

May +  
June



# FRESH INK

Inland Empire California Writers Club



# CONTACT THE board

President:  
Judy Kohnen  
judy.kohnen@gmail.com

Vice President & Membership Chair:  
Ben Alirez  
iecwcmembership@outlook.com

Secretary:  
Elisabeth Anghel  
anghelelisabeth@gmail.com

Treasurer:  
Sam Nichols  
samuelthomasnichols@gmail.com

Newsletter Editor:  
Abigail Handojo  
iecwcfreshink@gmail.com

Hospitality Chair:  
Shirley Petro-Timura  
timura@hotmail.com

Social Networking Chair:  
Cynthia Demone  
talk2msm@verizon.net

Webmaster:  
Kelly Lewis  
kelsolive@gmail.com

Critique Group Coordinator:  
Constance Cassinelli  
cassinelli100@hotmail.com



## Table of Contents

Board Contacts .....	2
President's Message .....	3
Editor's Note .....	4
What's Coming Up .....	5
Program Review .....	6-8
Club Benefits .....	9
<b>ANNOUNCEMENTS</b>	
CWC's books .....	10
Kudos Korner .....	11
Beyond Our Branch .....	12-13
<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>	
SoCal Writers Showcase .....	14
Fresh Ink guidelines .....	15
<b>SUBMISSIONS</b>	
"Poetry Musings" .....	16-18
by Samuel Thomas Nichols	
"The Castle Man" .....	19
by Shirley Petro	
"Ontario Art Book Fair" .....	20-21
by Ben Alirez	
"Death by Avocado" .....	22
by Leticia Garcia Bradford	
Next Month's Theme .....	23



# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

One of the best things about a writing club like ours is the connection, inspiration, and support from our writing "tribe."

Victoria Waddle, a writer-librarian is part of my tribe, part of my local writer's network. For our June presentation, Victoria will present her latest book, "Keep Sweet." Over the past 15 years, I have attended a few writing presentations with Victoria. I even critiqued a few chapters of her manuscript! Last month, that WIP (work in progress) turned into a book. I am thrilled. Turning an idea into a book is quite the undertaking, as we all know. Not only do I celebrate her achievement--I take her success personally. I was a tiny part of her writer's journey. It's aspirational to know, and grow, with a writing group.

As our earth tilts us towards the sun (and the summer heat in Southern California) I encourage you to utilize the longer hours for writing. For me, born in Canada, the summers in Southern California are for hibernation. I hunker down inside a room with good air conditioning. Even though we may have travels or visitors, the summer is our time to pen a messy story from beginning to end, or time to revise a draft, or to implement a marketing plan.

Whatever you do, enjoy every hour of your summer.

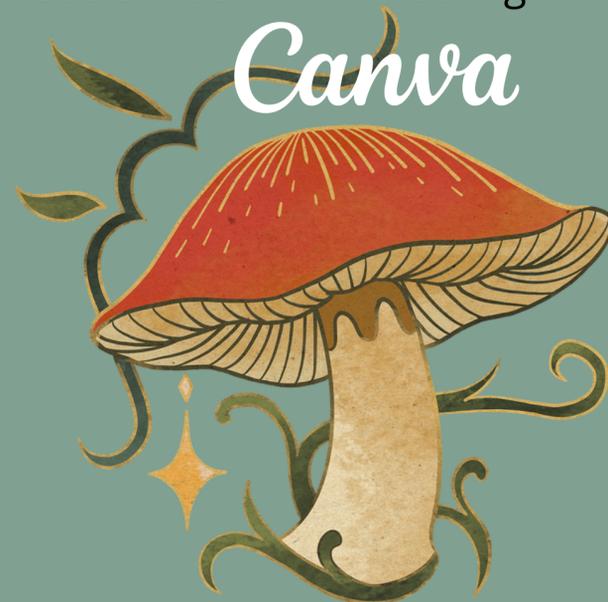
Write on,  
Judy Kohnen

# EDITOR'S NOTE

Anything Under the Sun

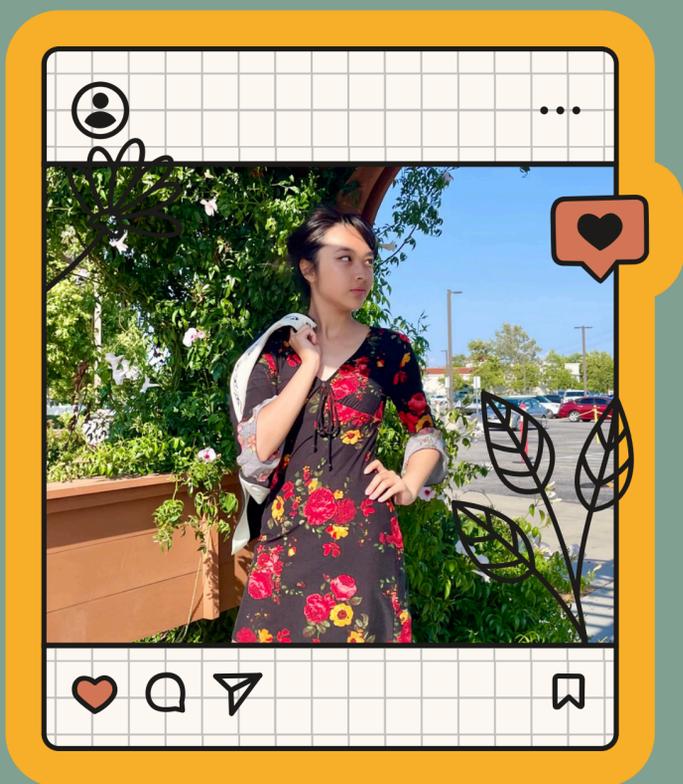
This issue was edited using

Canva



Hello reader,

As of May 23, 2025, I have finished the last four chapters of my life's book called "high school." The graduation cap design I decided on was simple—a two word reference to the 1989 film Dead Poets Society. In glittering pink letters, I spelled out "Carpe Diem," Latin for "seize the day." With only one "teen" year left, age feels like hot sand on the beach... sweeping and impossible to ignore. As the summer season dawns, I encourage you to seize the day and take a good, long nap once it ends.



@abigail\_handojo

Due to the lack of submissions received in May (except for Ben, thank you, Ben!), I decided to combine May and June's issue. Mune? Jay? *Junay's* Fresh Ink is a combination of cottagecore and rustic aesthetics. Earthy like March's but muted in colors like October's. This clipart collection adds a whimsical and mysterious fae-like touch to the pages... fitting for the theme of growth. Hopefully this Fresh Ink was worth your wait!

Faith, trust, and eraser dust,  
Abigail Elina Handojo



Saturday, June 28, 2025 at 10:00 am  
 Ovitt Family Community Library  
 215 East C St, Ontario, CA 91764



## Leaning into the Author's Voice and Small Press Publishing

Victoria Waddle believes that the literary world is like a library—there is a place for all sorts of voices and genres (even genre-defying books) in the collection. But finding that place can be hard. She has had work published by three small presses in Inland Southern California. She'll talk about her experiences including topics: choosing the right POV, editing work, selecting book covers, and practicing good literary citizenship.

### About the Author

Victoria Waddle is a Pushcart-nominated writer, with work published in literary journals and anthologies, including *Alaska Quarterly Review* and *Best Short Stories* from The Saturday Evening Post Great American Fiction Contest. Her publications include a collection of short fiction, *Acts of Contrition* (Los Nietos Press) and a chapbook, *The Mortality of Dogs and Humans* (Bamboo Dart Press). Her novel, *Keep Sweet*, about teens escaping a patriarchal cult, was recently launched from Inlandia Books.



Her recent essay on the harm of sexual purity culture went viral on HuffPost and was reissued on BuzzFeed. Previously the managing editor of the journal *Inlandia: A Literary Journey*, she helped to establish a yearly teen issue. She was formerly a high school English teacher and a teacher librarian. She can be found on the Substack *Be a Cactus*, (<https://VictoriaWaddle.Substack.com>) where she writes about book bans and other literary topics.

JUNE 2025 MEETING

WHAT'S COMING UP

APRIL 2025

# MEETING REVIEW

## Poetry Open Mic

Saturday, April 26, 2025, at 10:10 a.m.

Ovitt Family Community Library

215 E. C St., Ontario, CA 91764



## Review by Ben Alirez

To pay homage to National Poetry Month, the Inland Empire California Writers Club hosted an open mic poetry event. Wendy Van Camp, a self-identified speculative poet, led off the branch meeting with several short poems like “Apollo,” “Endeavor,” “Dragon,” and “Star Jump.”

Cindy Demone came next with an entertaining collage of alphabetical letters that introduced animals of every kind. It brought smiles to many faces.

Constance Cassinelli donned a hands-free headset to sing a compelling poem she last performed as a twenty-four-year-old.

Shirley Timura, who assisted with a writing prompt at last month’s poetry workshop, came next, followed by Vicki Peyton who recited a poem called “The Phoenix has Risen” about the hardships of her late-husband’s declining health and the devotion she had to him.

Jessica Gonzalez, a guest like Wendy Van Camp, recited two poems, “Breathe” and “Séance.”

Allison Sanders, read a poem inspired in 2006 by her inability to sleep one night. As she began to pray, an entire poem emerged. She went on to recite several more poems that derived inspiration from her deep personal faith.

Parker Emerson then performed a poem inspired by a past stay in Big Sur.

Another guest, Diosa Xochiquetzalcoatl, stood before the audience and apologized that her voice was not more robust, having just received treatment. She went on to recite a poem she had published in the Latino Book Review in both Spanish and English.

Leticia Garcia Bradford revealed the fact she started her poetry career in the Bay Area. The piece she shared was her longest, a look at the many facets of grief, with portions sung to the words of “Swing Low Sweet Chariot.”

Monica Aleman, who participated remotely via FaceTime, contributed with three poems of her own, including one about her late mother.

Sam Nichols then unveiled a math poem titled, “My New Math” and a humorous ode to the three infamous P’s (on what not to share)—proselytization, politics, and porn.

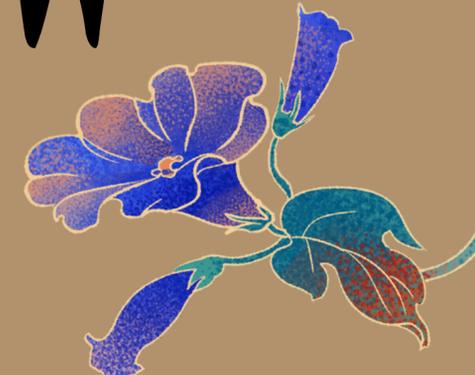
Kelly Lewis added a poem derived from Shirley Timura’s poetry workshop the previous month. And in the waning minutes, Wendy Van Camp contributed a Haiku titled “Reclaiming Her Name,” and Cindy Demone ended with “Countdown.”

Afterward, several members met for lunch at Upland’s Eden Garden Fusion Grill.



MAY 2025

# MEETING REVIEW



**Flash Fiction workshop led by K. Andrew Turner**

**Saturday, May 24, 2025, at 10:10 a.m.**

**Review by Abigail Handojo**

On a sunny May morning, the IECWC members gathered at the Ovitt library for another monthly meeting. This time, the tables were directed toward our club president, Judy, and guest K. Andrew Turner. Andrew is a writer of both prose and poetry, founder of East Jasmine Review—an electronic literary journal, and was a semifinalist for the 2016 Luminaire Award in poetry. He opened the workshop by explaining what flash fiction is and its range of 750 to 1500 words before he dove into the main components of the form.

## **1. Brevity**

Andrew emphasized the importance of brevity in flash fiction. When revising your work, “if a word or entire paragraph is not necessary, cut it.” The most important words in flash fiction are the verbs. Action verbs will “do all the heavy lifting” when it comes to imagining a scene or interaction. “Be okay with being vague.”

## **2. Structure**

This can include the basic narrative arc (beginning, middle, end), but there are also other options such as slice of life, poetic, lyrical, or vignette-styled writing “You can stitch flash pieces to make a longer work.” Andrew used the example of a set of stories about a daughter’s relationship with her father. Individually, a single story could stand alone, but read chronologically, they create a longer work.

## **3. Characterization**

Andrew noted that characters must be (1) yearning for something and (2) doing something immediately. They must be seeking something they don’t have or want to gain. Within the first paragraph, they must be making a choice that will have consequences for the rest of the story “right out the gate.” He suggested to “pick the most interesting thing in your character’s life” and build the story around that.

He also mentioned that two characters are a good amount to have. Enough for conversation and dynamics, but not too much that there’s a whole list of names for readers to keep track of.

## **4. Conflict**

The main struggle or conflict should be on a personal scale. For instance, the character’s relationship with their siblings, coworkers, or their interactions with other people. Andrew advised writers to rely on the reader’s personal experience. Often, readers will make the connection between the person on the page and their own lives.

MAY 2025

# MEETING REVIEW

## 5. Resolutions

This can be handled off-page at the end. It is the writer's job to "guide the readers to the conclusion you want them to have" and allow them to draw their own ideas. Readers can come up with different interpretations of the same ending. This could be done in a single sentence.

As examples, Andrew read two pieces he previously wrote himself, titled "Never Forget the Dark" and "Vitiligo." He also recommended *Life, Orange to Pear* by John Brantingham and Meg Pokrass's work.

Following the lesson, members had two rounds of 10-minute writing periods. Andrew provided a couple of open-ended prompts to get the members' creative juices flowing.

Prompts:

- "Write a story in first person about a place you know well."
- "Imagine a moment from the past week you've experienced. Dramatize that moment. What's important, what's not."
- "Pick an article of clothing or an object and use that to spur creativity. That article/object should appear and create something of great meaning."
- "Write about two characters yearning. They should have a relationship (platonic, romantic, familial) and their yearning should be in opposition to each other."
- "Write a story where the narrator is not telling the whole truth."
- "Find an image, picture, or painting that speaks to you and write a story based on that image."

After jotting down with a pen or typing away with a keyboard, the members shared their work and discussed ways to improve. Overall, it was a productive workshop and a successful meeting!



For more of Andrew, visit his website [www.kandrewturner.com](http://www.kandrewturner.com) or follow him on X/Instagram/BlueSky as @kandrewturner.



# benefits of IECWC

## MEMBERSHIP

- ALL AGES are welcome!
- Entrance into monthly meetings
  - (in-person or remotely through Zoom)
- Access to monthly speakers on topics related to the craft
- Exposure & practice by submitting to our monthly literary newsletter, FRESH INK
- Network with other club members
  - (various levels of expertise, mentors)
- Participation in Critique Groups
  - (in-person or remotely through Zoom)
- Your OWN PAGE on our Club website at no additional cost
  - Highlight your bio, photo, website, social media, and published books
- Opportunities to serve on the board or on committees of our branch
- Camaraderie among other writers at all levels, all genres, and all ages!
- Partake, volunteer, and/or help plan our Spring and Fall Conferences which are provided at little (or sometimes no) cost to our members
- Annual opportunity to showcase your work at Open Mic events.
- Annual opportunity, each January, to attend/appear on our Panel of Authors
  - Members who were published the year before
  - Learn/share advice on the publication process, ask/answer questions, and buy/sell your books on site
- Annual opportunity to submit, read, and assist with judging the competitive Statewide CWC Literary Review, with readership of about 2,000 members and their readers and associates
- Simultaneous Co-Membership into California Writers Club
  - Our state-level parent organization at [www.calwriters.org](http://www.calwriters.org), with additional volunteer opportunities

- Read/advertise in the Tri-Annual CWC Bulletin available online, free of charge
  - Access to news from the other CWC Branches throughout California, gaining perspective about other serious, mostly published, writers, editors, Web designers, graphics experts, etc.
- Potential for your writing to be chosen to be displayed in the Southern California Writers Showcase at [www.socalwritersshowcase.com](http://www.socalwritersshowcase.com)
- A wonderful addition to your curriculum vitae or resume!
- Access to the monthly IECWC Blind Review Team
- Utilize our FACEBOOK PAGE to get your works word out to the public interested in writing

### JOIN or RENEW at:

<https://iecwc.com/membership-meetings/>

**Active**  
**\$65**

**Supporting**  
**\$65**

**Student**  
**\$15**  
ages 8-22

**Renewal of Membership**  
**\$45**

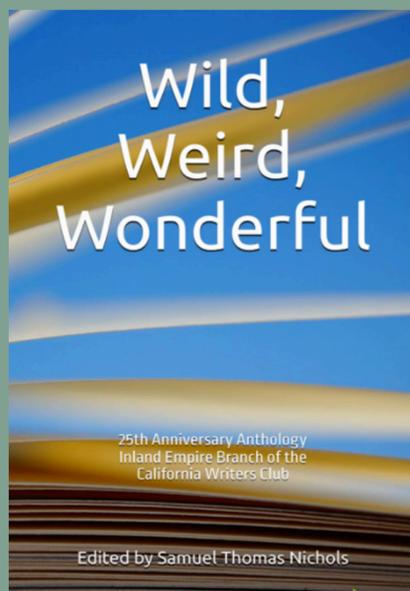
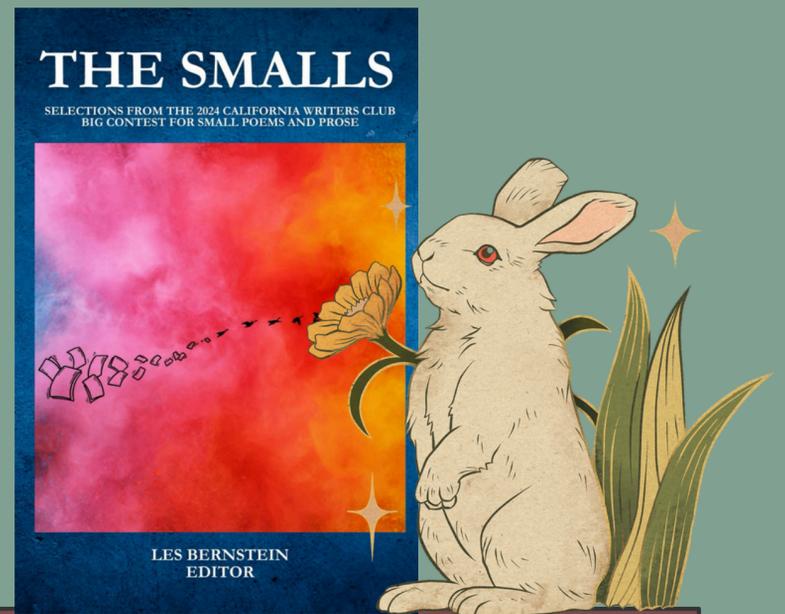
Renewal deadline September 30.  
On October 1, CWC shall drop all delinquent members from the rolls. If dropped, you must pay the new \$65 member enrollment fees.

C  
W  
C

## THE SMALLS

The Smalls includes selections from the California Writers Club 2024 "Big Contest for Small Poems and Prose." This is a vibrant collection of unique voices chosen from the contest entries.

<https://a.co/d/45iqsdm>



## Wild, Weird, Wonderful: 25th Anniversary Anthology Inland Empire Branch of the California Writers Club

<https://a.co/d/0SVxuupt>

This collection includes short stories, poetry, memoir, nonfiction, memoir, original drawings and photographs, and one novelette entitled *Murder in Huckleberry Heights*.

This anthology contains the varietal work of eighteen members of the Inland Empire Branch with several genres being represented.

## Vision & Verse: A Fusion of Art, Photography, Prose and Poetry

The multi-talented artists and writers featured within these pages have come together to create a dialogue between their respective mediums. This collection showcases the beauty of visual art married with the magic of the written word.

<https://a.co/d/2zu0Afx>



BO  
OK  
S

**WRITTEN BY VETERANS**

**VETERAN STORIES  
WORKSHOP & READING**

**MONDAY, MAY 12, 2025**  
**6:00PM-8:00 PM** ★ **18 YEARS OR OLDER**

★ **Ovitt Family Community Library**  
215 E C St. Ontario, CA 91764 ★

The workshop will be led by award-winning author, John J. McBrearty, a retired Lt. Colonel with over 32 years of military service.

**mbm PUBLISHING**  
JOHNWRITESHISTORY@GMAIL.COM  
JOHNWRITESHISTORY.COM

Congratulations **John J. McBrearty!**

On May 13-18, he attended the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival and finished first place in the creative writing category, receiving a creative arts scholarship.

On May 12, he hosted Veterans' Stories, a writing workshop in Ontario.



On May 27, he spoke as a keynote speaker for the 40<sup>th</sup> Division Alumni Association's semi-annual luncheon at the Joint Forces Training Base.

# Kudos Korner

Congratulations **John Broussard, Abigail Handojo, and Jaiden Horn!**

On April 25, they led a panel and poetry reading structured session at a School Climate Conference to a crowd of 400 educators on empathy in education.

"This project made me realize the power of poetry: telling a story that moves their hearts enough to change their minds and call them to action," said Abigail Handojo.



**PROTECT  
CONNECT  
EDUCATE**

# CWC Berkeley

## Submission Support Group



In the Submission Support Group, we'll share our knowledge and experience gained by wading through the seas of "Thanks, but no thanks," and equip you with the tools you need to succeed.

The group will be genre-agnostic: writers of fiction, nonfiction (creative or otherwise), and poetry will all be supported, of any length, for any kind of market (journals, anthologies, websites, publishers, etc). The aim is to be helpful for both seasoned submitters and those who have never submitted before.



Meet fourth Sunday of every month 1-2 pm  
Zoom moderated by Chase Anderson  
Questions? Contact [contact@chasej.xyz](mailto:contact@chasej.xyz)

Register to attend the Zoom event:  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZIkceChrD8jHdNGdDmjx-tlICnF7Y8EPaDa>

# CWC Marin

## Call for Submissions

The California Writers Club Marin is accepting short-short story submissions! Winners will receive certificates of excellence and will appear on our website and the statewide website. External expert judges will be announced soon.

California Writers Club of Marin presents

# LEFT BEHIND

A Flash Fiction Contest

Submissions open June 1, 2025  
Deadline September 1, 2025 midnight  
Word Count: 500-1,000 words

### Theme: Left Behind

**Prompt:** Craft a gripping 500–1000 word short-short story that explores leaving something-or-someone behind or being left behind. *Capture a powerful moment in a brief burst of storytelling. Show us what's left behind—and what lingers on.*

Flash fiction features short-short stories with high impact.

To enter & view guidelines: <https://cwcmarin.com/contest/>

# HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR WORK TO SOCALWRITERSSHOWCASE.COM

- You must be a member in good standing
  - AKA submitted application & paid your dues
- Maximum length of submissions: 500 words
  - You can add 1 link to your website
- Software: Microsoft Word (.docx) file attachment
- No indents, columns, tables or bullet points
- Subject line must read: SUBMISSION FOR SOCAL SHOWCASE
- In Body of email: list (1) your name, (2) your branch name, and (3) title of work
  - Also in the Body, include this permission: "I am submitting this for use on the CWC South website and confirm that I am a member of a Southern branch of the California Writers Club. I further confirm that it is my original work and all rights to its use belong to me. CWC South may use this on its website, archive it for future use on its website or choose to not use it, however the rights I grant are non-exclusive and I retain the right to sell it, allow its publication elsewhere including simultaneously, and all other rights to its use. CWC South is not paying me for its use. CWC South may not sell it or authorize its use outside of the CWC South website without"
- Send email & attachment to the current branch President, Judy Kohnen.
  - She will verify membership and will forward it on to be published.



Visit [www.socalwritersshowcase.com](http://www.socalwritersshowcase.com) to familiarize yourself with the categories of content.

- Short fiction: "flash fiction" – stories with beginning, middle, end
- Memoir: short memoir pieces or vignettes about our past
- A Writer's Life: ideas, humor, tips to keep your writing going
- Craft: "how-to" articles related to writing or marketing your work

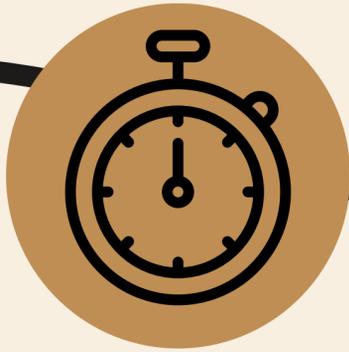
Most work is accepted by the Editor if it is of appropriate quality. The site is updated monthly, but there may be a backlog in a category. Once your work appears on the site, it stays on the site for 6 months. After that, your name and the title of your work will appear on the Archive List page by month. You retain the copyright for your submission. Our website copyright notice: Articles or stories appearing on this website submitted by members are copyrighted with all rights reserved by their respective authors. Note that some contests/publishers will consider posting on a website to mean that the piece has been previously published and perhaps ineligible for a contest or future publication, so keep that in mind.

# Deadlines

Submissions are due the **15th** of every month

For example:

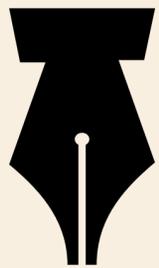
The deadline for July's issue is June 15th



# Content Limits

**Submissions with the following will not be considered:**

- Excessive or gratuitous violence (violence for violence sake)
- Excessive or gratuitous profanity
- Excessive or gratuitous sexual situations or pornography
- Political or religious agendas that are meant to persuade or denounce



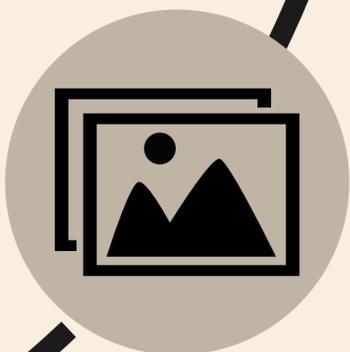
# FRESH INK *guidelines*



# Form

- Prose word count <1,200
- No line count on poetry

Send as an attachment  
Google or Word document  
Times New Roman  
12pt font



# Photos

Accompanying images are optional

We can only publish digital images that **do not violate copyright**

You are encouraged to submit photos you have taken



# Email

Share with Abigail Handojo at [iecwcfreshink@gmail.com](mailto:iecwcfreshink@gmail.com)

Subject line must read "FRESH INK - month"

Replace "month" with your target month for publication

Check your email periodically for suggestions from the editor



# Poetry Musings

SAMUEL THOMAS NICHOLS

## Growth

I tend to think of growth as a positive phenomenon, especially during the spring and summer when my garden is developing and later producing an array of fruits and vegetables. Surrounded by developing cucumbers, squash, tomatoes, peppers, melons, herbs, and more, is poetically peaceful and rewarding. But growth, like evolution and change, is a noun that not always connotes the positive, as in: *there is an inoperable growth on your lung*. There are also examples of growth that may be perceived as either positive or negative depending up individual. One particular example is the growth of AI (Artificial Intelligence), which I personally loathe. There are many thousands of AI generated poems that can be viewed on the website, [tinypoetry.com](http://tinypoetry.com). In fact, they have a free AI Poetry Generator that can be used, without registration. I took it for a test run using this month's theme, growth, and was rewarded with the following two poems:

### Awakening

In the cradle of tender hues,  
A bud unfurls, as dreams amuse,  
Colors burst, a vivid ray,  
Heralding joys of spring's ballet.

From somber shades to vibrant cheer,  
New life dances, drawing near,  
With every petal wide and free,  
The world awakens, wild with glee.

### Silent Awaiting

Tiny seeds in earthen beds,  
Lying soft where silence spreads.  
Beneath the weight of winter's breath,  
They dream in darkness, whispering death.

Each one cradles sun's embrace,  
Imagined warmth, a sacred space.  
Time will stir the sleeping ground,  
A promise held—new life unbound.

In shadowed stillness, patience grows,  
Awaiting spring when the first wind blows.  
With raindrops' kiss and sun's first gleam,  
They'll break forth, wild, from slumbering dream.



Now these may not be the quality you'd expect from Percy Bysshe Shelley, who penned *The Sensitive Plant* (*Mimosa pudica*) using the same aabb rhyme scheme as these two AI generations. (I nearly wrote compositions, instead of generations, but I don't believe computer applications are capable of composing). Shelley begins *The Sensitive Plant* with:

A Sensitive Plant in a garden grew,  
And the young winds fed it with silver dew,  
And it opened its fan-like leaves to the light.  
And closed them beneath the kisses of Night.

And the Spring arose on the garden fair,  
Like the Spirit of Love felt everywhere;  
And each flower and herb on Earth's dark breast  
Rose from the dreams of its wintry rest.



Which, may not seem any better or worse than the first poem presented above, but *The Sensitive Plant* is in 4 parts, is 77 stanzas (311 lines) in length, and contains much that makes it great. My favorite stanzas are found in lines 224 through 239:

Between the time of the wind and the snow  
All loathliest weeds began to grow,  
Whose coarse leaves were splashed with many a speck,  
Like the water-snake's belly and the toad's back.

And thistles, and nettles, and darnels rank,  
And the dock, and henbane, and hemlock dank,  
Stretched out its long and hollow shank,  
And stifled the air till the dead wind stank.

And plants, at whose names the verse feels loath,  
Filled the place with a monstrous undergrowth,  
Prickly, and pulpous, and blistering, and blue,  
Livid, and starred with a lurid dew.

And agarics, and fungi, with mildew and mould  
Started like mist from the wet ground cold;  
Pale, fleshy, as if the decaying dead  
With a spirit of growth had been animated!



I've had several people tell me they can discern between AI generated poems and those written by a human poet. I cannot and that disturbs me. In Shelly's essay, *A Defence of Poetry*, he writes: "Poetry, in a general sense, may be defined to be 'the expression of the imagination': and poetry is connate with the origin of man." He further writes that poetry "... springs from the nature itself of language, which is a more direct representation of the actions and passions of our internal being, and is susceptible of more various and delicate combinations, than color, form, or motion, and is more plastic and obedient to the control of that faculty of which it is the creation."

As the growth of AI continues to accelerate and its ability to mimic becomes indistinguishable, I am reminded that computers do not have passion. They do not experience, think, or dream. They do not love, hate, cower in fear, or spring up in joy. When I worked at Xerox, El Segundo in the 1970s, a headhunter offered me a position leading an AI development team and I told him I didn't want to live in a world where machines think, and here I am now, in a world where machines are closing in on independent thought. I close with a sonnet I wrote in November 2022:

### Behind the Panel

Of switches and dials are mysteries  
Hidden in etched and plated circuitries  
Black, white, red, and green wires in concert  
Soldered together no longer inert

Solutions emerge from fractured AI  
Leaving us exposed without an ally  
In this struggle on this digital front  
Where nothing's sacred yet terribly blunt

Where it's headed is dimly unclear  
This new way of computing peer-to-peer  
Will it demolish, or will it abet?  
Will it emerge as an asset or threat?

I loathe the idea of machines that think  
But here we are, poised on that very brink





# The Castle Man

*Shirley Petro*

The story is told about castle on snowy hill. Some said a man lived there alone, a kind and quiet man.

The story of this mysterious man circulated in town. One woman was curious. So, she set out to view the castle and perhaps this man as well.

As she approached the property, she spied concentric circles around the castle. She was astonished! Warning signs loomed up. *"Stop! Land Mines Ahead!"*

*But this woman had an inbred "I can do this" spirit that helped her as much as it hurt her. But it nevertheless remained strong in her. No evidence-based information was needed for her. It compelled her to tip toe through the land mines.*

She made it safely with the first ring. Now she could see the remaining rings. Next was a row of barbed wire, then the line of barking, snaring dogs. Still ahead of her the deep moat filled with snapping alligators. She made it through them miraculously. Finally, she recoiled at the heat of the fiery torches as they burned so hot. Her skin was burning, the skin that covered her heart. She lay down and wept. It was no use. Why go any further?

This man obviously took great care to build these mighty walls around his house. Perhaps it took many years. She had to acknowledge the effort and energy he invested in constructing these fortifications. Why not just let it be as it is? It all must surely serve a magnificent purpose unknown to her. She had her burns now and he had his walls. So be it.

She turned and walked back. As she turned around, she thought she saw his face in the window. She recalled some tales that were often told of this man. His dark heavy hair, his bright listening eyes. And there were other rumors, smoldering rumors.

She turned her shoulders and then her feet. They were facing the castle. She took a small step forward.

# Ontario Art Book Fair

by Ben Alirez



Saturday, March 29, 2025  
Ontario Museum of History & Art  
225 E. Euclid St., Ontario, CA 91762

It was a cold but sunny Saturday,  
When artsy people came to play,  
They came with wares and artifacts,  
There was even food and yummy snacks  
There were animators, illustrators, too  
And poets and artists and tattoos  
Printmakers, bookmakers, zine-makers galore  
Cartoonists, sculptors, and storytelling lore,  
There were painters, publishers, sketchers—a few,  
And graphic designs in crimsony hues,  
And let's not forget photography,  
Oh, but the wonder of artsy ideology

The city of Ontario held its first ever art book fair at the end of March, and although the Inland Empire California Writers Club did not qualify for an exhibitors' booth, we participated with an information/outreach booth. And it was a great time!

The atmosphere was festive, and the venue could not have been more electric. Not when it featured an eighty-eight-year-old historical landmark—Ontario’s very own Museum of History & Art. The structure radiated “Night at the Museum” vibes and made the affair so much more meaningful.

Several club members worked the booth in rotating shifts, including Vicki Peyton, Cindy Demone, Sam Nichols, Kelly Lewis, and my wife Carol and me. Also in attendance were club members Scott Skipper, Denise Nichols, Peter Hall, and Kimber Commodore.

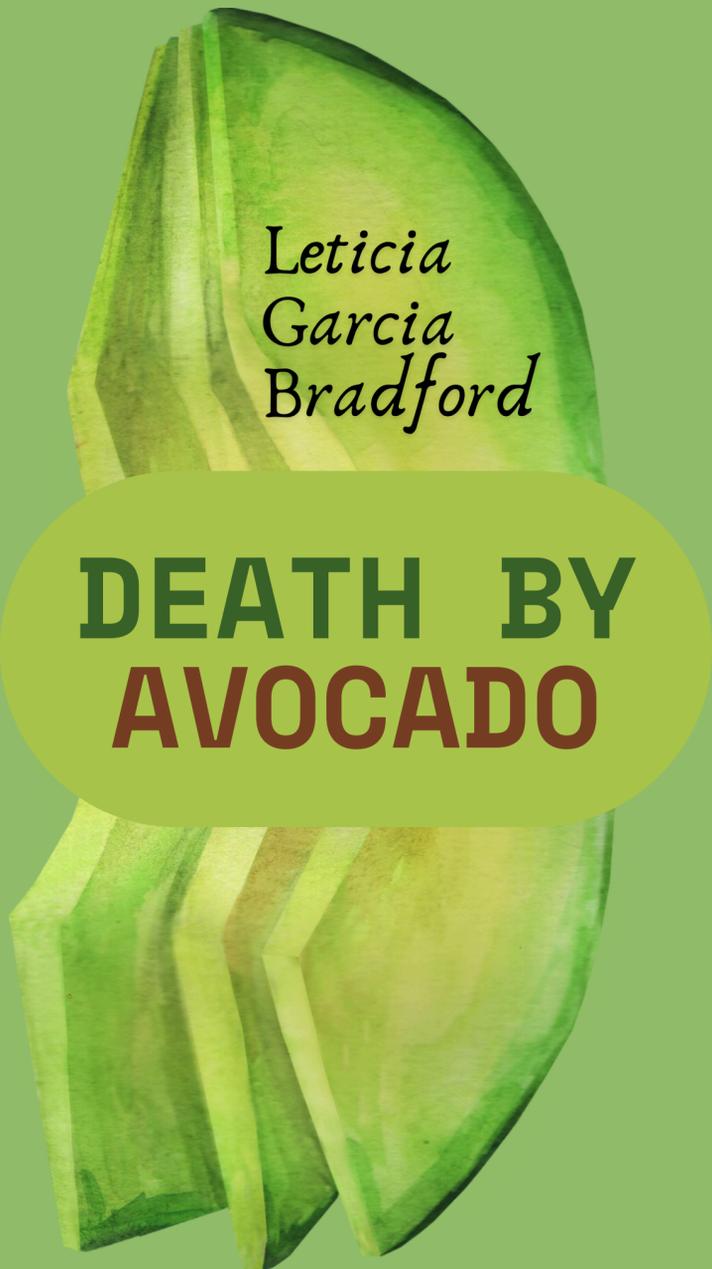
Plenty of people visited the aptly decorated booth and networking opportunities resulted. We met librarians, journalists, fellow poets, potential guest speakers and aspiring writers.

As of this writing, Rebecca Ustrell, the event coordinator, announced that the book fair was such a success that the city is planning to make it an annual event, with added programming, giveaways, activities, and exhibitor spaces in the future. An estimated 1,200 guests visited the inaugural event.

Which means..? IECWC should continue taking part, too.  
Now where was I? Oh, yes...

There were filmmakers, mural-makers, curators, more,  
Library insiders to help you explore,  
There were crafty clay shapers, print-screen bag makers,  
Ontario crime stoppers, a puppeteer for gawkers,  
And on and on and on it went





*Leticia  
Garcia  
Bradford*

## **DEATH BY AVOCADO**

My writing of late has been quite an underachievement, so I have come to rely on writing prompts to get my juices flowing. Firing up my writing prompt of the day I found these innocuous words: Put your favorite fruit in a life or death situation. This is how I came to write "Death by Avocado". The avocado is not just my favorite fruit, but my favorite food, as well. "Food of the gods," I call it. Though some may quibble that the avocado is not a fruit, but a vegetable. Last time I checked, fruits come with seeds and only one seed is necessary as in the case of the avocado or the banana. Well the banana is a close runner up to my favorite fruit, but need I digress.

Many a day I thought, "What would be the best way to free my life from my ex-husband?" I thought of warfarin, rat poison, which is used to treat blood clots and readily available. Thanks to advances in medicine now there are other drugs like Xarelto to keep you from stroking out. Other poison options would be strychnine or oleander. I had no idea how to obtain either or how to mix just the right potion to do the lethal damage. Thankfully, I didn't have to go the poisoning route. Nor did I need to wish him a heart attack. I was relieved of my excess baggage without the risk of going to jail.

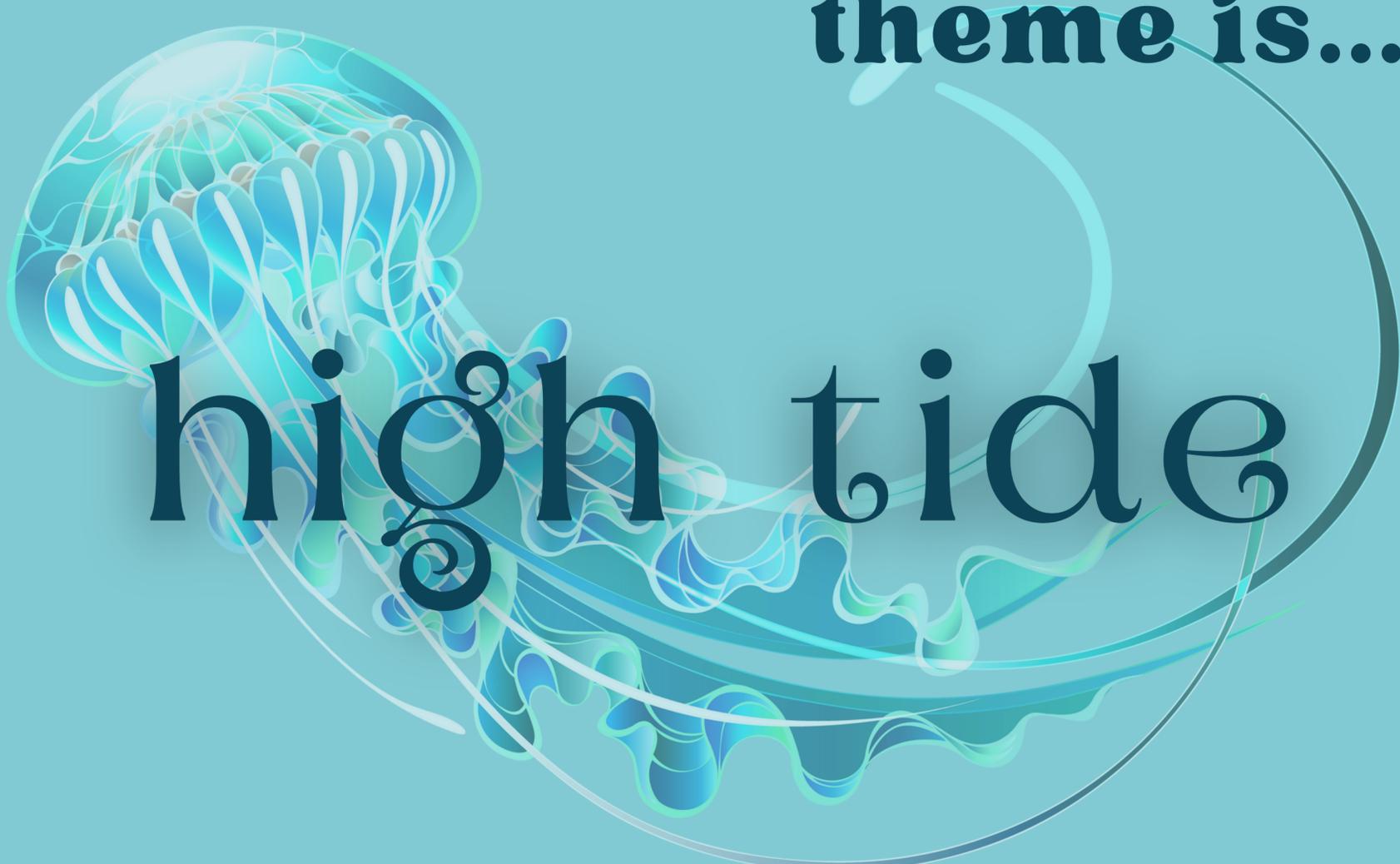
In a wind thrashing wet storm a branch from my father's avocado tree came down because it couldn't sustain the weight of the hundreds of fruits and the added water. My former husband, who, to my chagrin, still lived on the property, upon inspecting the damage to the tree was in the wrong place at the wrong time. Or the right time as I saw it. Avocados are known to fall like coconuts. At my father's ranch we heard many a fruit make a hard thud on the weathered plastic green corrugated roof of the patio. We were always alarmed and wished Chicken Little had given his warning, "The sky is falling." So when my ex took a closer look at the storm damage, he was struck on the center of the crown with an errant avocado which triggered a fall. Coming down his head struck a rock at just the right spot. Death was instantaneous. Thus, Death by Avocado. Another reason to love this fruit.

What will tomorrow's prompt be?

**Abigail's final**

**Fresh Ink issue's**

**theme is...**



**high tide**