



Women Who Write, Inc.

Since 1988

WRITERS' NOTES

Women Who Write, Inc. Newsletter

November, 2024

SPRING GATHERING/GOLDFINCH LAUNCH by Kim Crumrine

Thinking back to our 2024 Spring Gathering/*Goldfinch* Launch, though so many months and seasons behind us, still warms my heart this cold time of year. Due to inclement weather our Winter Gathering was postponed until June, and then combined with another perennial favorite, the launch of our literary magazine. The result was a unique, memorable and joyous event.

This year we tried something completely new and fabulous. The Madison Community House's gym was adorned with exquisite Indian decorations, provided by Megha Maholtra and Prachi Jain. Multiple pairs of sunglasses were scattered on each table, for some mysterious reason revealed later on. There were bowls of bangles and sparkling Bindi stickers.

There was a lot of excitement in the air as we settled down with our coffee to hear the *Goldfinch* authors read their pieces. Each one so different and so poignant. WWW writers write from the heart and are so talented! *Goldfinch* Editor Bernice Bellouny was able to join us virtually which was such a treat.

And the treats kept coming. Lunch was next with a dizzying array of platters of Indian food as well as salads and pasta. I tried and loved everything. One of the most delicious lunches to rival any restaurant's. Each homemade meal was made with TLC, you could just tell.

After lunch the party really got going. After weeks of practice, the "WWW Bollywood Dancers" performed three dances to beautiful, rhythmic Indian music. And then the audience was encouraged to don those sunglasses and join along in the dancing. The smiles on everyone's faces just lit up the room and the energy was AMAZING. Kate Cutts and I were lucky enough to learn Bollywood dancing from the best: Megha and Prachi.

Women Who Write is a supportive group of women who are eager to learn new things, share their talents and come to together to have fun. This day was no exception...what a truly memorable WWWW event!!!

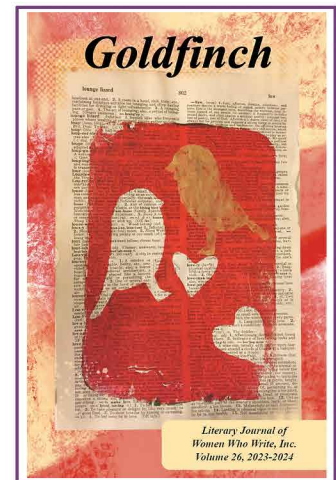
Thank you to all WWWW members who wrote an article for this issue! I am very grateful.

If anyone has an idea for an article, please feel free to reach out to me at: kimcrumrine@comcast.net. Thanks!

Kim Crumrine
Editor, Writers' Notes



Women who Write became Women Who Dance! Here we are dancing to "Kala Chashma".



This year's cover art was created by Liz Lewis.



Maggie Roycraft, Maureen Haggarty, and Pat Weissner (left to right) assisted with the mailing of *Goldfinch* to those who could not attend the gathering.



Delightful decorations added so much flair!



PODCASTS - “HEAR TO LEARN” by Kim Crumrine

There are so many ways to learn writing skills. I've always loved writing, but my classes on genre, plot development and point of view pretty much ended in high school. The only place I would see parentheses or analogies would be in equations in the math I studied in college. And grammar? In word problems of course which I didn't have the luxury of examining closely. So when I turned to writing all these years later, I needed a brush up for sure. Women Who Write's conferences, workshops and critique groups have been one of the primary sources of my writing re-education and I am so thankful for that. And aside from further studying the subject matter in books, another great source has been listening to free podcasts on writing.

A podcast is a digital audio file that can be downloaded onto your computer or phone. Essentially it's someone talking about something! And there are so many podcasts out there on every subject imaginable. Each podcast is like a subscription - a new episode can be available daily, weekly or even monthly.

There are many apps on your phone you can install so you can download the podcasts of interest to you. Spotify and Apple Podcasts are two of the largest.

Early on I found a gem of a podcast called “*The Essential Guide to Writing A Novel*” hosted by James Thayer, a novelist, attorney and a goodnatured, professorial type with the humor to prove it. His weekly podcasts are chock full of practical “rules” on writing and information on character development, strong techniques, how to overcome writer's block, dialogue techniques, you name it. He often refers to Jack M. Bickham's book *Scene and Structure*, which I purchased and studied, finding that to be a great resource as well. Thayer's podcast is based on his book of the same name, if you prefer the written word.

Another podcast I would recommend is called “*Story Grid Writing*” hosted by Shawn Coyne and Tim Grahl. The last episode aired in 2023 but there are dozens of episodes to listen to, each around an hour in length. I'm not through all the episodes yet. I have to really focus on them; they are like lectures where I want to really understand and absorb everything that is being said. Their “How Does Stephen King Write?” and “Literary vs. Commercial Fiction” have been two of my favorite episodes so far. There is a topic for everyone covered in these podcasts.

Some podcasts are lighter and don't take all of my concentration. I can have them on in the background when I'm doing other things. “*88 Cups of Tea*” is a motivating, informative podcast hosted by Yin Chang which ended in 2020 but is worth diving into. Guests are interviewed in a charming manner and you feel at once part of a community that wants to help and support you on your writing journey. Just recently I listened to an episode where Greg Pizzoli, a NYT best selling picture book writer, was interviewed. He was so inspiring as he talked about his life and finding your voice. I had a smile on my face the whole time.

I encourage you to try podcasts as a resource for writing techniques. There is a great selection available and most are free. If you're a multi-tasker, it can be nice to learn about the craft of writing while you're doing something else or it's also a pleasant way to unwind and take a few moments out for yourself.



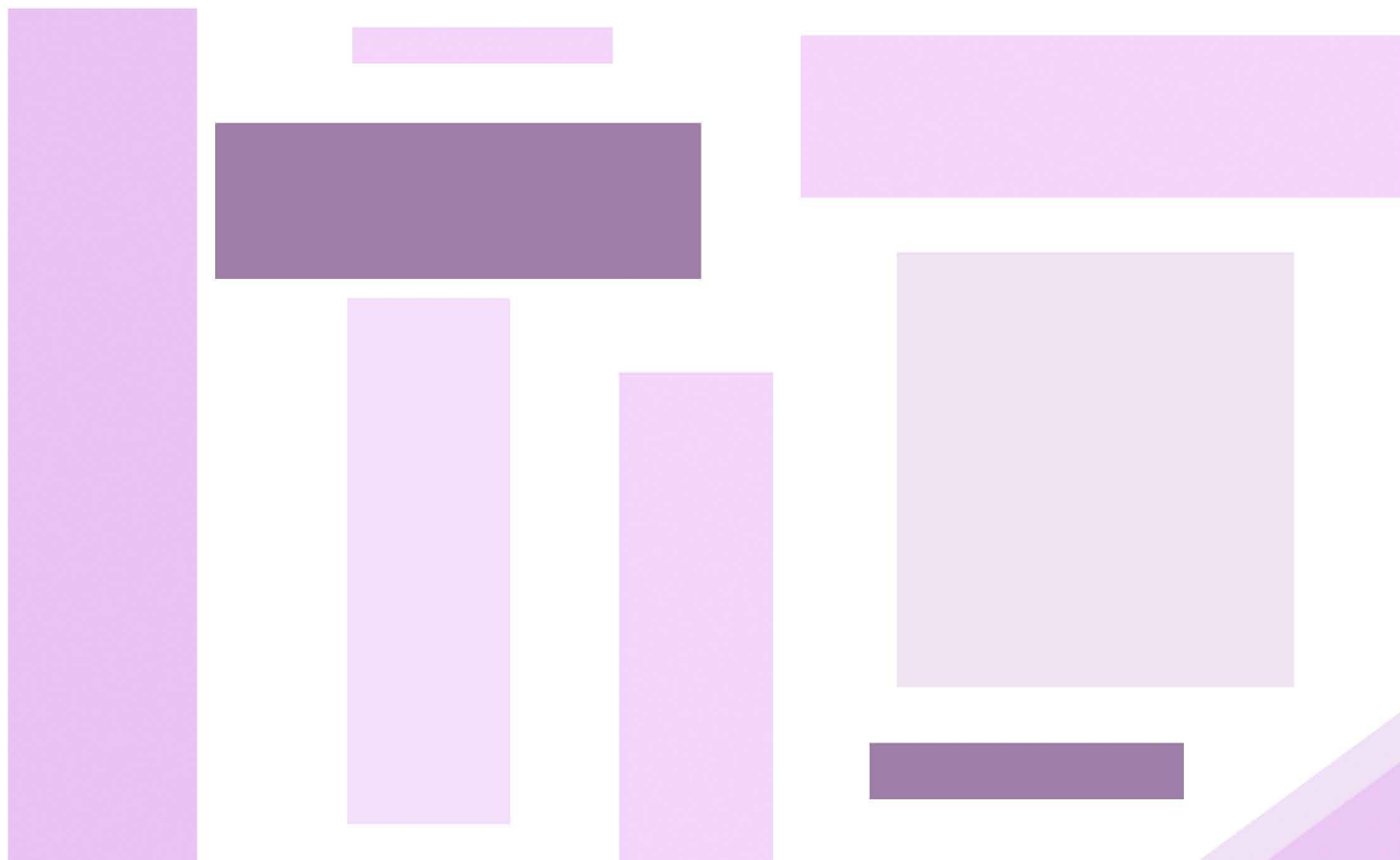
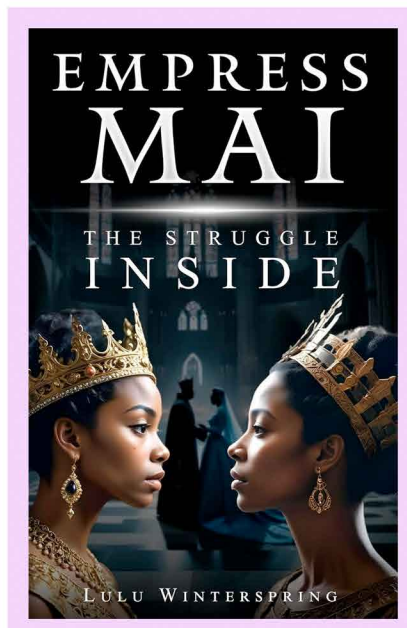
MY JOURNEY OF WRITING EMPRESS MAI'S NOVEL by Lulu Winterspring

Empress Mai is one of the proudest stories I have ever written and the first I have published. I remember when I started to write this story in 2022, I didn't know how it would turn out. I was at a place where I had lost my inspiration for over a decade. I couldn't come up with a story no matter how hard I tried until that day. I sat in front of a computer, then I thought to myself- if I really want to be an author I need to do something about my writing. Suddenly, I started to write, although I didn't know what to do with the character I created. I wrote things anyway. The more I wrote the more the story came into place.

At first, it was just for fun and I told everyone about it. Most people who knew me thought that I was kidding until the day I showed them the printed book. The amount of support I have received is breathtaking. I had no idea that I would sell out my first published book at a small event at work. I thought to myself I could really do this if I put my mind to it. Since then I have dedicated about 4 hours a day in front of the computer to write.

A few months later I got very sick and was unable to work, think or do anything. I still didn't give up. I wanted to continue bringing to life the story that has been haunting me since the day I picked up my pen to write. Right in the middle of a hardship, *Empress Mai* returns for a second time. I wrote the second book while struggling with my health. I was motivated to continue to follow my dreams despite the difficulty of my life.

After I finally published the second book I didn't stop, I wrote the third one right after. The two last books of *Empress Mai* were written when I was at the peak of my struggle. At the moment, I'm writing the fourth book of the series and I hope this time I can make writing the dream job that I have always desired. I have loved storytelling since I was a child. I have always wanted to become one of the greatest storytellers in the world. I might not be there yet but this is something I'm looking forward to achieving. I hope my journey motivates writers out there to never let anything come in between you and your dreams.



MY WRITING JOURNEY by Sharon Wagoner

I've been writing long enough to know that a literary journey is like flipping a coin. If the coin lands face up, you'll win a contest like Foreword INDIES or receive a manuscript request to buoy your spirits. Still, the next toss will surely be tails, initiating a negative book review, or a rejection from a prized agent. That's the literary game. It's always yin and yang.

My debut novel, *The Levitation Game*, launched last year, so I'm a newbie author. But it *feels* like I've been around the block many times, almost like Groundhog Day, in a rundown neighborhood full of graffiti and rats. I'm sorry to be pessimistic about writing. Publishing is tough.

Even though my time as a wordsmith feels long, I started writing late in life. I began as a children's book illustrator and, after some time, attempted to write children's books, but this ended in futility. Still, writing felt fun. Story ideas unraveled addictively, especially around 3 am, when I'd don slippers and root around for a paper and pen (before I took notes on my iPhone or kept a notebook by my bed) to remember them. Yet, I remained an artist, not a writer.

That changed during my dad's battle with Parkinson's. The stranger-than-life hallucinations and disease-induced mayhem unsettled me to the point where I felt compelled to diffuse the emotional roller coaster with words.

I began a novel and never stopped writing.

As my first draft took shape, I realized that I was a better writer than an artist. Sure, I had a lot to learn, and it would take years of homeschooling and numerous drafts before publication. My gut told me I was on the right track, and writing mentors confirmed my suspicion. I queried agents and publishers, but my first novel wasn't ready. Going through the rejection process is good because you'll hone your work with every refusal. You might not get the high-pitched ding that signals your manuscript is fully baked, but every misstep gets you closer.

My first manuscript, *Chorus of Crows*, didn't get the green light from agents and publishers, but a dream inspired me to write a new book, *The Levitation Game*, and what a journey it's been.

Now, I've started a new novel called *The Savannah Book of Spells*, edited and rewritten *Chorus of Crows*, and am searching for a publisher for the latter. It never gets easier. My books might not levitate up the charts. But it's my life's purpose. I feel it in my heart and soul.

Discover more at <https://sharonwagnerbooks.com/>



CRITIQUE GROUP UPDATE by Kim Crumrine

One of the best things about being a member of Women Who Write is being part of a critique group. "Writing for Kids", "Spiritual Writing", "Writing to the Beats" and "Just Write" are just some of our critique groups and there's always the opportunity to form a brand new one.

The benefits of a being in a critique group are many. You will be among supportive people who are passionate about their own writing and about helping others write. Feedback is so important, and having another pair of eyes look at your words can make a huge difference. Constructive criticism helps us grow as writers and shapes our work for the better. And here's another "best": It can be a wonderful social outlet and an opportunity to make lifelong friends.

There are a few critique groups that have recently been started or need a little help getting off the ground. Please feel free to reach out for more information on joining and/or helping:

"Constant Novelists" Contact Joan Heleine at jghhel@aol.com

"Mystery Writing/Thrillers" Contact Michelle Moallem at michelle.moallem@gmail.com

"Playing With Poetry" and a new **"Childrens' Writing"** Contact Laura Daniels at laura_daniels_117@hotmail.com

"Memoir Writing" Contact JoAnn Jackovino at joannjackovino@gmail.com

If you have any general questions about critique groups or you have an idea for a new one, please email me at kimcrumrine@comcast.net.

OPEN MIC AT CAFE METRO *an excerpt from "Confessional" by Dana Punzo*

Stories of adventures, missteps, life lessons learned the hard way.

It was the usual crowd of artist types.

Dark rimmed glasses, and few funky pairs peering over held up smart phones, self-published books, or pieces of paper.

Words rolling off each other, tumbling around the cafe originating from our souls, and tucked in places deeper, or not so much.

Art is art, and creative expression can just be.

We listened to unique voices in flavored tones, moods, cadences and since I am a visual person, I enjoyed everybody making their way to the small space in the cafe to read their original poetry or prose.

She rose unexpectedly in the back of room... and announced in a clear steady tone that she wanted to speak right then, and so she moved to the front of the room and took the mic into her hands with what appeared to be excitement to confess something rather than read.

...she told her own story in the most natural way, and we, curious, breathed deeper with and for her, while some of us held our breath. There was a change in the polite silence in the air around us...

I could feel us all exhale more and more in a tender rhythm, and some of us started to nibble on house made desserts, sip coffee, and wine again. She thanks us in a gentle, relieved way, and looked around for who to hand the mic. I think I came over and smiled, and went back to announcing the next reader.

Sometimes, actions speak, and readers need to just listen more.

