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Lisa Montanaro Writes

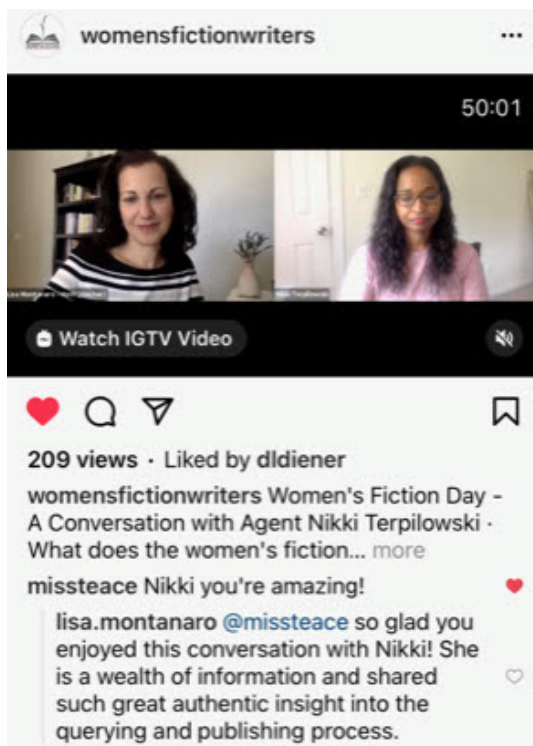


Ciao!

I hope you're enjoying a good summer. Mine has been a great combination of personal, professional, and writing.

On the personal front, my 20-year-old niece finally came to visit after two years of not seeing her. She typically visits every summer and we missed last year due to the pandemic. She came for a week in June and we enjoyed all that Northern California has to offer, taking her to the ocean, mountains, and nearby lakes. Right after she left, my husband and I went on our first vacation since fall 2019. We rented a cabin near Donner Lake and the charming town of Truckee, outside of beautiful Lake Tahoe. We enjoyed the great outdoors with swimming, stand-up paddleboarding, cycling, and hiking, and playtime with our rescue dog who tagged along. My time off filled my creative well and allowed me to come back to my writing with renewed vigor. **Check out my thoughts on taking a break under Writing Reflections below.**





On the professional side, I've been enjoying coaching with clients, including some fabulous writers. We've worked on branding, book launch plans, marketing, publishing decisions, and productivity. On June 8th, I conducted an online workshop for hundreds of writers who were attending the Jericho Writers Summer Festival of Writing out of Great Britain (but alas, it was virtual this year due to the pandemic). My topic was *The Brand Called You: Personal & Professional Branding for Authors*. I loved sharing practical and powerful content on one of my favorite topics!

I also had the pleasure of interviewing literary agent Nikki Terpilowski of Holloway Literary on Women's Fiction Day and picked her brain about the publishing industry, finding an agent, and lots of other juicy topics. She shared some golden nuggets for sure. I hopefully will have a handy link for you to watch that interview in

the future if you're interested. For now, you should be able to access it on the Women's Fiction Writers Association Instagram account by scrolling down until you [see this image of our faces](#).

On the writing side, I got back to my manuscript for what I hope will be the last round of deep-level revisions. To further things along, I booked a virtual writer retreat in July with my long-time writing partner, Ann, who lives in Minnesota. What a productive weekend! We did brainstorming sessions via Zoom, then both sat with butts in chair for many hours working on our manuscripts and checking in on progress. If you can't meet up with a writer pal in person (due to logistics, distance or the pandemic), I highly recommend a virtual writer retreat! I am continuing to make progress on my revisions and hope to be finished by September. Crossing my fingers! I also was able to meet some writer friends for an in-person gathering in San Francisco (we are all vaccinated thankfully). What a treat!



I also had several freelance articles published for The Bike Campaign, a non-profit that promotes bike riding as a form of exercise, environmentalism, and transportation. My most recent one was *Women on Wheels: Fun and Empowerment Rolled into One*. Check out the [Freelance Writing page](#) of my website for links to the articles.

Enjoy the rest of the summer. Happy reading, happy writing, and stay safe.

Cheers!



Upcoming Webinar:

The Power of the Author Newsletter: Building Your Mailing List to Stay Connected to Readers

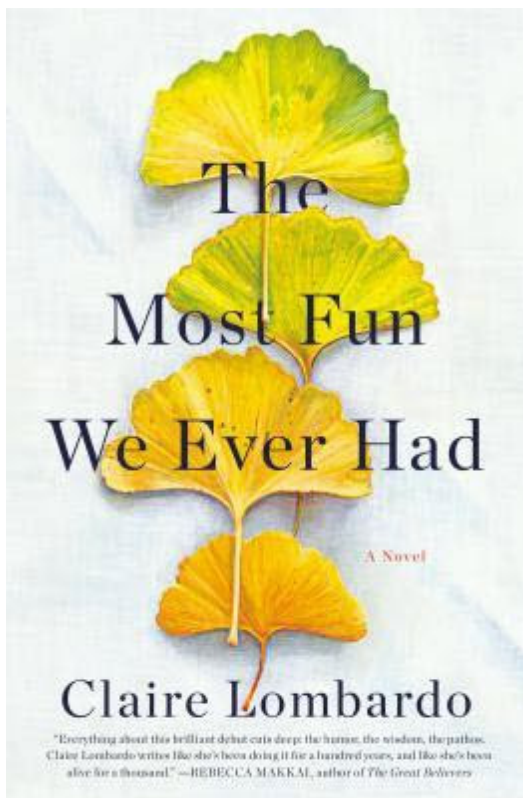
Presented by Lisa Montanaro

Thurs, Sept 16th, 4 pm PT/7 pm ET

I'm so looking forward to presenting this webinar! Not yet a WFWA member? Consider joining a fabulous organization that offers fantastic value. All webinars are free for members and recorded to watch at your leisure in the future.

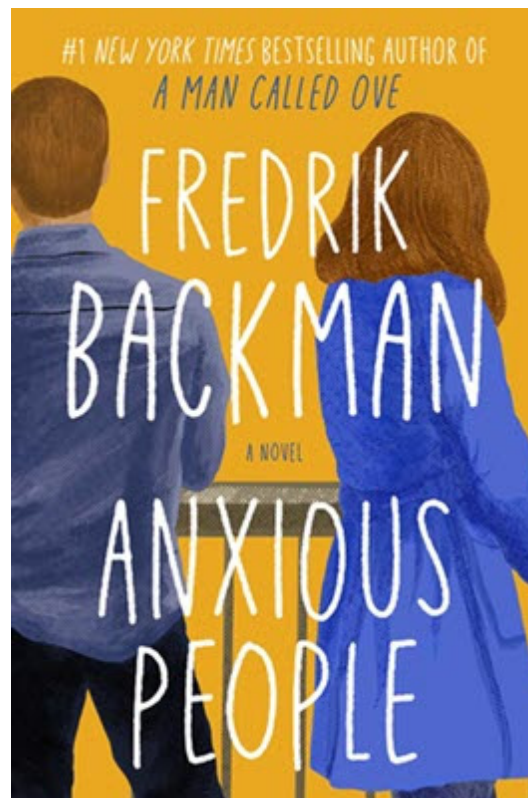
[Details & Registration](#)

Reading Recommendations



The Most Fun We Ever Had

by Claire Lombardo



Anxious People

by Fredrick Backman

This is my kind of book! A multi-generational family drama spanning decades with 7 point of view characters that places you squarely in the middle of the chaos of their lives and never lets you go...

[Read More](#)

Oh my god, this book! It's so freaking good. Backman is definitely one of my all-time favorite authors. Every book of his that I read, I am blown away. This one is quirky (as all of his books are), clever, philosophical, emotional...

[Read More](#)

Writing Reflections

La Dolce Far Niente



The Italians have a phrase that I've always loved: *La Dolce Far Niente* — the sweetness of doing nothing. It refers to the pastime of languishing happily, letting the world pass by while you relax, savor, and soak it in. It sounds so decadent. And most of us crave it, but don't always let ourselves enjoy it. I'm just as guilty as the next person. As a productivity consultant by training, I pride myself on getting a lot done. I track my project and task management in my Asana app, conquer my email, and honor my appointments. I set writing sessions on my calendar and try to stick to them. But I recognize that if I

don't take time out to "do nothing," I may miss the magic that comes with it.

For many of us, there is a constant push-pull of wanting to do more while knowing that we also need to take time for self-care and to unplug. E.B. White captured that dichotomy when he said, "I arise in the morning torn between a desire to improve (or save) the world and a desire to enjoy (or savor) the world. This makes it hard to plan the day."

As humans, we all need time off to recharge, refresh, and rejuvenate. As creative beings, we often need to take time to fill the "creative well." You can achieve that by moving your body, gardening, experiencing solitude, viewing art, listening to music, reading great books, writing in a journal, or spending time in nature. And you should be able to do that without guilt. Easier said than done for some people, right?

Many of you are probably juggling work, family commitments, creative pursuits, and what I call life administration (adulting takes a lot of energy!). You want to get to your writing (or whatever creative passion project you're pursuing), but often you need a break. My advice is to take it and not feel guilty about it.

For the past year and a half, we've been struggling globally with a pandemic. Some people experienced a surge of productivity in the beginning, getting a ton of projects done and finding renewed energy. Then as the pandemic dragged on and the months passed, that changed for many to a feeling of malaise and languishing. It was at that point that many people needed a break to fill the creative well. Perhaps you're one of them. If so, I hope you allowed yourself that small luxury in the midst of very trying times. I did

marathon writing sessions for months on end, making serious progress on my manuscript. Then I hit a wall and knew I needed to take a page out of my Italian paisanos' advice and take a break. And it was just what I needed! I filled that creative well and came back with a renewed sense of purpose for finishing my manuscript. Now I'm back at revisions and my sessions are productive and enjoyable again.

There's a difference between taking a much-needed break to fill the creative well, and procrastination or avoidance. Recognize the difference. If you genuinely need a break, try to honor that. Pick a date to get back to your writing and then give yourself the freedom of the sweetness of doing nothing — whatever that looks like for you.

Coaching Corner

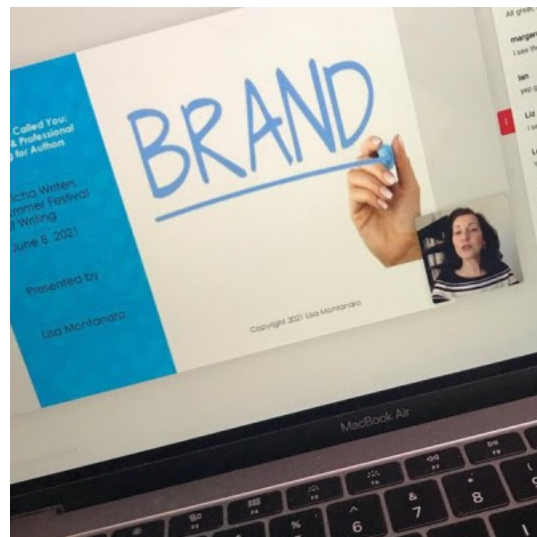
Repeat After Me: Branding Before Marketing

Recently, I presented a webinar for The Jericho Writers Summer Festival of Writing. My topic was ***The Brand Called You: Personal and Professional Branding for Authors***. I love this topic! I've been presenting it for years—to entrepreneurs, employees, organizations, and yes, writers.

I think the reason I like it so much is that it is holistic when done well. An Author Brand is made up of your Personal Brand (who you are and what makes you uniquely you) and your Writer Brand (what you write). You should figure out your brand before you start marketing. Personal branding for writers is different than Author Platform. It's when you peel back the layers of the onion to get to who you are underneath before you start layering things on top of it.

In my opinion, a lot of writers make the mistake of starting with marketing but they don't really know who they are as a writer yet. So I like to focus on branding first and then the marketing. I think a lot of times when people talk about Author Platform, they're jumping the gun and going straight to the marketing without focusing on the underlying branding. Writer branding is really deeper -- it's the core of who you are and how you show up in the world. Think of it as the through line that goes through all of your writing and books and the way you show up in the writing community. Do yourself a favor and go internal before you go external!

If you need help, I've got you covered. [Reach out for a coaching session](#) and we will peel back the layers of your branding onion together.



Need Some Writer Coaching?