



Vol. 2, No. 28, July 10, 2020

In this issue:

- Short Story vs. Novels
- Author Spotlight: Gini Grossenbacher
- Reading Roundup: Books from the 1930s

## From the Editor

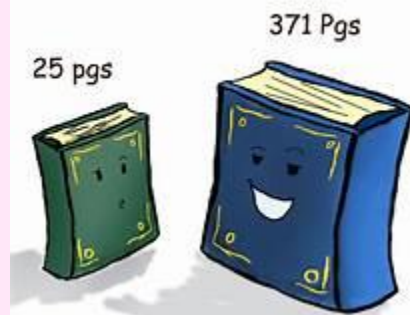
Madams are in our spotlight today – that is Madam’s from the days of long ago, the 1800s as we talk to Gini Grossenbacher who brings two courageous women to life in the pages of her books. What’s even better is that her book *Madam in Silk* is inspired by a true story of a strong and fascinating woman from so long ago. Keep reading to find out more that Gini shares with us today.

This week’s article has worked its way up to ‘S’ – so we’re talking a little bit about the difference between short stories and novels. There’s more differences than just the length between the two.

Stay tuned for future issues –In the weeks ahead we have author interviews scheduled with Pamela Nowak, Chris Karlsen, Joyce E.S. Pyka, Linda Ulleseit, Chrystyna Lucyk-Berger, Christina Baker Kline and more!

*Trisha*

[texastrishafaye@yahoo.com](mailto:texastrishafaye@yahoo.com)



**[Get Pages of the Past delivered to your inbox every Friday!](#)**

Join us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/184527085517941/>

## Short Stories versus Novels

Short stories versus novels. What's the difference? It seems that it's obvious. One is short. The other is ... not. One takes a short time to read. The other takes longer. So – what else is there to write about?

**LENGTH:** The length of the story is, of course, the most obvious. Short stories can be anywhere from 500-1,000-2,000 words, and often as much as 5,000-30,000 words. They are usually read in a single sitting. While novels or novellas can run anywhere from 30,000 words to 100,000+, meant to be read over several, or many readings.

But with these length differences, come a few other factors to know about before writing one or the other.

**PLOT:** A short story, because of its brevity, will only have one major plot and possibly a minor subplot. While a novel will contain a complex main plot, along with many subplots.

**CHARACTERIZATION:** A short story will focus on only one or two characters while novels have the length and depth to be able to focus on many multiple characters.

**TIME PERIOD:** Short stories generally only covers a very short time period. Novels can cover short periods of time also, but usually their timelines will cover a much longer period of time, sometimes even several generations.

So, which should an author concentrate on? Most authors write both novels and short stories. Sometimes the deciding factor is to go in the direction the inspiring thought leads. But sometimes one form or the other helps focus on the end product.

For instance, if I have an idea for a storyline, but I'm not sure if there's enough depth to turn this idea into a novel, I can start with a short story to see where it goes. This gives me room to play around with plot and characters and determine if there's enough 'meat' to turn the idea into a full novel. If I play around with an idea and have more plots and characters working their way into my short story, there may be enough to develop it into a larger work. Conversely, sometimes within a few thousand words I've exhausted the idea and it peters out with only this short work being the end product.

Sometimes your decision to go with a short story or a novel is determined by the author's commitment of available time and energy. A novel can take a year – or many years – to complete and publish. As *Writer's Digest* wrote in '[Should You Write a Novel or Short Story?](#)' – "Writing a novel could take a year or more, and whether you publish it or not, it's a huge investment of time, energy, and mental and emotional strength."

If you don't have enough of any of the above to spare for that length of time, a short story might be the perfect answer, enabling you to write out the story with a minimum of time expended.

***[Get Pages of the Past delivered to your inbox every Friday!](#)***

Join us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/184527085517941/>

## Author Spotlight: Gini Grossenbacher

Today we're pleased to introduce you to a fascinating author, Gini Grossenbacher. Gini chats with us this week about her two books, *Madam of My Heart* and *Madam in Silk*. I doubt you'll find anything lacking on the research or the writing and if you like historical fiction, I think you'll enjoy these. Join us today, grab a cup of tea, and come see some of the tidbits that Gini shares with us about her historical fiction writing journey.



**Hello Gini. Welcome to Pages of the Past. Today we're chatting with you about your books – *Madam of My Heart* and *Madam in Silk*. Both are set in 1849 and the 1850s. Both main characters are affiliated with brothels in their cities. Both women seem to be strong women that prevail through many hardships. Yet each tale appears to be different. Even though both books are set in 1849-1856, did you find that the settings of San Francisco and Baltimore affected the stories differently?**

Though each book features nautical scenes appropriate to seaside cities, each of those places have unique characteristics that influence the characters. Baltimore's inner harbor is the first of three settings for *Madam of My Heart* and

Brianna's house lies within the Fells Point neighborhood facing the Inner Harbor known for its clipper ships. I set some of the early scenes in the Admiral Fell Inn which is today a grand hotel established in the 1700s and first known as a boarding house and mission. From the old world to the new—that is Brianna's path as she journeys to the woolly, lawless world of San Francisco in the mid-1850s.

The prequel, *Madam in Silk*, shows gold rush San Francisco at its inception in 1849 when it largely consisted of tent buildings constructed on grassy hillsides surrounding the bay filled with empty clipper ships, their crews having fled to the gold hills. Our protagonist, Ah Toy, resides in a shanty amidst the new street grid later called Chinatown. The bay and its shipping features largely in the plot since not only does Ah Toy take refuge on Telegraph Hill overlooking the bay in order to find peace outside the chaotic city, but she also witnesses the growth of the town as its harbor expands with countless piers that stretch out into the bay, welcoming ships from all over the world.

**Your first book, *Madam of My Heart*, has been garnering quite a few awards. Congratulations! How did you decide on your storyline for this first book?**

I patterned the storyline on the tales I found based on the life of Arabella Ryan, later called "Belle" who married the gambler Charles Cora. She became a successful gold rush era madam in San Francisco in the 1850s. I found little trace of her youth in Baltimore, some mention of her in New Orleans, and a fairly

complete story of her in San Francisco. I read between the lines in order to amplify several issues: the position of women; antebellum slavery; New Orleans Voodoo, and the role of the Chinese in America's cultural fabric.

**You've shared that *Madam in Silk* is inspired by a true story. Can you tell us a bit about how you came across this fascinating tidbit and how it turned into a tale you had to tell?**

Ah Toy is a woman of legend, written about in several gold rush profiles and nicknamed "The Girl in the Green Silk Pantaloons." She came to San Francisco from Canton in 1848, and records say she was a twenty-year-old prostitute. In order to weave in cultural depth, I created her backstory as a widow of a porcelain merchant. We know that she was the first Chinese woman to arrive and that she established a "lookee" parlor where sailors and miners would come to see her exotic beauty. My goal was to tap the love story between her and John Clark who was a policeman on her beat. Another goal was to show her character in light of the many conflicts ripening in the new city: anti-immigration sentiments, the rise of the Vigilantes, and the lowly status of Chinese-born women in that society.

**I read that you've done in-place literary and historical research across five continents. You mentioned Bangkok, Kyoto, Singapore, London, Paris, Rome, and many more places. This gal that's never been out of the US is envious. How has been in actual physical locales affected the research you've done for your books?**

Travel has always been a value for me, something I was willing to save for. I spent my twenties as a travel agent in Sacramento, and as such I was able to go to Asia and Europe on discounted fares. I also spent two years as part of college and post-graduate programs in Italy where I met my first husband. Then I taught high school English in California to very diverse populations from all over the world. People say, "Write what you know," so I guess having gone a lot of different places gives me a strong sense of cultural similarities and differences across our world. I empathize with the various cultures I write about in my stories, and my goal is to present them with reverence and respect.

**What are you writing at the moment?**

I have two literary projects going right now. I'm compiling and publishing a chapbook of poems (as yet untitled) at the end of 2020. I've been writing poetry for thirty years as a creative writing teacher, so I have quite a collection which my editor in Chicago is helping me refine. I'm also writing the sequel to *Madam of My Heart*, called *Madam in Lace* which features Celeste, the French prostitute readers will remember from the first novel. The novel opens in 1857 Paris where Celeste is searching for her mother, a former madam, who has vanished. She seeks and receives help from a band of Italian revolutionaries, one of whom captures her heart. That will come out late in 2021.

**Thank you for joining us today, Gini. We appreciate your time and look forward to reading your books. Please leave a few links where our readers can find you and your books and we'll go follow and friend you.**



**You can find Gini's books here:**

**Madam in Silk:** <https://www.amazon.com/gp/offer-listing/0998380652/>

**Madam of My Heart:** <https://www.amazon.com/Madam-My-Heart-Redemption-American/dp/0998380601/>

**You can find Gini here:**

<http://www.ginigrossenbacher.com/>

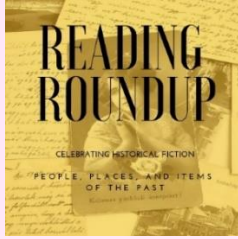
<https://www.facebook.com/ginigrossenbacherauthor>

<https://twitter.com/ggrossenbacher>

Gini Grossenbacher writes historical fiction with a blend of romance, mystery, and spiritual elements. Her work reflects her fascination with hidden women's histories, dazzling intercultural communities, and strong sisterhoods. She pulls heart strings, raises eyebrows, and embeds tidbits of tantalizing history in her American Madams Series. Gini holds a B.A. cum laude in English from Lewis and Clark College, Portland, Oregon, a Masters in Education from LaVerne University, Los Angeles, and has completed post-graduate coursework in editing from UC San Diego. Her love of literature and history featured prominently in her twenty-seven-year high school English teaching career, and she continues to collaborate with the group she founded in 2013, Elk Grove Writers & Artists.

***[Get Pages of the Past delivered to your inbox every Friday!](#)***

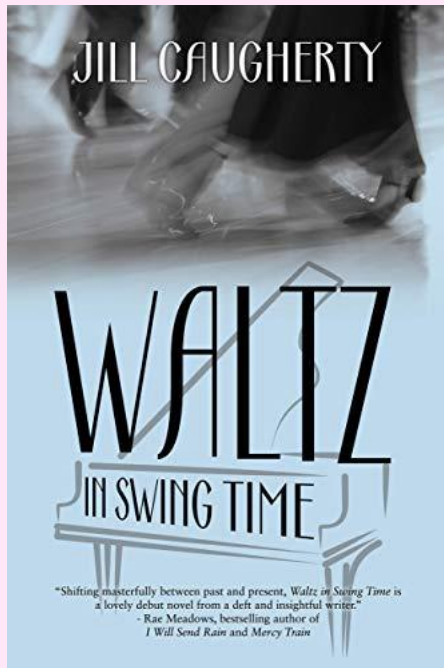
Join us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/184527085517941/>



## The 1930s

### Waltz in Swing Time

**Jill Caugherty**



Growing up in a strict Utah farm family during the Great Depression, Irene Larsen copes with her family's hardship by playing piano. Even after an unthinkable tragedy strikes, Irene clings to her dream of becoming a musician. When a neighbor's farm is foreclosed, Irene's brother marries the neighbor's daughter, who moves in with the Larsens and coaches Irene into winning leading roles in musicals. Clashing with her mother, who dismisses her ambition as a waste of time and urges her to become a farmer's wife, Irene leaves home.

During a summer gig at Zion National Park, where Irene sings in a variety show for Depression-weary tourists, she meets professional dancer Spike, a maverick who might be her ticket to a musical career. But ultimately she must decide whether pursuing her dream justifies its steep price: losing her home and family.

Alternating between Irene's ninetieth year in 2006 at an assisted living home and her coming-of-age in the thirties, *Waltz in Swing Time* is a poignant tale of mother-daughter relationships, finding hope amidst loss, and forging an independent path, against all odds.

**[Get Pages of the Past delivered to your inbox every Friday!](#)**

Join us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/184527085517941/>