

Write Angles



THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE BERKELEY BRANCH OF THE CALIFORNIA WRITERS CLUB

President's Message

On Meetings and Elections...

-Tanya Grove

First, I want to take a moment to promote what I consider to be the *heart* of our club—our monthly meeting.

I'm surprised that more members *don't* come to meetings. I know we all have busy lives, and I understand that a few of our members live out of the area or have mobility issues. But when less than half of our membership shows up on the third Sunday of the month, it makes me wonder.

It is the only regularly scheduled event where *all* members and guests are welcome. It's a time when we can talk with each other over coffee about our current writing projects. It's where we hear firsthand about what's going on in the club. It's a chance to enjoy our own members read aloud and inquire about their writing process or their journey to publication. On top of all that, we learn from our featured speakers, who are experts in writing and publishing. They provide valuable information, tell us marvelous stories, and answer our questions. And all of this is **free!** If *you* are a member who rarely joins us at these wonderful gatherings, I'd love to know *why* and also what might entice you to come. Write me at berkeley-cwc@gmail.com.

OR

It's been a whirlwind, I must say. I have only four months left in my two-year stint as president of the Berkeley branch. In May, we'll have elections, and in June, I will hand over my duties to...well, that's the \$64,000 question, isn't it?

CWC relies on its members. With a membership close to a hundred, one would think that there are plenty of hands to keep the club running smoothly. But there is so much to do, and the board that once had *seven* vice presidents has shrunk to only a few, who are still trying to cover all the bases. And because vital positions remain open, it falls to hardworking members who have *already* contributed generously to pick up the slack. This makes for a weary board. And while consistency is helpful, fresh energy is vital to any organization.

And that is why I am sounding the alarm: WE NEED YOU and we need you NOW!

For many of our current board members, it is either the case that their terms end this June, or they've already ended, but they have stayed on as acting board members because *someone* has to do it.

The March and April issues of *Write Angles* will provide job descriptions so that members know what the positions entail. Then it will be up to you, dear members, to run for the position that best suits *you*. (*Cue patriotic music.*)



February 2014

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Upcoming Events

2/16 Meeting – Speaker:
Mary-Rose Hayes

3/16 Meeting
Critique Group Forum

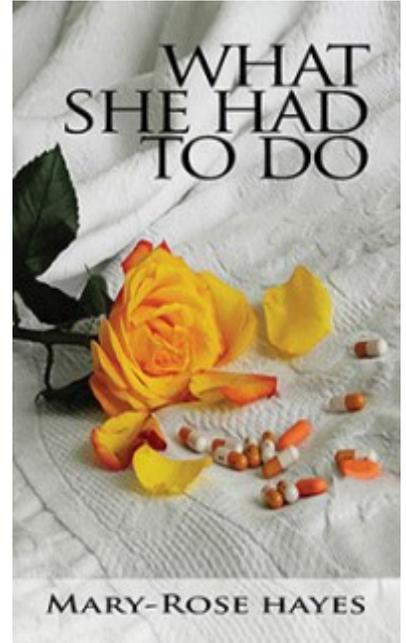


*February Speaker***CWC Member a Jill-of-all-genres**

–David Baker

Mother's beautiful topaz eyes, the bright window and the rosy wallpaper swirl together and fade into darkness; I wake disoriented, the phone is ringing, the glaring green numerals on the clock radio say 3:00 and an English-accented stranger is telling me how Mother has been found unconscious on the kitchen floor and I must come home at once.

In this scene from *What She Had to Do* by British-born Mary-Rose Hayes, the protagonist dreams she's a child again and wakes to discover that her mother is dying. She leaves behind her husband, college-age daughter, and San Francisco advertising job and returns to England, intending to offer care and comfort. But she is determined also to uncover the secret haunting the imperious, destructive woman she rejected years ago. We are eager to see what will happen when she crosses the Atlantic and plays her part in what *Kirkus Reviews* calls "an enthralling, well-written family novel."



But we should not conclude that Hayes, our featured speaker for the February 16 meeting, works only in a single category. The genres of the eight other novels she has written include suspense, horror, and erotic adventure. *A Time to Run* and *Blind Trust* are political thrillers she coauthored with Senator Barbara Boxer. Hayes has also published short stories and poetry in England and the United States, and has written and optioned several screenplays, including an original vehicle for Lana Turner. Her novel *Amethyst* (E.P. Dutton, 1991) was chosen as a *Time/Life* bestseller consideration. She has been a script editor for Thames Television, London, a travel correspondent in Tripoli, and a librarian in Londonderry.

With such a broad range of experience, Hayes is ideal as a literary guide. Among the questions we might ask her are: What happens to style when you shift from one genre to another? To what extent is coauthoring a division of labor? What did you do when E.P. Dutton told you to rewrite your novel to reflect the new title (*Amethyst*) they wanted? The answers to these and many other writing questions await us at the February meeting.

Calling for Personal Narratives

I thought it might be a nice change to feature different genres in the next few *Write Angles*. I generally ask for submissions that focus on either writing or publishing. And this past fall, I asked for poetry too. But for the March issue, I'm asking members to send in short personal narratives that look back in some way—a childhood memory, a regret, an event that turned out to be a turning point, or a person from your past.

Submissions should be Word docs no longer than 350 words with no special formatting and arrive in my inbox (writeangles@gmail.com) no later than Saturday, February 15. I'll select the best one or two to print in the March issue.

You *know* you have hundreds of stories to tell from your past. Write one of them down!

Tanya Grove, editor



Poetry Page

EDITOR'S NOTE: Twenty fourteen marks the centenary of the beginning of World War I. The Poetry Page is commemorating this event by featuring a series of World War I poets, British soldiers who expressed their feelings on the war through verse. The first two are featured below.

Siegfried Sassoon (1886-1967) was born in England of a Jewish father and Anglo-Catholic mother. His father, Alfred, was a member of the famous Baghdadi Jewish family and was disowned for marrying outside the Jewish faith. Sassoon's father was thus unable to inherit any of his family's vast fortune. Despite this, Sassoon was able to attend college prep school and Cambridge.

Sassoon left Cambridge without taking a degree and enlisted in the British Army at the war's outbreak. His experiences at the Western Front left him not only disillusioned with warfare itself, but shell-shocked as well. He was treated at a hospital in Scotland for what is now known as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Sassoon became a journalist and novelist after the war, making the acquaintance of such literary notables as E. M. Forester. He converted to Roman Catholicism towards the end of his life and is buried near the priest who inspired him.

Rupert Brooke (1887–1915) was the most symbolic of the loss of life and talent brought on by WW I. Born to the headmaster of the Rugby School, he excelled in both athletics and academics and showed an interest in poetry at an early age. He won a poetry prize while a student at Rugby School and later entered King's College, Cambridge. It was at Cambridge that he developed friendships with both literary and political figures, including Virginia Woolf and Winston Churchill.

Brooke enlisted in the British Army in 1914. He died of blood poisoning from a mosquito bite while on his way to Gallipoli in 1915 and is buried on the island of Skyros in the Aegean Sea.

"The Soldier" is the fifth sonnet in his *Sonnet Sequence 1914*, and its tone is more sentimental relative to that of Siegfried Sassoon and the other War Poets. In reading this poem, one can see that his influences were the Romantic Poets such as Keats and Shelley, rather than the grim realities of war.

THE DUG-OUT

Why do you lie with your legs ungainly huddled.
 And one arm bent across your sullen, cold,
 Exhausted face? It hurts my heart to watch you
 deep-shadow'd from the candle's guttering gold;
 And you wonder why I shake you by the shoulder;
 Drowsy, you mumble and sigh and turn your head...
 You are too young to fall asleep forever;
 And when you sleep you remind me of the dead.

Copyright 1918, 1921 by Siegfried Sassoon

"The Dug-Out," written in 1918, captures one of Sassoon's wartime experiences with haunting eloquence. Its frightening honesty coupled with the poet's attempt to make order of the chaos that was the war marks the beginning of Modernism in poetry.

V: THE SOLDIER

If I should die, think only this of me;
 That there's some corner of a foreign field
 That is forever England. There shall be
 In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
 A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
 Gave once her flowers to love; her ways to roam,
 A body of England's; breathing English air,
 Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home...

Copyright 1915 by Rupert Brooke

Book Review

Tragic Tale of Post-Katrina Motherhood

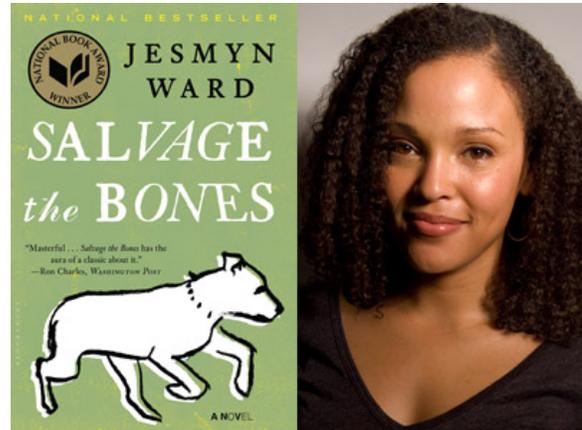
Salvage the Bones by Jesmyn Ward
- Reviewed by John Q. McDonald

People still suffer from hurricane Katrina, which laid waste to a wide swath of the Gulf coastline and to the city of New Orleans. It was inevitable that literature would spring from that storm. The dreamlike movie *Beasts of the Southern Wild* brought to life the damp, impoverished landscape so deeply scarred by Katrina. Ward's highly visual novel will remind the reader of that movie. But this story touches on more broadly sympathetic themes.

Esch is a teenaged girl who lives with three brothers and a widowed father on a run-down patch of land they call The Pit. As the story opens, middle brother Skeetah is helping his fighting pit bull China give birth to her first litter of puppies. It is a searingly vivid scene and sets the unflinching tone of the rest of the book.

It is a sultry summer in the Bois Sauvage. Esch's father monitors the approach of a new hurricane, and he is anxious to prepare. Elder brother Randall is hoping to enter a basketball program, and youngest brother Junior tags along with irrepressible curiosity. Esch watches her world with passion. She is reading the ancient story of Medea and views the behavior of the boys around her through a filter of brutalized motherhood.

The idea of motherhood runs through the story. China births her struggling puppies. The kids miss



their beloved mother. Esch is intimate with boys from school, holding them with passion and appreciation for their tightly knotted muscles shining with sweat. Ward's descriptions are full of powerful simile. Her characters have an earthy passion that feels thick and layered. The storm arrives, but not before dramatic episodes batter each of these characters, including the dog, in their turn. The storm itself is almost improbably disastrous.

A story so wet, tragic and vividly described as this one will, of course, draw comparisons to Faulkner, especially his story "Old Man." Ward approaches his saturated imagery, and at points exceeds his ability to bring certain kinds of people and events to life.

We hesitate to predict whether a book may last through time, but this book has the rich and timeless quality that gives it potential to endure. Highly recommended.

Central Board News

Agenda Highlights of CWC-Central Board January 2014 Meeting

- Linda Brown

The Central Board met on January 26 in Oakland, too late to report on for this issue of *Write Angles*. I'll report on it in the March issue. Meanwhile, here are agenda highlights:

- *The Bulletin*
- *Literary Review*
- Results of Branch-Needs Survey*
- Membership Category Review
- New webmaster for www.calwriters.org and new role
- CWC member benefits (over and beyond what's offered by each branch)
- Updates on Club insurance, *Publishing Pathways*, and Friends of Joaquin Miller Park

* I made three recommendations: 1) a CB Planning Retreat because I believe planning helps save time and ensures better coordination over time; 2) review of membership categories and standards plus creation of a Club-wide membership application; and 3) report on all the branch suggestions, since some suggestions will be discussed during the months ahead on the CB's electronic forum.



Open Mic at CWC Redwood a Great Experience

- Jing Li

On Saturday, December 28, 2013, I drove from my San Francisco home to attend the 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Open Mic reading at SoCo Coffee, 1015 Fourth St., Santa Rosa, hosted by Robin and Abby from the CWC Redwood Branch.

The event was free for readers and audience, but everyone was encouraged to purchase something, a coffee or salad, to show appreciation for SoCo's generous offering of their restaurant space. A good move on both sides—the Open Mic obtained a stage, and SoCo Coffee had extra customers during the slow afternoon hours.

It turned out to be a crowded day, with thirty-six people attending, including me and the eleven other readers who shared the microphone. With the warm afternoon sun pouring in through the big glass windows, the atmosphere was cozy, relaxing, and reader-friendly.

Sign-up started at 1:30 p.m., first come, first served, with five minutes to be allotted per person. Two featured readers began the program. A college instructor/musician read his work and then sang songs in Spanish and English to his own guitar accompaniment. An editor read about the unlikely but happy marriage of her parents in the 1930s. After a ten-minute break, writers who had signed up read their pieces, three from their published books—novels and poetry—the rest of us from our manuscript papers. Most readers complied with the



five-minute-per-person rule. A few did go over the time limit but were forgiven.

All genres were presented. It eased my own nervousness seeing some seasoned writers and editors appear to be a little nervous. I admired one reader who asked the audience to forgive him for his shaking hands because he had Parkinson's. Although most in the audience were middle- and post middle-aged, a few young faces in their twenties and thirties were there.

I enjoyed the inspiring experience of having my writer's voice heard and confirmed by an enthusiastic audience. It felt good after facing the silent words on the sound-less computer screen day in and day out. Judging by the explosion of hearty applause for my reading and people coming by to tell me they enjoyed my story, I can predict that my writing does bear a marketable potential.

I also liked the five-minute-per-person rule because it helped me keep in mind the principle of "Brevity is the essence of writing." It gave me the incentive to edit my writing over and over because I wanted to tell more in fewer words.

I plan to go back again on the fourth Saturday of each month, the regular scheduled Open Mic dates.

(See also Member News on p. 7.)

You fail only if you stop writing.

- Ray Bradbury

SBW Hosts New Night

Grammar Diva to Hone Writing Skills

South Bay Writers is meeting on a new night. The club will now meet the 2nd Monday of every month, beginning in February. We're still at Harry's Hofbrau at 390 Saratoga Avenue from 6 pm-9 pm, but the new night is less noisy and less crowded on the cafeteria line.

On February 10, author Arlene Miller, aka "The Grammar Diva," will help us sharpen our grammar skills. She will review the latest rules in grammar, as well as outline the primary grammar differences in fiction and nonfiction writing. Sharpen your No. 2 pencil! We'll be taking a grammar quiz to test our knowledge. Cost is \$15 (including \$10 for meal). www.southbaywriters.com



Volunteer Corner

Taking Stock

- Madelen Lontiong

The beginning of the year is a time for taking stock and taking inventory. People in the retail industry know this well. Before retailers can stock their stores with new merchandise, they must clear out their existing inventory. They catalogue what they have and what they need so they can order new merchandise. It's a good system that allows buyers to determine what products sold well in the previous year, what didn't sell, what to reorder, what to discontinue. Taking inventory gives a business a clear picture of what's working, what isn't, and what changes need to be made.

If we apply this system of taking inventory to our branch of the California Writers Club, what do we find? Our club is 104 years old, one of the oldest writing clubs in the country. Our membership writes in many genres: novels, plays, suspense, fantasy, historical fiction, science fiction, romance, young adult, picture books, westerns, cartoons, blogs, memoirs, technical writing, journalism, essays, music, and poetry. We don't just *claim* to write, we're *writing*. Some of us publish online or self-publish; some publish through traditional publishing houses.

We have volunteers who perform a variety of tasks to help keep the club afloat and operating smoothly. We have club officers—required for all branches—as well as members who provide marketing support, mentor each other, welcome newcomers, arrange speakers, bring supplies, and offer practical support at meetings. This shelf has dwindling supplies and some bare spots. Here is what our inventory of volunteer shelves looks like:

President - stocked shelf until June 2014
 Vice President - stocked shelf until June 2014
 Treasurer - stocked shelf until June 2014
 Secretary - bare shelf
 Delegate Central Board - stocked shelf
 Delegate NORCAL - stocked shelf
 Publication Pathways Mentor - bare shelf
 Membership Chair - bare shelf
 New Member Orientation - stocked shelf
 Volunteer Recognition - stocked shelf
 Nominating Committee - bare shelf



Communications & PR - bare shelf
 Write Angles Editor - stocked shelf
 Copyeditor - stocked shelf until ?
 Technology Advisor - stocked shelf
 Web Master - stocked shelf
 Social Media - stocked shelf

Programs

Speaker Chair - stocked shelf until June 2014
 Workshop Chair - bare shelf
 Fifth-Grade Story Contest - bare shelf
 Write On! Contest - bare shelf
 Book Raffle - stocked shelf

Social

Holiday Luncheon - stocked shelf
 Hangin' Out with Writers - bare shelf

Marketing

Marketing of Writers Chair - bare shelf
 Marketing Education - stocked shelf
 Member Readings - bare shelf
 Marketing Success Group - stocked shelf

Critique Groups

5-Page Support/Critique Group - stocked shelf
 Novelists - stocked shelf
 16 Eyes - stocked shelf
 Kiddie Lit-ers - bare shelf
 Middle Grade/YA - stocked shelf

The question for our branch: now that we've assessed our inventory, what will we do with our bare shelves?

The Berkeley Branch meets on the third Sunday of each month (except July, August, and December) at 2:00 p.m. in the Bradley C. Walters Community Room of the Main Library in Oakland at 125 14th Street ([View Map](#)).

Enter on Madison Street.

Free street parking is available, and it is a short walk from the Lake Merritt BART station.



Tidbit

RIP Berkeley Post Office, CWC-CB P.O. Box

– Linda Brown

Despite continuing protests, the United States Postal Service plans to close its historic main post office in Berkeley. Your CWC-Central Board (CB) has been tracking developments because its mail address has been at this post office for years. Who knows, maybe the Berkeley Branch first rented a PO Box at this location before the Central Board was formed?

With notice of the closure and since the CB receives mostly government and insurance mail, the CWC-CB moved its

mail drop to a new location near new CB president David George (Mt. Diablo) and Treasurer Sharon Svitak (Tri-Valley). The new snail mail address for your Central Board is

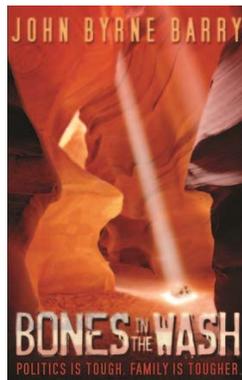
California Writers Club
P.O. Box 201
Danville, CA 94526
The PO Box for the
Berkeley Branch
remains the same at

Berkeley Branch
California Writers Club
P. O. Box 11269,
Oakland, CA 94611



Member News

John Byrne Barry has recently published [Bones in the Wash: Politics Is Tough. Family Is Tougher](#), a political thriller + family soap + murder mystery set during the 2008 presidential election in New Mexico. Available as an ebook or trade paperback.



On February 23 at MoJoe's Café, corner of Blake and Sacramento in Berkeley, John will host a book launch, with readings from the book. 2 pm. bonesinthewash.com

Jing Li's success at the Open Mic reading sponsored by the CWC Redwood Writers has resulted in an invitation to her to be a "Featured Reader" at the 22nd Open Mic at SoCo Coffee, 1015 Fourth St., Santa Rosa, Saturday, March 22, 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. See the story about her first reading on p.5.

Clifford Hui's short story, "Leonard Bessom Hunts for a Present," appeared in *Fiction on the Web*, November 17. <http://www.fictionontheweb.co.uk/2013/11/leonard-bessom-hunts-for-present-by.html>

Judith Newton's food memoir, [Tasting Home](#), which came out with She Writes Press in March 2013, was awarded a starred review in [Publisher's Weekly](#). It has also placed in several contests: London Book Festival, First Place, Autobiography; Independent Publishers, Bronze, Autobiography/Memoir; Hollywood Book Festival, Honorable Mention, Autobiography/Biography; Reader's Favorite, Finalist, Autobiography; and Southern California Book Festival, Honorable Mention, Biography/Autobiography.

Berkeley Branch members are encouraged to send us writing-related news. Please write "Member News" in the subject line and send to Anne at writefox@aol.com no later than the 15th of the month.

Did you know that *Write Angles* is now up on our website?
www.cwc-berkeley.org

And if you've missed past issues, you can find them on Scribd at this link:
<http://www.scribd.com/search?query=cwc.berkeley+Write+Angles>



Marketplace

Charlotte Cook offers story editing, prepublishing services, and workshops for writers of fiction, creative nonfiction, and screenplays. Also available is office/retreat space for classes and meetings. [storyeditor@att.net/](mailto:storyeditor@att.net)

Thomas Burchfield offers editing and proof-reading services for fiction and nonfiction books by CWC Berkeley members. For details, visit his web page, e-mail him at tbdeluxe@sbcglobal.net, or call 510-817-4432.

Anne Fox, *Write Angles* copyeditor, offers copy-editing services for all levels of fiction and non-fiction. References available. writefox@aol.com

Tatjana Greiner offers developmental editing for all genres of fiction and nonfiction. Email her at workshop@mac.com. More information at: <http://tatjanagreinerwordshop.com>.

Berkeley Branch members are welcome to advertise their writing-related services. Please write "Market-place" in the subject line and send to Anne at writefox@aol.com no later than the 15th of the month.

Write Angles

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