



## **President's Message**

### **What Are You Reading?**

When people find out we are writers we receive the same questions: “What are you writing?” or “What have you written?” At our monthly meetings, I ask guests to introduce themselves and tell us about their writing. But a more important question is: “What are you reading?”

In *On Writing*, Stephen King makes his point very clear. “If you want to be a writer, you must do two things above all others: read a lot and write a lot.”

On the website *Open Culture*, Ray Bradbury advised writers on bedtime reading, “Stuff your head. One short story, one poem (Pope, Frost and Shakespeare, not modern “crap”), and one essay. These essays should come from a diversity of fields, including archaeology, zoology, biology, philosophy, politics, and literature.”

Sound advice from two very successful writers who wrote, struggled with rejections and were eventually published. See their secret to success?

They read. A LOT.

If you are reading a book (or several as I do) kudos to you! You’re doing what other successful writers are doing. If you’re not reading, or are between books, pick up something and “stuff your head” as Bradbury so eloquently put it.

Here’s my challenge. When you chat with your writer friends, don’t ask how many words they’ve written. Don’t ask them how many pieces they’ve submitted. Ask, “What are *you* reading? The next time I see you, ask me what I’m reading. And, be prepared to share the name of the book(s) you are reading. **Joan Raymond**

## **July 16, 2016 meeting**

### **July Speaker: Aaron Gansky**



Living with our story or novel’s characters inside our heads is one thing; getting them onto the page to become real to readers can be a struggle. At the July 16 Writers of Kern meeting, award-winning novelist, teacher, and podcast host Aaron Gansky will provide in-depth information on how to develop unforgettable characters. In his lively talk, *Three Pillars of Character Development*, Gansky will show the significance of developing characters’ minds, their physiology and biological history, and their spiritual beliefs.

“My first novel, *The Bargain*, was a finalist for the Selah award largely because of the development of the characters,” he said. In 2015, Gansky’s *The Book of Things to Come*, the first book in his *Hand of Adonai* series, won the Selah Award for YA Fiction. He has written two books on the craft of fiction; *Firsts in Fiction: First Lines* and *Write to Be Heard* (with Diane Sherlock). Gansky also founded the online literary magazine, *The Citron Review*. To learn more about Aaron Gansky and his work, visit [www.aarongansky.com](http://www.aarongansky.com).

Writers of Kern monthly meetings open to the public are held the third Saturday, from 9:30-noon at the Clarion Hotel on Rosedale Highway. Admission is \$5 for members, \$10 for guests. Admission at the door or online at <http://writersofkern.com/meeting-fee/>

# Calendar



## Writers of Kern Meeting Schedule 2016-17

**July 16, 2016**

Aaron Gansky

“Three Pillars of Character Development”

**August 13, 2016**

Molly Jo Realy

“Building Your Social Media Swarm”

**September 17, 2016**

Robert Kimsey

“Intellectual Property Law for Writers

**\*\*\*October 15, 2016\*\*\***

**[note change from previous schedule]**

Barbara Jean Hicks

“The Author-Entrepreneur:  
It's Not Just About Writing”

**November 19, 2016**

Don E. Thompson, Poet Laureate

Poetry Reading and

“Preparing/Publishing a Chapbook”

**December 10, 2016**

Winter Dinner

Hodel's

**January 21, 2017**

Joan Kerr

“Turning Travel Journals into Travel Tales”

**February 11, 2017**

Murder Mystery Dinner

**February 18, 2017**

Mar Preston

“The Mysterious Mystery Marketplace”

## **June 2016 meeting**

The June meeting started with a short writing exercise in which members were asked to spend five 'Museful Moments' writing spontaneously on the topic 'Storage Unit.' Three volunteers read their work aloud, showing the wide range of creative possibilities in the title. Be warned, this exercise will be repeated occasionally in future.

A survey was held to find out members' preferences for a possible change in venue: the meetings are becoming so popular that we are outgrowing the current meeting room. Stay tuned for a decision later in the year.

Reminder: annual membership renewals are due by end of July.

The Board elections were held and existing Board members re-elected with some re-shuffling, Dennis VanderWerff switching to Treasurer and Dan McGuire taking the Vice-President responsibilities. Since Susie Rainbolt has new family responsibilities, Jenny Estes generously stepped up to take over Membership for the time being. Another very welcome volunteer was Gay Chambers, who will train to help out in a variety of roles.

After the break we were treated to Michael Prince's production of 'A Playwright's Process.' He is much more than a mere writer; he also produces and acts in the plays at the Gaslight Melodrama and Music Hall, and his audience-grabbing talents were evident. Six times a year he writes and produces new plays, and three versions of each – as written by himself, ...

*[continued next page]*

# Members



### It's True!

The time to renew your WOK Membership is now! You'll save \$5 a month on meeting fees, be able to participate in one of our outstanding critique groups, and have the opportunity to enter the Fall Writing Contest for cash prizes. Members enjoy additional discounts at all WOK special events, and are invited to the exclusive member-only Winter Dinner. The modest \$45 renewal fee gives you all member benefits now through June 30, 2017.

PLUS—if you renew by July 31, 2016, you'll be automatically entered into a drawing for a \$50 Amazon gift card!

You can renew your membership today online at <http://writersofkern.com/membership>, OR, in person at the upcoming meeting on July 16 OR, you can mail a check to: Writers of Kern, PO Box 22335, Bakersfield CA 93390.

### Welcome Aboard!

Three new members last month:

*Jennifer Keller*

*Elizabeth Atilano*

*Elida "Lee" Stewart*

We all look forward to your active participation in the Writers of Kern activities.

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"The idea is to write it so that people hear it and it slides through the brain and goes straight to the heart." ~ *Maya Angelou*

[June meeting, continued] ... as rehearsed by the actors and as performed before an audience, They evolve! They revolve around character and a developing story rather than a pre-determined plot. He puts them together using a ten-year-old laptop and has no outline to work from, feeling that would detract from the freshness and spontaneity needed to involve the audiences. How did he get into this business? By force of circumstance, when the original artistic director suddenly quit!

Altogether, it was a highly entertaining and instructive talk followed by questions and answers.

### **ELECTION RESULTS**

The Board was re-elected with swaps in responsibilities. See *Nuts and Bolts* for the new Board line-up.

### Successes!

*Jenny Estes*, with story accepted by *Chicken Soup for the Soul*

*Andrew Roth*, First Prize at OC Writers Conference with *'Horses and Jesus'*.

*Shelley Evans*, for her poem in Chapbook *'Beat the Drought - Every Drop Counts'*

*Ken Cannon*, with *'Bib Overalls'*

*Annis Cassells's* short memoir piece, *'Tap!'* and

*Terry Redman's* story *'Our Critique Group'* both in SoCal Writers' showcase

Next time you see them, offer congratulations and ask about their stories.

# Writing

## Book Review

### Furiously Happy: A Funny Book About Horrible Things by Jenny Lawson

It's the raccoon that got me. Arms up, grinning. Who isn't going to pick up a book with a grinning raccoon on the cover? This memoir style collection of stories is about living with mental illness and anxiety disorders, and grasping every bit of ridiculous fun possible along the way. And, if fun involves kangaroo suits and roadkill raccoons, all the better. That fun is interspersed with equally ridiculous arguments with her long-suffering husband, Victor, whose sardonic commentary was – for me – the highlight of the book. We won't talk about the poor therapist.

I had mixed feelings on the book. Some will find the hilarity offensive, others cling to it as an example of how to live with illness rather than in spite of it. I was neither offended nor inspired, merely amused, and disappointed we didn't get to delve more deeply into the darker aspects of the disease that lingers in the background of every story, a hindrance to marriage and motherhood and simple every day interactions.

Rambling therapy sessions gloss over their very real need. There are mentions of self-harm, insomnia, manic episodes and obsessional behaviors. But all that gets glossed over with laughter. I like laughing, I do. But, after the first few chapters, that laughter fell flat and I craved something a little deeper.

The last few chapters made a half-hearted effort for balance as Ms. Lawson addressed the mental illness issues more directly and her interactions with the community sharing her troubles, but too little too late for me as a reader.



Still, I'm a tough sell on humor and this book made me laugh. It gets bonus points for that.

If you're looking for a probably inappropriate laugh or two (and provided you are not easily offended), it's worth a read.

If not, maybe not.

*Anna Stewart*

## Critique Corner

Writers of Kern,

I'm waist deep in rejection infested mud, smack in the middle of the literary swamp. I've received two emails this week, one spouting the glory of my craft and requesting more pages while the other decided I needed to reconstruct over a hundred pages of my novel—or look elsewhere.

After some research, I've decided I'm no longer a writer, I'm a masochist in need of an intervention therapist.

**Masochist** [mas-uh-kist] *noun*

1. A person who delights in rejection letters
2. A person who spends hours upon hours staring at a blinking cursor on an empty computer screen
3. A person who is gratified by pain [more commonly known as an **author**]

**Therapist** [th-uh-pəst] *noun*

1. A person who frames a writer's rejection letter or letters
2. A person who kills darlings and magnifies dialogue
3. A person who helps with the labor and delivery of novels [more commonly known as a **critique group member**]

*Clarissa Kae*

# Nuts & Bolts



Regular monthly meetings are held at the Clarion Hotel, Rosedale Hwy, Bakersfield [next to Costco] 9:30 to noon on the third Saturday of each month except May and December. Visitors are always welcomed. Admission \$5 for members, \$10 for non-members, includes refreshments.

New members are also welcomed, both Active [previously published] and Associate [not yet published]. Writers of Kern actively assists Associate Members who aspire to become Active.

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Writers of Kern seeks and welcomes submissions of members' writing for the newsletter and the website blog. Send prose, memoir, poetry and essays to the Webmaster, and send book reviews and articles of general interest to the newsletter editor

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**The Write Way  
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Copyright The Writers of Kern  
PO Box 22335  
Bakersfield, CA 93390-2335**

**Coming soon, from California Writers' Club:**

The new 2016 edition of the Literary Review will soon be in your mailboxes. It's the first issue ever with advertising included. Enjoy it!

The next issue of the CWC Bulletin will be published in mid-August, and the deadline for submissions is July 29th! CWC wants every single branch's activities and events reported. Advertising in The Bulletin is a wonderful value for authors and guest speakers with writing-related ads to submit. Deadline for those is also July 29th. Full details can be found under the Publishing banner on [www.calwriters.org](http://www.calwriters.org).

**The Writers of Kern Executive Board**

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# Last Words

## Xanthous

Now this is something I'm personally acquainted with. I have been xanthous all my life, and according to the young woman who takes care of my xanthous, I will stay in that range as I grow older. Most of my friends aren't xanthous, but I don't hold that against them.

What is xanthous? It is someone who has yellow or red hair. Mine tends to be more yellow than red, but I do have red undertones.

My mother was called "cotton top" when she was growing up. Not until she was in her thirties did she turn a little yellow, but today she is back to being a cotton top. My mom was lucky that she didn't go through the stages of going gray. She went straight to white. My Hair Stylist says I am following my mother's pattern.

When my oldest was born, his hair was so light it sparkled like silver, but when he hit puberty, it went to a darker blonde. My youngest was born with the same color, but he has stayed white. His football coaches in high school used to call him Q-Tip due to his pure white hair and skinny body frame. Funny thing about him is his facial hair is red. My middle son was born with auburn hair, went blonde while growing up and went back to auburn when he hit 30.

In reading about blonde or xanthous hair, it is rare to be a natural blonde later in life. Only 16% stay that color, most will darken as my oldest son did. Over the last say, seven years I succumbed to the thrill of having my hair weaved with some color.

Being a blonde was getting to be a bore. In fact my Hair Stylist encouraged me to add a touch of pink. That was fun. Made me feel a little



rebellious in a hair kind of way. I'm thinking of a little turquoise this summer.

Don't believe the old adage that blondes have more fun, they were just trying to sell a bottle of bleach. I think my brunette, brown-eyed friend had way more fun than I did.

Therefore, whether you are xanthous, black, or brunette, it's just hair so have a little fun with experimentation. It will grow back.

*Gay Chambers*

## Sunshine

When you know of WOK members who may need a little cheer, please notify the Sunshine Committee at [sunshine@writersofkern.com](mailto:sunshine@writersofkern.com)



Without your help, we will miss connecting with and supporting our friends and fellow writers. Thanks!

*Annis Cassells*

