

Saturday Writers Newsletter

May • 2020



Writers Encouraging Writers Since 2002

A Chapter of the Missouri Writers Guild

A Nonprofit Organization / Corporation

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Claire Askew To Discuss "Why Poetry?" at SW Virtual Meeting May 30

Saturday Writers welcomes award winning poet Claire Askew to take the podium and discuss, *Why Poetry?* What makes poetry as a genre and form special? How has the world of poetry broadened in the past few decades and how does it continue to expand? How can ambiguity in a poem be productive? How can poets create emotional resonance? What is the role of music and sound in poetry and how can knowledge of prosody make a poem stronger even if



it isn't one written in strict metrical form? What defines a strong poem in the first

place? What are some resources or ways of seeking inspiration and building a poetic practice? Whether you are a poet, a reader of poetry, or even a writer of prose who wishes to hone your skills in the precise use of language, you will benefit from a hard look at such questions.

Claire holds a BA in English from Lewis & Clark College and an MFA in Poetry from Washington University in St. Louis, where she was the 2017 recipient of the Norma Lowry Memorial Prize in poetry. Her work has appeared in *Lit From Within*, the *Oregon Poetic Voices Project*, and elsewhere. Originally from Kansas, she now lives in St. Louis, Missouri, with her husband and their cat.

—Sarah Angleton

Saturday Writers Goes Virtual

Due to the closures and safety precautions in place from the Covid-19 outbreak our monthly meetings will be held virtually, and will be recorded. Recordings will be provided to members via email.

Members will receive an email with access information. Guests are welcome to attend our virtual May meeting for free. Please email Jeanne.F@saturdaywriters.org for

access information. Membership is \$35.00 per year. If you are a guest and would like to join, please visit our website saturdaywriters.org and the Dues & Membership button for the membership form and payment options.

Our meetings are intended for an adult audience. Please contact info@saturdaywriters.org if you are younger than 18 years old.

Welcome to Saturday Writers

Due to social distancing, until further notice monthly meetings and other events will be held via Zoom.

Join us on the last Saturday of each month, January through September to hear speakers share their knowledge of craft, writing process, marketing, all things writing in all genres.

Leadership is evaluating various ways for us to stay connected. We held our first Open Mic on May 14 and plan more. We've considered hosting a virtual write-in and virtual drop-in critique groups, but are looking for input on whether these would be things you might attend. Email Jeanne.F@SaturdayWriters.org to let her know and share any other suggestions you might have.

- 11:00-1:00 p.m.—Regular meeting **VIA ZOOM** for business items and our guest speaker.
- Doors open at the Zoom room 10:45 a.m.
- Visitors are welcome to attend for free at this time.



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Writing THE END

On Sunday, April 26, 2020, I wrote THE END on the last page of a novel I've been working on since the fall of 2017. A sense of relief and accomplishment poured over me. Wow. I'd done it. Completing my first novel could have been a fluke—a lucky happenstance that I could actually write novels—the second was absolute confirmation.

That got me to thinking. What does it actually mean to write these words? Celebration was the first thing that came to mind. Initially, I did my happy dance and shared the news with my writing posse. I allowed the delicious feeling to last for a few days, knowing what would come next. Today, it's back down to business.

Wait—I wrote THE END—wasn't I done? Finished? Complete?

Well, no.

Novels—and stories of any kind—are living, breathing beings. As you write, ideas emerge, characters grow and change, the plot you thought you understood suddenly shifts. You, as an author, change. Although almost all of my individual chapters have been through both of my critique groups, no one but me has seen the entire manuscript from start to finish. In truth, not even me.

Those early chapters were written by a different me. A me who thought she understood the story she was writing.

Now that I've danced my happy jig and felt the satisfaction that comes with completing a story, the hard part begins.

The Things We Do Not Speak Of is destined for the desk of an agent somewhere who simply can't wait to read it. An agent who knows exactly whom to sell it to. She (or perhaps he) knows in her gut that the next story to keep her up at night because she can't put it down, is heading her way. My job now is to turn my draft into that very story this agent is waiting for.

Exactly how does one go about doing that? I believe the path to polished is as unique and different as the authors who put pen to paper.

I tend to write out of order. Whichever characters are up for a chat on any given day are the ones I listen to. It is, after all, their story. I stopped a couple of months ago when I couldn't figure out how to get from point A to point B and created



Jeanne Felfe

two different “documents.” These helped me to see the story from beginning to end so I could look for holes and rearrange any chapters that didn't belong as currently numbered.

The first was a set of note cards. On each card I wrote the following:

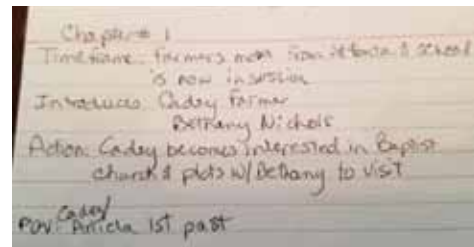
Timeframe: where in the story does this chapter take place?

Introductions: which characters first appear here? Obviously, this one became less used the further into the story I went. All significant characters revealed themselves earlier in the flow.

Action: what happens in this chapter?

Point of View: whose point of view? (Since I write in a multi-POV style, this is important.)

Here is a sample:



Doing this exercise helped cement the story's flow into my brain, but something was missing. I still couldn't quite “see” the story timeline. So I created a map of sorts. This map was basically the same information as the cards, but presented in a time-graph format. This took up two sheets of paper. Here's page one. You don't need to be able to read it, it's only to show the flow. This method allowed the holes to pop out at me so I could add what was missing, and shuffle a few chapters around.



Today I will begin going back through a chapter at a time, fine-tuning. Although what's here is already mostly polished—seriously, each chapter has had between four and twelve set of eyes on it—more meat needs to be added to the bones. I plan on completing everything during the month of May, so I'm ready in time for PitMad on June 4.

This is a lofty goal, but hey, what else do I have to do during the pandemic? So, I'll write.

—Jeanne Felfe, President

What's the Big Idea?

Decades Ago

It feels like decades since Saturday Writers has gathered together face-to-face. Oh, the things we take for granted, like sharing a few hours with kindred souls. Fortunately, our diligent SW staff found a way to continue communications during the Covid-19 challenge through FB and the audio meeting.

In some ways, the stay-at-home order seems to have benefited many writers as the contest entries have been pouring in each month. That's great news and worthy of celebration. Speaking of celebrations, let's hear from our February and March first-place prose contest winners.

Our Decades February contest theme focused on the 1900s & 1910s. Cheri Remington, one of our newest members, vaulted her way to the top with her winning entry, "War and Fortune." I was curious about the title and asked Cheri about it. "The title comes from the plot and I definitely wanted to use the word 'fortune,' then when I was considering it, I remembered a couple of similarly titled books, (*The Fortunes of War* by Olivia Manning and *The Fortune of War* by Patrick O'Brien) and I jumped on board."

The intriguing story follows the uncertain future of a young woman who is devastated by the death of her parents. She is influenced by the continuously encouraging predictions from a local tarot reader. Still, she struggles with the reality of her often painful life as it unfolds. Cheri draws readers into the story, making them feel the pain from tragedies this woman endures, but the unexpected ending warms your heart.

When asked if she has other works in progress, Cheri responded, "I have a metaphorical trunk full of novels at various stages of completion. They are all romance and fantasy novels, some trilogies and some stand-alone. I've finished one novel, but the feedback combined with trying to fix it, bogged me down so much that I have shoved it at the bottom of the pile. It has become the sacrificial example of what not to do!"

Well, Cheri, I think we all feel that way about something we've written. I hope you will dust it off one day and share it with the world.

Having our monthly face-to-face meetings hasn't slowed Cheri down. She enjoyed the Zoom meeting and said, "I found it easier to pay attention and follow along with this format. As for the stay-at-home time, I'm doing a lot more



writing. Normally, my job makes it difficult to find time to focus. Now I have time and can concentrate on writing. It's been great for me. I've written three stories since the quarantine began and getting ready to start number four."

I bet we see one of those stories place in a contest again. Congratulations, Cheri, on your first entry in our next anthology.

The March contest theme included the 1920s & 1930s. Robert Walton took first place with his winning entry *Duck Plucking Time*. Now there's an interesting title! I anticipated a humorous plot to follow. Instead, the story was a poignant reminder of the horrific treatment of people of color during those decades. Robert shared with me that an old friend "spent his childhood in the Jim Crow South, and a campfire reminiscence of his planted the seeds of the story in my mind. The ghosts of Jim Crow that now stride openly across our land impelled me to write it. I'm ashamed of what happened before and fear what may happen again."

I didn't recognize Robert's name from my years of working the front table, then I learned why. "I'm not a member of Saturday Writers, though I've had a long and most productive association with your group." He went on to say that his prose entries placed in SW contests in 2008, 2012, and 2015. That's encouraging news for all writers. In fact, Robert suggests SW helped him in his efforts to publish his first novel.

"My novel, *Dawn Drums*, came out in 2013. Prior to its publishing, then Vice President Rebecca Wise most helpfully agreed to have various members preview the proofs and compose a brief recommendation for the book. I greatly appreciate the effort involved and am still proud of their comment:

"A look into the grit of the Civil War as told by many characters. The first-person narrative makes you feel like you are there fighting alongside the soldiers. This well-researched book will definitely appeal to the Civil War buffs."

—Saturday Writers, St. Peters, Missouri

We're happy you've continued being associated with SW from a distance, but we'd love to have you become a proud member of this amazing group. I'll make it easy for you. Here's the link <http://saturdaywriters.org/dues--membership.html>

Kudos to all who entered the contests. Stay healthy and keep submitting those entries!

—Diane How

Exploring the Harlem

Renaissance Movement

(Reprinted from February 2019 with slight modification as part of our belated celebration of National Poetry Month.)

This article consists of a short explication of the poem “Seventh Street” by Jean Toomer, found in his book, *Cane*. This and a biography of the poet can be found at poetry.org. I am only familiar with the poetry of three male poets from the Harlem Renaissance Movement, which spanned the 1920's. All three—Jean Toomer, Countee Cullen, and Langston Hughes—are exceptionally good poets in their own way and I highly recommend them. I consider this poem and many others in *Cane* to be the first examples of American haibun, an adaption of Japanese haibun. I feel comfortable making this assertion, since several scholars have claimed Ezra Pound's poem below to be the first American haiku.

*The apparition of these faces in the crowd:
Petals on a wet, black bough.*

The short, formal forms like haiku at the beginning, middle, and/or ends of poetic prose, written at a slant, accompany a poetic prose piece describing a journey, either internal or in the case of “Seventh Street,” the migration of the Southern black to the Northern cities. This is the exact definition of a haibun. The diaspora from rural to urban cities included all races in America during this approximate time period.

The following more or less paraphrases other critics' reviews of “Seventh Street:”

The poem begins and ends with short, formal quatrains which have an AABB rhyme scheme. In the first line, there is repetition of the word “pocket” and the “ur” sound. In the second line, there is the susurrus of silken shirts. The second and third lines begin with near rhyme alliteration and assonance of “B” and “oo” sounds. In the fourth line, there is repetition of the word “whizzing.”

The poetic prose of the main body begins with repetition of the title. Both quatrain and main body talk about prohibition and the wild, loose life of the time and place due to war and diaspora from rural to urban due to industrialization, drought, and depression caused by economic collapse. The 1920s were certainly interesting times, perhaps like the 2020s might become.

“Wedge” is repeated several times—how the wedge of blacks is a fractionalizing force—as a metaphor for the force of modernization and change that



R.R.J. Sebacher

splits up society during this time period when they moved from the agrarian economy of the rural South to Northern urban cities. This caused the loss of internalized values and stability that were not easily replaced. They are left with the feeling of being shredded in the metaphor of splitting wood. White blood and black blood both being red are brought up throughout the poem. This is also brought up in a rather dramatic ending that states that a “Nigger” God would hide his head in shame and end it all. This ends with the question of who is responsible for this state of affairs or who started this—“Who set you flowing?”

The metaphor of blood flowing is used extensively throughout the poem. The interior of the poem states that white “blood suckers” of Washington are the profiteers causing much of the blood flow. I interpreted this to mean the wealthy and their politicians. It also inferred that the black blood flow will be a revitalizing force in the “Stale soggy wood.”

“Seventh Street” comes at the turning point in the overall work of *Cane*. It starts the second segment of the three part work—a demarcation or transition between the earlier section portraying the rural black life of the South and the second section which describes their lives as being “shredded” by the move into Northern cities. It's where they lose their moral and emotional compass and stability, no longer having the support structure of a community where they fit into comfortable niches.

The standard critique of this poem also notes the similarity to jazz, with a short formal beginning and ending with informal riffs in the body of the piece. I wonder if this metaphor, although it works, would have been chosen if the author had not been black. There appear to be scores of critiques on his life and work. The many I read spent what I thought was an obscene amount of time dwelling on the question of whether or not Jean Toomer tried to pass for white. Why couldn't they simply accept him as a human being and a remarkable poet? I will admit that it is worth briefly noting that his light skin coloring and acceptance in the black community gave him a unique opportunity to record the black community of his time while being able to go back and forth between the white and black literati in New York.

I hope this stimulates your interest in the poets of the Harlem Renaissance. I know I found these three poets worthy of the time I spent acquainting myself with their work and look forward to checking out more of the poets of this time, including the female poets. We only get better at what we spend time doing, so keep writing and reading poetry. It will enlarge your world.

—R.R.J. Sebacher, SW Poet Laureate

Margo Dill Presented Saturday Writers with Tips for Self-editing and Revising Manuscripts at April Meeting

Margo L. Dill is a children's author, a freelance editor, and part of the WOW! Women On Writing e-zine's staff. She identified some of the more common writing mistakes she sees as an editor and provided suggestions on how to correct them to SW on April 25.



Not starting in the right place tops the list. To avoid disorienting your reader, it's important to quickly establish the setting, the characters present, and who is talking. Be sure to set the scene after every break.

When describing a scene, many writers focus on the visual and tend to ignore the other senses. Providing rich details using all five senses can add depth to your story. However, be careful not to slow the story down by providing too much detail. A good rule is to report only what is important to your character. Be sure to leave something to the reader's imagination.

Another common mistake with beginning writers is to "tell" instead of "show." Look for sentences that start with "He felt" or "She was." Try to show what your characters are feeling by describing their facial expressions and body language. Let the reader infer the emotion rather than tell them.

Margo discussed some point-of-view issues she often encounters. In most cases, you should write a scene from the point of view of a single character. Only provide information that your POV character would know. Do not tell the reader what other

characters are thinking. That's called Head Hopping and is discouraged.

Common grammar problems include using a passive voice instead of an active one. Avoid the use of the "to be" verbs such as be, am, is, being, been, are, was, and were. Look for verb tense shifts, and avoid filler words like just, really, that, as, actually, very, so, and well.

Margo finished by discussing revision methods you can use to edit your own work. Here are five simple techniques she suggested:

1. Use a variety of colored highlighters to identify different aspects of your writing. Pink for dialogue, green for description, yellow for backstory, etc. This provides a visual image of how balanced your story is. Is there too much dialogue at the beginning? Or maybe too much summary in the middle?
2. Shrink the manuscript font so it fits on about 30 pages. Lay the entire story out on the floor to get a visual of how the story flows. This works well when combined with the highlighter method.
3. Change the time and/or place that you write for a fresh perspective.
4. Read your story aloud or have someone read it to you.
5. Study and imitate other authors in your genre.

To find out more about Margo and her editing business, go to www.margoldill.com or <https://www.editor-911.com>

—Jeffrey S. Czuchna

February Contest Winners

Theme: 1900s & 1910s

First Place: Cheri Remington for "War and Fortunes"

Second Place: Rhonda Wiley-Jones for "Tuck Tail or Sail"

Third Place: Diane How for "Treasured Memories"

Honorable Mention: Jackie Dana for "My Heart's Desire"

Honorable Mention: Christine Anthony for "No Place Like Home"

Honorable Mention: R. G. Weismiller for "The Winds of San Marco"

March Contest Winners

Theme: 1920s & 1930s

First Place: Robert Walton for "Duck Plucking Time"

Second Place: Susan Gore Zahra for "Pearly Gates"

Third Place: John Marcum for "The Wheelman"

Honorable Mention: Sherry Copeland for "Black Sunday"

Honorable Mention: Marilyn O'Neill for "Hairdon't"

Honorable Mention: R. G. Weismiller for "Requiem for a Gangster"

DEADLINE: SATURDAY, May 30!

2020 Contest Theme: Decades

Prose: 2020 Word Limit

Poetry: 50 Line Limit

Begins: 4/25/20

Prose Deadline: 5/30/20

Poetry Deadline: 7/25/20

May Theme:

1960s & 1970s: The Beatles; Vietnam War; JFK; MLK and his “I have a dream speech”; Berlin Wall; moon landing; swinging 60s with bell-bottoms, tie-dye, and miniskirts; Nixon and Watergate; oil crisis; disco music; first MRI; first child born by IVF; floppy disk; cassette players; Rolling Stones; Bob Dylan; Grateful Dead; lava lamps, etc.

We encourage you to think outside the norm and always read Contest Rules and Guidelines before entering.

New Release from SW Member P.A. De Voe

Enjoy a trip to ancient China where history and mystery meet!

SW member P.A. De Voe released her new book, *Judge Lu's Case Files, Stories of Crime & Mystery in Imperial China*, an international, historical collection of short stories, in April.



In late 1300 Imperial China, the young Judge Lu is newly appointed to the position of district magistrate. He, and he alone, represents the heart and soul of the area's justice system. In each case, he has to use ingenuity, guile, and intelligence to match wits with criminals and evil doers. Through it all, he is assisted by his trusted trio—including his younger brother and two former bandits turned personal guards.

P.A. De Voe's YA *Warned*, second in her *Mei-Hua Trilogy*, won the 2016 Best International Silver Falchion award. *Trapped*, from the same trilogy, was a 2017 Agatha award nominee and Silver Falchion awards finalist. Go to padevoe.com to learn more about her mysteries, available now from Amazon.



DEADLINES: SATURDAY, June 27!

Everything Children Contest

2020 Contest Theme: Decades

Prose: 2020 Word Limit

Poetry: 50 Line Limit

Begins: 4/25/20

Prose Deadline: 6/27/20

Poetry Deadline: 6/27/20

Love writing for children? Revved up to try your hand at writing for children? This is your chance! This special Everything Children Contest is for any type of children's writing—picture books (without the art), early readers, chapter, middle grade, and Young Adult.

These entries will be judged by someone experienced in that genre.

Cost: \$5.00 per entry for members
\$7.00 per entry for nonmembers

Upcoming Events (Yes! There Are Some!)

Saturday Writers Schedules Second Open Mic

Thanks to the successful navigation of May's Zoom general meeting and open mic night, SW will host a second open mic night Tuesday, June 23, from 7-9 p.m. Watch your email for instructions about how to participate, whether as reader or as attentive audience in the comfort of your own home.

St. Louis Writers Guild Goes Online to Continue Its Mission of Keeping the Literary Community Connected

The St. Louis Writers Guild is hosting several online events each month until further notice. Virtual workshops are FREE for both members and nonmembers during this time of sequestering. On Saturday, June 6, 10 a.m. to noon, author Warren Martin will offer a workshop based on his experience with book marketing.

Virtual Writing Salons are held every Thursday from 7-9 pm via WebEx. Everyone is welcome. Curious about what a virtual speakeasy is? For details and other upcoming events, go to: <http://www.stlwritersguild.org/events>

News Flash(es)

Hey writers! I'm going out on a limb by making an assumption, but what the heck, here goes. I assume most people who like to write, plain and simply like "words." Yes? It makes sense. And, the better grasp they have of the words in a language, the better apt they are to choose words from a bigger barrel, so to speak, and in turn have the advantage of putting sentences together with right-on-target descriptions. Right??? I promise this is leading somewhere...

I read two attention grabbing articles this past week, both equally interesting to the point I couldn't narrow down which one to write about, so I decided to make a non-decision, which when you think about it, is a decision in itself, and write about both articles.

First of all, did you know Merriam-Webster, on April 29th, added a whopping 535+ new words to their glossary's digital dictionary? The article didn't specify how many new words came to us due to the COVID-19 virus (the name comes from the abbreviated term **CO**rona**V**irus **D**isease -2019), but I bet it was something like 534. It seems like there's a new one every day.

For a second, the radar system in my right brain, supposedly the creative side, came to full attention. Why? Well, as a writer, I didn't want to think there was a whole treasure chest of 535+ bright and shiny new words I could be using in my descriptive fiction and I didn't even know they existed. To a true word nerd, that kind of stimulus could trigger a panic attack.

I trailed my index finger down



Tammy Lough

the list reading such jewels as community-spread, super-spreader, and social-distancing. What the heck? Those aren't new

words. Just last summer at our family reunion, about twenty aunts and grannies laid out a community spread of vittles eight picnic tables long. About an hour later, Cousin Chester, after gorging on barbecued ribs and pork steaks, five-alarm-fire baked beans, and enough fruits, nuts, grains, and vegetables to feed a hog farm, announced he felt a super-spreader coming on, and we all social-distanced pert near a half-mile away.

Secondly, this is some good stuff backed up by Harvard. You are going to be blown away.

Writers, do you know how, with pretty much no effort or preparation, you can become a better writer, increase your productivity, work faster with fewer mistakes, and not work one miniscule harder?

Are you ready?

The following highly technical, cost-extreme maneuver was performed in blocks of offices throughout our country. What was it they did? Do you give?

They opened the windows.

I'm not kidding. By allowing fresh air into closed-up offices, the employees experienced noted positive improvements in kidney function, healthy circulation of blood and the proliferation of new blood cells, a more efficient breakdown of liver toxins, improved digestion, metabolism, and elimination. A study measuring the impact of indoor air quality found both productivity and cognitive function much higher in "green" buildings with access to fresh air. I wonder how

fresh air will affect the creativity of a writer working on a story?

While we are sequestered in our homes, let's go outside on the sunny days and catch some natural Vitamin D. Speaking of fresh air, could somebody open Cousin Chester's window?

Writers Write!

—Tammy Lough

Saturday Writers Officers

President:

Jeanne Felfe
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Vice President:

Pat Wahler
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Secretary:

Sarah Angleton
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Treasurer:

Diane How
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Volunteers/Chair Positions

Assistant Treasurer: Denise Scott
Children's/YA Author Critique:

Sue Fritz

Christmas Party Chair:
TBD

Contest Chair: Heather Hartmann
Hospitality Chair: Bob Weismiller
Assistants: Diane How &

Ryan Cort

Information Table: Tammy Lough
Membership Chair: Denise Wilson
Members Online Critique:

Susan Moreland

Newsletter Editor:

Susan Gore Zahra

Newsletter Assistant:

Sherry Cerrano

Pre-Meeting Saturday

Works-in-Progress Café &

Creative Writing Salon:

R.R.J. Sebacher

Publicity Chairs:

Rose Callahan

Speaker/Workshop Chair:

Jeanne Felfe

Assistant: Tom Klein

Social Media Chair:

Heather Hartmann

Assistant: Rose Callahan

Website Maintenance:

Heather Hartmann

Assistant: Rose Callahan

Wednesday Works-in-Progress Café:

Jim Ladendecker

Write-In Chair: Brad Watson

Youth Outreach Chairs:

Nicki Jacobsmeier & Sue Fritz

Our meetings are held at the Spencer Road Library located at
427 Spencer Road, St. Peters, MO 63376.
Meetings will usually be in Room 240.