

The Georgia Authority

Monthly Memos from the Georgia Writers Association

Volume 1, Issue 2

March 2012

Upcoming GWA Events:

- Saturday, March 10: *Bonding, Branding, Building: Connecting in an Authentic Way*, Lisa M. Russell, GWA Administrator, FREE!
- Saturday, April 14: *The Art of Story*, Margaret South, screenwriter and producer.
- Saturday, May 12: *Telling the Truth and Keeping It Real*, River Jordan, memoirist and novelist.
- Saturday, June 16: Georgia Author of the Year Awards (GAYA) banquet & ceremony

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Connect with Haiku Poetry

By Laurence Stacey

In the world of poetry, haiku can be likened to an island filled with beauty, yet surrounded by mist. Although many poets are familiar with the word “haiku,” there are many questions about what the genre actually entails. Is it a Japanese nature poem? Does it have something to do with counting syllables? Is it written in three lines? These are all good questions; however, I believe the most important question to consider is “why haiku?”

The process of writing haiku reminds us to slow down, to appreciate the most subtle aspects of our existence. Whether it's the autumn moon sinking behind a row of pine trees or a memory sparked by the setting sun, haiku teaches us to distill a moment down to its essence in order to connect with a deeper part of ourselves. Having studied haiku for the past ten years, I have come to think of it as a

way of seeing things and interacting with my environment.

The simplest definition of a haiku is a brief, one- to three-line poem that juxtaposes our thoughts or emotions with an observation of nature. In re-

*midnight bus
the door swings open
to moonlight*

—Laurence Stacey

(first published in *Two Dragonflies*, Volume 2)

gards to nature, I am referring not only to the organic world of trees, mountains, and oceans, but also to man-made environments such as cities, towns, and even slums.

Haiku originated in Japan and is now enjoyed by poets

from a variety of cultural backgrounds. In grade school, many western students are taught that haiku must be written in a syllable format of “5-7-5” arranged in three lines. This rule of specific line counts is somewhat misleading. Japanese haiku are written in one line of 17 *onji*, or sound symbols. Within this line are “cuts” or pauses which are either implied or marked. These “cuts” often produce three phrase fragments, which also often take the form of 5-7-5. However, the amount of literal information that can be communicated in 17 English syllables is almost double the information contained in 17 Japanese *onji*. For this reason English haiku is usually written with somewhere between 10-14 syllables, in order to respect the minimalist aesthetic of haiku poetry.

I advise writers wanting to explore haiku to read and study

(Continued on page 2)

Second Saturday Sneak Peek: Lisa Russell

by Karen Pickell

Lisa Russell is on a mission. Her goal to educate and assist other writers drives her work for the Georgia Writers Association (GWA), her freelance marketing work for local authors and publishers, and her graduate studies. While working in numerous occupations along her life path, Russell realized that every job, including that of

a writer, has a marketing component; she also discovered her own talent for helping people and organizations market themselves via digital media. Now she wants to share what she's learned with fellow writers, to help them connect with their audience in an authentic way.

According to Russell, a writer should strive to use her plat-

form to build credibility, not simply to drive sales. The primary concern should be building a bond with people, acting as a “trust agent” (to borrow a term coined by one of Russell's favorite authors, Chris Brogan), not like “the Amway salesman . . . someone who's trying to sell things to you all the time.”

(Continued on page 3)



The 48th Georgia Author of the Year Awards

Click [here](#) for a complete list of nominees or scan the QR code below



Tickets on sale
May 1st

Robert Lee Brewer is senior content editor for the Writers Digest Writing Community, including the Writer's Market products. He lives in Duluth, Georgia.

Laurence Stacey is a graduate student in Kennesaw State University's MAPW program. He will teach Introduction to Haiku for [Marietta High School's Continuing Education program](#) in April.

Choosing Where to Get Published

by Robert Lee Brewer

Recently, I was a guest for an extension course on personal essay at UCLA. I love opportunities to answer questions, and this class had some interesting ones about getting published, especially about figuring out where to submit.

Is it better to try getting published in print or online?

This is a popular question, and I understand why, but I think it's dangerous to focus too much on the format. Especially when you're getting started, I believe it's essential to diversify. Submit to print publications, online publications, cell phone publications, or whatever else gets a foot in the door. Early on, it's important just to get experience submitting, dealing with editors, and hitting deadlines.

How much do editors edit? Do they give back edited pieces?

Editors are used to making at least some changes in nearly every piece they receive. However, they've all got different rules on when to give back pieces to writers. Some have writers double-check proofs regardless of any changes. Others send material back to writ-

ers only if they've made significant changes. Still others avoid back and forth with writers at all.

AFTER your work has been accepted or you've received an assignment, it would be completely appropriate to ask an editor what to expect as far as the review/rewrites process.



What if I want to write for mainstream publications? Should I avoid sending work to niche publications?

In the beginning, writers should just work on their writing and try to get published wherever they can. Traditionally, some venues are going to be easier to break into than others, though very few are easy. Some online publications are more open to new writers. Regional magazines and publications are good for many writers too.

Shooting for mainstream national magazines is a good goal. I believe in the diversified

portfolio approach in which writers query beginner-friendly publications, middle tier publications, and the highest paying markets. As writers find more success with the better paying markets, they can cut out the beginner-friendly publications and be more selective in where they write.

Should cover and query letters be short and to the point? Or should they drip with personality?

Every editor is different. For me, I prefer queries that are short and to the point. Also, I like a little personality. Writers who can send me a concise query that's also interesting have the greatest chance of getting accepted for publication, because those writers demonstrate they know that writing with concision doesn't mean writing without a personality. They also demonstrate that writing with personality isn't an excuse to ramble.

This article first appeared on the blog [My Name is Not Bob](#).



Haiku Poetry (continued from page 1)

as much as possible. Check out one of the contemporary online journals like [Simply Haiku](#), [Heron's Nest](#), or the journal I coedit, [Haiku News](#). As you read, ask yourself why some poems work, then try reproducing the effects of the poems. Every word in a haiku poem is important, and needs to be examined. Give your

poetry to others and see how they respond. A haiku poem should be perfectly clear, and yet still have a sense of mystery or ambiguity.

Finally, I encourage writers to seek out haiku poetry workshops. The act of sharing poetry not only encourages writers to learn more, but also offers fresh perspectives. As I prepare

to teach my first workshop on haiku, I am reminded of how much the advice of my peers and editors helped my personal growth. Have fun with the genre and learn as much as possible!



Second Saturday (continued from page 1)

Branding is much more than just having a nice logo. Service matters, which is why Russell personally answers every e-mail message sent to GWA, even if it means signing on from home in the evening.

In fact, Russell recently wrote about her experience in building the Georgia Writers Association into a literary trust agent, via what she calls a “social media constellation,” for *Social Media in Context: Writers Explore the Marketplace*, a book being edited by Dr. Anne Richards, Associate Professor of English at Kennesaw State University.

Russell is nearing completion of her thesis on writing in the digital environment to earn a Master of Arts in Professional Writing at KSU. Last month she led a well-received workshop on “Words That Work

Online” along with Dr. Laura McGrath, Associate Professor of English, during SoCon 12, Kennesaw State’s annual social media conference.

Down the road, Russell is considering pursuing a Ph.D. and hopes to spend even more time teaching, perhaps as an adjunct professor. Maybe she’ll develop her own online courses, as she did during an internship last summer. What’s certain is that wherever she is, Lisa Russell will continue to help her “students” achieve success—including her closest students, her three sons. In her own words: “God called me to be a teacher.” She is sincere when she says she hopes her students’ success will surpass her own.



How do you connect in a sea of social media?



Bonding, Branding, Building

Connecting in an Authentic Way

March 10, 2012 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM KSU Center

**FREE
WORKSHOP**

2012 Second Saturday Speakers Series

**Click [here](#) to register for the
March 10th workshop!**

Member News and Events

HARRIS *Arts* CENTER

March 30, 31, and April 1, Northwest Georgia Writers Conference, featuring writer’s workshops and keynote speaker Barbara Casey, author and owner since 1995 of the Barbara Casey Agency. For more details, please go to www.harrisartscenter.com or call 706-629-2599. (Submitted by **Alan Rabon** and **Gray Bridges**)

Around Georgia - March 2012

- ◆ March 8, poet Dave Smith, Georgia State University, workshop.gsu.edu/events.php
- ◆ March 15, Sandhills Writers Series, Donna Aza Weir-Soley & Jeffrey Stepakoff, Augusta State University, www.sandhills.aug.edu/index.html
- ◆ March 15, Byron Herbert Reece Lecture featuring Natasha Trethewey, Young Harris College, www.yhc.edu
- ◆ March 21 & 22, novelist Monique Truong, Emory University, www.creativewriting.emory.edu/series
- ◆ March 23, Anne Lamott, *Some Assembly Required: A Journal of My Son’s First Son*, First Baptist Church, Decatur, www.georgiacenterforthebook.org
- ◆ March 28, novelist Tayari Jones, Georgia State University, workshop.gsu.edu/events.php
- ◆ March 29 & 30, Agnes Scott College Writers Festival, www.agnesscott.edu/writersfestival
- ◆ March 30 & 31, Blue Ridge Writers Conference, Blue Ridge Mountains Arts Association, www.blueridgewritersconference.com

Get Writing!

Use these words

in a story:
hurricane,
flashlight,
lawnmower.

.....
In 300 words,
write about
“deceit.”

Prompts courtesy of
creativewritingprompts.
com

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Submissions

Please send your member news and events to The Georgia Authority editor by the 20th of each month.

Please contact the editor for guidelines if you wish to contribute an article to The Georgia Authority.

The Georgia Authority

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About GWA

Georgia Writers Association is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization that works across the state to encourage and strengthen the proficiencies of writers in both the creative and the business aspects of the writing life. We do this through an array of speakers and programs at regular meetings. GWA sponsors workshops, conferences, seminars, contests, and other events. We encourage the formation of satellite groups, critique groups, and other writer resource groups. We encourage the funding of guest authors to various Georgia counties. Our online publications are an attempt to educate and inform the diverse literary community of Georgia. Accomplished Georgia writers are recognized through the Georgia Author of the Year Awards.

Become a member for discounts to workshops & conferences, exclusive online resources, and more!

Join today at www.georgiawriters.org

A Ham What Am

By Cappy Hall Rearick

Being a Georgia author is a rather specious dignity, on the same order as, for a pig, being a Talmadge ham.

—Flannery O'Connor

For a Georgia writer, there is no better paradigm than the works of Flannery O'Connor. Several years ago, I drove to Georgia College in Milledgeville to study in the Flannery O'Connor Library, where scholars may conduct research by prearrangement. I hoped they would deem my intended PBS documentary project worthy.

Once there, I immersed myself in over 6,000 pages of original manuscripts and even watched a video of the author being interviewed on *The Today Show*. Flannery came across on television as shy and out-of-place, not the confident author who wrote some of the finest literary fiction ever to come out of Georgia.

During my languid days of study, I often wandered around in the library's reconstructed parlor furnished with O'Connor's personal things. My fingers brushed against hundreds of her books: Katherine Anne Porter, Eudora Welty, Faulkner. I leafed through large envelopes crammed with funny,

tragic, poignant clippings, collected by the author for projects that were never to be. I read her first diary, pencil-printed in a childish scrawl.

Flannery O'Connor was an enigma, a puzzling woman committed to her profession and her religious belief system. Few students and scholars of her work have ever considered her less than complex. Many came to Milledgeville before me because they were intrigued by her writing.

Toward the end of my time there, I was invited to lunch by Flannery's cousin, Louise Flourcencourt. After lunch, she asked if I might like to see Andalusia where her cousin had raised her famous signature peafowl. I jumped at the chance.

A crooked red clay road led to the farmhouse, which stood a quarter of a mile from the highway. The house was nothing to brag about, and the surviving structures even less so. Indeed, at first glance, the farm appeared to be abandoned. Finding it rife with the ghosts of O'Connor's characters, I halfway expected to see Old Dudley or Tarwater, perhaps a scowling Hulga Hopewell limping toward me in search of her notorious wooden leg.

We walked the grounds while wind whistled through moss-strewn oak trees. From time to time, a crow cawed in the distance, another ghostly reminder of the long-gone peafowl that had once dominated Andalusia. It has been said that Flannery loved the peacock's beauty, its strutting conceit, while secretly delighting in its ugly feet and annoying squawk—God's sense of humor made visible in polar extremes.

I am hardly a literary scholar, and in fact if Georgia authors are likened to a Talmadge ham, then I am still hanging in the smokehouse. But I have lost count of the many enjoyable hours I have spent with O'Connor's words, and I am overwhelmed by the legacy left us by this Georgia woman who captured on paper the heart and soul of more than a few Southerners.

Unfortunately, copyright issues prevented the project from being completed. But it was worth a shot!

Cappy Hall Rearick lives in St. Simons Island, Georgia, and is the author of five published books and five humor columns.