

## April 2019 Newsletter

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## President's Column

By: Alex Elfenbein

April is one of my favorite writing months. Something about all the rain and pollen in the air keeps me indoors and motivates me to spend more time at the keyboard. (Hint: It's the allergies!) I find it a bit easier to follow the truest piece of writing advice I know—showing up and putting my butt in the chair. It's simultaneously the easiest and hardest thing to do. What helps me stick with it most is remembering how wonderful it feels to get the words onto the page and the story out into the world. Whether I get a few thousand or only a few words on the page, each week brings progress. Every word is an accomplishment. I hope April brings you showers of great writing!

## 2019-2020 Board

President	Alex Elfenbein
Vice President	Leah Hinton
Secretary	David Douglas
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Critique Group Lead	Gary White

If you're interested in one of the open positions or volunteering, please email us at [writersguildtx@gmail.com](mailto:writersguildtx@gmail.com) or ask at the next general meeting!

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## Opportunities for You to Get Involved

The board is almost filled for the rest of the year, but we still have opportunities available for club members to help. The **membership chair** needs a volunteer to help welcome guests, maintain the membership roster, and communicate with the membership. This role is great for people that enjoy socializing and want to get to know people better.

We also have opportunities if you'd like to work on special, ad hoc projects or "apprentice" for one of the board positions. If you're interested, let an officer know at the next general meeting or email [WritersGuildTX@gmail.com](mailto:WritersGuildTX@gmail.com). We'll work with you to find a place you can put your skills to use.

## Meeting Reminder: April 15 – "Character Development" with Amanda Arista





Why spend months developing a character only to find that is the wrong character for the story you want to tell? Using a boiled-down amalgamation of three top screenwriting teachers, Amanda Arista will show you how to create a character that will leap off the page with their own backstory, voice, and deep connection to the story.

**About the Speaker:** [Amanda Arista](#) was born in Illinois, raised in Corpus Christi, lives in Dallas but her heart lies in London. Good thing she loves to travel. During the summer after second grade, she read every book in the young adult section of the library, much to the surprise of the local librarian. So she started making up her own stories and hasn't stopped. She has a husband who fights crime, one dog who thinks he's a real boy, and another who might be a fruit bat in disguise. When not writing, Amanda often dreams of co-opening an evil bakery and selling despicable desserts. Her particularly favorites are larvaceous lemon bars and sinful cinnamon streusel. She spends her weekends writing at coffee shops, practicing for the day that caffeine intake becomes an Olympic sport, and plotting character demises with fellow writers Wolvarez, Killer Cupcake, and Keith (names have been changed to protect the not-so-innocent).

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**Register for the WGT Storysmith 2019 Spring  
Writing Conference**

Please join us Saturday, May 4, at the Collin College (Central Park Campus) Conference Center in McKinney for our annual writing conference. This year we



are excited to announce three amazing guest speakers, each with their own fields of expertise. Whether you write fiction, non-fiction, screen plays, or anything in between this will be the conference for you.

Our key speakers include the amazing **Amber Royer**, who is the author of the high-energy comedic space opera Chocoverse series (Free Chocolate, Pure Chocolate coming March 2019). She teaches enrichment and continuing education creative writing classes for teens and adults through both the University of Texas at Arlington and Writing Workshops Dallas. In addition to two cookbooks co-authored with her husband, Amber has published a number of articles on gardening, crafting, and cooking for print and online publications.

WGT is also proud to have **Daniel Wells** as a key speaker. He is a writer, lecturer, director, and organizer within the worlds of screenwriting, fiction, and film. Daniel is the Vice President for WORD (Writing Organizations 'Round Dallas), Creative Director of Dallas Screenwriting Crew, Municipal Liaison of NaNoWriMo (National Novel Writing Month), and organizer of the DFW Writers Room.

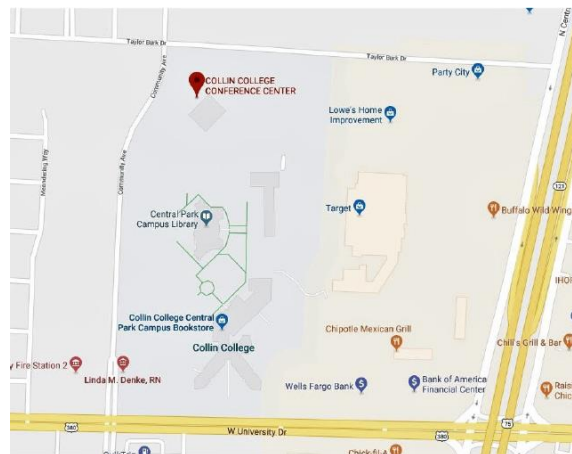
Lastly, we have the fabulous **Tex Thompson** because what writing conference could be complete without her? Arianne "Tex" Thompson is a 'rural fantasy' author, enthusiastic speaker, and professional ruckus-raiser. She is the author of "Children of the Drought," an internationally-published epic fantasy Western series from Solaris, as well as an instructor for Writing Workshops Dallas and 'chief instigator' of WORD (Writers Organizations 'Round Dallas).

# Writers Guild of Texas



On-site registration begins at 8:30 a.m. with sessions from 9 a.m. – 5: p.m. Please note to pre-register by April 30 to get a FREE lunch (full day only). This event has limited seating, so be sure to sign up as soon as possible. WGT members get exclusive discounts when registering.

The campus is located near Highway 75 and 380 / University Dr. From 380, turn north onto Community Ave. The Conference Center will be on your right (just south of Taylor Burk Dr.) Click on the map to view more details.



Please visit our website to register: [www.wgtonline.org/events/spring-2019](http://www.wgtonline.org/events/spring-2019).

## March Meeting Recap of “Self-Editing Essentials: Proven Methods for Enhancing Every Manuscript” with Blake Atwood

WGT was proud to have Blake Atwood as our featured March speaker. Blake shared with us self-editing essentials and gave us the editing low-down from the perspective of a top-rated professional editor.

Blake discussed copy editing methods for eradicating common mistakes. He encouraged writers to keep a list of their crutch words, hedging words, and to always be aware of redundancies and common grammatical abuses – think “a lot” vs “alot.”



Blake stressed the importance of discovering your “moonwalking bears” and

suggested writers watch the video by “Look Out For Cyclists” to test awareness which showed how a writer might miss errors in their own work. He further suggested that writers can’t look at the big and small picture at the same time. He said to “revise” the forest before whacking away at the trees. Writers should highlight everything they love and ask, “Did I write this more for me, or more for my readers?” Writers shouldn’t get caught up in wowing their readers with a line. Instead, readers should be wowed by an immersive experience. Cut what seems indulgent and use it in a blog post for the book’s launch.

Blake also suggested we shouldn’t fear the robots. Use the tools that are available to all writers such as Grammarly, Hemmingway Editor, Scrivener, and Pro-Writing Aid. He even suggested having Microsoft Word read a manuscript aloud, so writers are better able to spot trouble. Blake suggested the following resources:

- “Dreyer's English” by Benjamin Dreyer – Read for a funny look at grammar.
- “Self-Editing for Fiction Writers” by Renni Browne and Dave King
- “Atomic Habits” by James Clear
- “Look Out For Cyclists” awareness test: <https://youtu.be/Ahg6qcgoay4>
- Grammarly.com
- Hemmingwayapp.com
- ProWritingAid.com

Blake Atwood is an editor, author, and ghostwriter. Find him at <https://blakeatwood.com/>.



## Member Spotlight: Steve McCluer

**Steve McCluer** has been a long-time member of WGT and a fixture of the WGT critique group. He claims to be “the least-published striving writer in WGT.” That’s not exactly true, because he has written many nonfiction pieces for magazines over the years, and his letters to the editor appear frequently in *The Dallas Morning News*. Since retirement, he has focused his energy on writing “the great American novel,” now in revision 21.3. Once published—he says “presumably posthumously”—*Bud’s Streets* will star a fictional homeless man on the streets of Dallas in a genre he says is “urban/social justice.” He says he is desperately looking for an agent and a publisher.

Steve has actually been writing short stories, mostly fiction, for more than 30 years. His tales have been almost exclusively told aloud and from memory to audiences as a member of various storytelling guilds. He is a frequent teller at the annual Tejas Storytelling Festival which runs for three days in Denton. He favors horror stories. One notable exception was a Flash Fiction memoir that won him honorable mention in the 2017 WGT Flash Fiction contest.

## Community Event: Stage Writers Festival

In partnership with [WORD](#), [Stage Writers](#) will celebrate the one-year anniversary of their inaugural meeting by hosting the first annual [Stage Writers Festival](#). The festival will be held at Crossroads Christian Church (black box theater) in Carrollton on Saturday, May 18, and will feature nine staged

readings of 10-minute plays written by their members and other DFW-area playwrights. If you'd like to submit a play for consideration, enter the contest before April 20. For more information and tickets, visit [StageWriters.org](http://StageWriters.org)

## Flash Fiction Honorable Mention: “Handcuffs” by Mary Lou Condike

“You okay, Sara?” Paul mumbled.

“If the guy in this book rolls his eyes once more, I’m going to vomit.” Dropping the paperback, I threw off the blankets and grouched all the way to the bathroom. Paul was reading War and Peace. Why anyone would read Tolstoy is beyond me. He likely wants to brag he’s read it. What a literary snob!

Once back in bed, I resumed reading Fifty Shades of Grey.

“It’s unbelievable. The neighborhood women are ranting about this book. It’s the poorest written trash I’ve ever read.”

Paul grunted and turned out his light. “I’ve had enough. Read as long as you like. A brass band couldn’t keep me awake after that last chapter.” He snored before I’d turned the page.

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I finished the book by dawn and headed to fix breakfast.

“Garbage.” I tossed the paperback into the trash.

“What’s garbage?” Paul strolled into the kitchen, smelling of Stetson aftershave and looking sexy in his police uniform. He peeked into the trash without saying

a word, but his eyebrows nano-arched.

“Court today?” I said, hoping to distract him from the book I’d chucked into the bin.

“Nope. I’m inside, writing reports. Back on the streets tomorrow.”

Paul didn’t like to write, even though he loved reading.

He glanced into the trash again and smirked. “Some of my reports read like that book, including the handcuffs and the whips.”

“It was disgusting. I can’t believe Janis recommended it.”

He grabbed the newspaper while I served breakfast.

“More coffee?” I watched him mop the plate with his toast.

“Not today. The reports I’m writing should keep me awake.” The corners of his mouth twitched. “But I can’t disclose the details.”

His car barely disappeared from the driveway when I noticed his handcuffs on the counter. I stared at them and recalled a scene in that god-awful book. “Hmm...”

Sauntering over to the island, I snatched the silver manacles and rubbed them on my neck. The metal cooled my hot skin. I shivered.

“Whew! I’m hot! It’s this damned polyester bathrobe.” I ripped the garment off with the flair of an over-the-hill stripper while I twirled the handcuffs over my head. My saggy boobs drooped beneath the satin top of my babydoll pajamas. I didn’t care. I slithered out of them and tossed them aside while my libido took over.

What did that god-awful book say? Was the handcuffs a part of the crouching dragon position or the other one? What was it called?

“Oh, hell. The way Grey described it, I’d bet a contortionist would pull a muscle.”

Crouching into a squat, I slipped one ring of the handcuffs onto the leg of the glass-topped table. And of course in my excitement, I immediately clamped the other ring to my wrist, tightened it, and flopped onto the tabletop.

The smooth glass chilled my belly, causing me to squeal and giggle with delight.

“Watch this Mr. Grey!” I writhed naked on the table, fogging up its surface. With one arm still hooked to its leg, I was about to slip off and swing into a bumpy-grinder dance when my phone rang.

My motherly voice on the answering machine broke the spell. I’m sorry. I can’t come to the phone right now. Please leave your name, number, and a brief message. I’ll return your call as soon as possible.

“Sara, it’s Paul. I forgot my handcuffs. Kavanagh will be over at eight to retrieve them.”

“Oh, Christ.” It was ten minutes ‘til. Panic struck. I’d have peed my pants, if I were wearing any.

“Get off the table you horse’s arse and unlock the cuffs.” I peeked under the table for the keys. Paul always clipped them to the chain when he removed the cuffs from his service belt.

“No keys! On the counter!” I craned my neck searching for my means to freedom. I spotted the keys on the floor by the refrigerator. They must have flown off during my wild bathrobe fandangle.

My sweat glands shifted into overdrive. The loose skin on my belly stuck to the smooth surface, sounding like a farting walrus with each move as I wormed to

the edge. Worse still, I left a slightly smeared, but visible body print of Moby Dick on the tabletop.

I reached for my robe. “Shit. Two inches. That’s all I need.” I could almost touch a sleeve, but not quite. And forget the baby dolls. They were hanging from the kitchen fan. And the damnable keys might as well have been in Kansas.

When the doorbell rang, terror grabbed me by my nakedness, all 190 pounds of it. “Just a minute.”

I stretched a leg toward the bathrobe, snagging it with a toe. I managed a few inches.

The doorbell rang again. This time the door open. “Sara? It’s Kavanagh. You in there?”

“I’m not decent. Just a minute.” I controlled my voice, but sweat poured into the crack of my butt. “Jesus. Another inch.” At last, I got it, stuffed an arm into the sleeve, and wrapped the bulk of the robe around my oversized torso. “In here...”

“What happened?” Kavanagh’s eyes rounded like a glass-eyed Beanie Baby.

“The key is over there.” I gestured toward the refrigerator.

While retrieving the key, Kavanagh happened to glance into the trash, then asked, “Do you play with handcuffs often?”

“Almost never. The last time I trapped myself in cuffs, I was seven-years-old, playing Annie Oakley.”

“Who were you playing today?” Kavanagh’s face remained stoic.

I stared at the floor.

“Never mind. I can guess.”

Kavanagh's phone rang.

"Hey, Paul. No problem. My pleasure...they were in the kitchen, but not on the counter. I'll tell you at the station."

"Tell him what?" I slumped into a chair.

"To add another 'remove shackles' incident to his report. We've rescued a dozen women since..." He gestured to the wastebasket, "...Since that book came out."

"Damn." I said, and then rolled my eyes just like the guy in the book.