

TOPICS
COMING
IN FUTURE
ISSUES

- Don't Let
Your
Characters
Get Lost
- Freshen your
Poetry by
Going Back to
the Basics

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The WAG Digest

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 2

MARCH 15, 2009

Come Hear Rik Feeney: How to Write a Book in Sixty Days!

Rik Feeney will speak at our monthly Writers Alliance of Gainesville meeting on Sunday, March 22, at 2:30 p.m. at the Tower Road Branch of the Alachua County Public library.

Rik is the author of the "Back Handsprings: The Secret Techniques" and several books on the sport of gymnastics as well as the new "Cheerleading: Conditioning for Back Handspring & Tumbling Success!" available online at:

www.GymnasticsTrainingTips.com. Rik is also a Self-Publishing Coach, consulting with authors to write, publish and promote books, and develop web sites. He has given several talks at writing events around Florida and is finishing his new book, "Writing for Fun, Fame, & Fortune."



Please join us for this entertaining speech and bring your writer friends. The event is free and open to the public.

Visit Riki's web site at: (<http://www.isthereabookinsideyou.com/index.html>).



The Novel Pod—What's So Novel about That?

Dorothy Staley

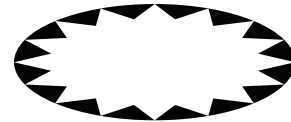
Pods have been defined as vessels that contain seeds (as in peas); however from this writer's point of view a pod is a small group of genre specific authors who meet to provide fertile ground for ideas to grow into stories, poems, novels, memoirs or essays. Pod members review and critique excerpts from one another's ongoing work to enrich the imagination from which fresh ideas sprout, encourage tried and true techniques to ensure proper growth, and yes, to prune when necessary.

As the leader of a novel pod, I propose the following guidelines:

- Novel pod membership limited to five.
- Authors submit work via e-mail or paper copy to members ahead of meeting dates.
- All authors who submit excerpts shall be critiqued.
- In the interest of time, work will not be read aloud.

- Members review manuscripts and come prepared to discuss at each meeting.
- When critiquing, include what works and what doesn't.
- Critique discussions may include stylistic suggestions (character, dialog, setting, plot, pace, etc.). However, grammatical corrections shall be marked on manuscripts but *not* discussed during meetings.

I hope, as we meet in our pods to explore one another's work, new approaches will evolve, new techniques will be explored, and fresh new writings will come to life.



Would you like to join a writer's pod? Would you like to host a pod? If so, please contact WAG's pod coordinator, Dorothy Staley at dasapr41@yahoo.com.

"Pod members review and critique excerpts from one another's ongoing work to enrich the imagination from which fresh ideas sprout, ."



Writing Blunders and How to Avoid Them

Don't Use Adverbs and Adjectives to Prettify Your Prose

August 21, 2008 by William Noble

In Chapter 13: Don't Use Adverbs and Adjective to Prettify Your Prose from *Noble's Book of Writing Blunders (And How to Avoid Them)*, learn how adjective and adverbs create redundancy and promote lazy writing and see how you can make your writing direct, vivid, and descriptive without making your readers want to get rid of your book.

Some years ago the fine short story writer Raymond Carver offered recollections about learning to write from teacher and novelist John Gardner. "I remember him as being very patient," Carver wrote in *Fires*, "wanting me to understand what he was trying to show me, telling me over and over how important it was to have the right words saying what I wanted them to say. Nothing vague or blurred, no smoky-glass prose ... He made me see that absolutely everything was important in a short story. It was of consequence where the commas and periods went."

This attention to detail is precisely why Raymond Carver acquired a reputation as a short story master; rarely, if ever, was a word or a series of words purposeless and uncertain. His prose was tight and emphatic, and his phrases never dangled or were superfluous. His craftsmanship honed his work to its essence. There aren't many Raymond Carvers in this world, but each of us can learn some important things from the way he approached his writing. Sentence structure and punctuation were crucial, the proper word was essential, and what was omitted as important as what was inserted.

Which brings us to adverbs and adjectives. Clearly, Carver would cast a suspicious eye on these forms of speech because many times they add little to what is already on the page. Frequently, they are not important, and in a short story, that means they have no business there.

Many inexperienced writers throw in "pretty" words to make their prose more dramatic and meaningful. But such cosmetic touch-up often turns out to be redundant or simply uninspiring. Take adverbs such as "lovingly" or "speedily" or "haltingly." They each point to some circumstance or emotion or movement, yet do they offer solid impact?

He whispered to her lovingly...

She zoomed around the oval speedily...

He stuttered haltingly...

(See Writing Blunders Page 4)

Writing Blunders (Continued)

In the last two instances, the verbs themselves provide the acting and the emotion in the sentences; the adverbs merely underscore what the verb has already described. Is it possible to “zoom” without doing so speedily ... or to “stutter” without doing it in halting fashion? These are redundancies, and they do little for the prose except to give it an awkward cast.

The stone sank quickly...

The fire truck bell clanged loudly...

How else would a stone sink but quickly? How else would a fire truck bell clang but loudly? The key is to gauge the relationship of the adverb and the verb it modifies: Are they saying essentially the same thing? If so, there is a redundancy, and the adverb should come out—fast!

It isn't only redundancies that adverbs can generate. They also encourage lazy writing. Take the earlier example, “he whispered to her lovingly ...” I suppose he could whisper many things, including words, which are loving, but somehow the adverbial tail seems a lazy way out. By using “lovingly”

the writer is really—and we've heard this before—telling instead of showing. Far more dramatic would be to write:

He whispered words of love ... my sweet, dear lover, my angel ... he purred his contentment, his joy ...

No adverb here, and the drama is enhanced. I've shown those things that he whispered lovingly, and the reader has to be more involved in the story.

It has become a cliché to use the adverbial tail time and time again. In addition to minimizing the dramatic effect of the action, it grinds on the reader's ear (remember, readers “hear” as well as read). All those words ending in “-ly,” not doing much for the sentence, not creating much of a word picture ... Who could blame readers for wondering why the words were there in the first place?

And who could blame these same readers for laying the book aside? “Most adverbs,” says William Zinsser, “are unnecessary.” He's right. And when it's important to prettify your prose, there are better ways to do it.

*“misplaced
adjectives can
do as much
damage as
botched-up
syntax”*



Writing Blunders (Continued)

Not with adjectives, though. These suffer the same general malady as adverbs—usually they are too numerous, they clutter up our writing, and they can turn a deft phrase into a ponderous mass. Consider:

The house had an empty feeling to it, the air stale with undefined kitchen odors ...

This is a tight, dramatic description. But what happens when I add more adjectives to “prettify” it?

The dark, dreary house had an empty, suspicious feel to it, the thick air stale and sour with undefined, scary kitchen odors ...

Do all these adjectives add much at all? An empty house implies something strange and sinister, so do I need “suspicious”? Do I also need “dark, dreary”? An empty house might be these things as well, but I’m not unmindful that a sinister house may also be bright and sunlit (though it does stretch my credibility a bit). At least, though, I should dispense with one of the two adjectives, either “dark” or “dreary” because taken together, they are a well-recognized cliché ... and they almost mean the same thing.

But note the other bits of overwriting: if the air were stale, wouldn’t it also be thick? And wouldn’t it be sour, as well?

Mark Twain had it right: “As to the Adjective: when in doubt, strike it out.” The tendency is to try and beef up the noun being modified. It’s human, I suppose; most of us can never be that sure we’re getting our point across. Decorate that noun some more, your fragile self-confidence hears. Don’t run the risk the prose will fall flat because it isn’t distinctive enough.

Ah ... you think, a little word or two, here and there ... it’ll catch the reader’s attention, it’ll keep her reading ...

Well, yes and no. Yes, it might certainly catch the reader’s attention, but never underestimate the kind of attention that could be. Try negative attention, the kind that might push the reader away from the prose. Consider:

He was cheered by the friendly smiles ...

He spied a group of dirty street-urchins ...

Do the adjectives “friendly” and “dirty” add anything to the sentences? Read the words without adjectives ... Now read them with the adjectives inserted. Is anything more provided by including the adjectives? They contain the



***"they aren't
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up space".***



Writing Blunders (Continued)

thought that's already in the noun they modify, so they aren't doing anything for the sentences except taking up space. Aren't smiles usually "friendly"? Aren't street-urchins usually "dirty"? Why the adjectives, then?

"a wise man
(with perhaps a sexist bent)
said, "pick adjectives the way
you would diamonds
or a mistress ..." ."

The short answer is that you're trying to prettify your prose, to give it a lushness that will settle on the reader. Adjectives are a way of lengthening your sentences and providing a more complicated word picture, and this, in turn, will intrigue the reader because there will seem to be substance in the prose. The reader will experience more, and hence, the reader will enjoy it more.

But misplaced adjectives can do as much damage as botched-up syntax. If the adjectives are there only to prettify the prose, they should be eliminated. The key is, adjectives should be used only when they

highlight something the noun can't highlight. For example:

He slipped into the darkened alley ...

Not all alleys are dark, so now you know this one will be. But suppose this had read:

He slipped into the narrow alley ...

Alleys are usually narrow (if they aren't narrow, they're called streets or roads), so the adjective isn't telling any more than is offered by the noun. This is "prettifying" the prose, and it isn't pretty at all. Reach for adjectives that give more information than can already be found in the noun—when, in fact, an adjective should be used at all. Frankly, most adjectives are not needed. What benefits they offer are usually much less than the havoc they create.

Some years ago, a wise man (with perhaps a sexist bent) said, "pick adjectives the way you would diamonds or a mistress ..."

Carefully, he meant, so carefully.



Call for Submissions

Posted March 8

Jelly Bucket, the literary journal of the **Creative Writing Program at Eastern Kentucky University**, is accepting fiction, poetry, and creative non-fiction for its premiere issue through June 1, 2009.

Fiction: One story under 10,000; less than 1,000 words, up to three. **Poetry:** Three to five poems. **Creative nonfiction:** One piece up to 10,000 words; less than 1000 words, up to three. Double-space all entries. Send to: Editor / *Jelly Bucket* (c/o Russell Helms) / Creative Writing Program / 467 Case Annex / Eastern Kentucky University / 521 Lancaster Avenue / Richmond, KY 40475-3102

Puerto del Sol, is a nationally-distributed journal dedicated to providing a forum for innovative poetry, prose, drama, criticism and artwork from emerging and established writers and artists. Puerto del Sol is reading submissions through March 31, 2009. Puerto del Sol is especially interested in reading submissions of reviews and short plays or excerpts from longer plays for our upcoming Spring 2009 issue.

Web site: <http://www.puertodelsol.org/>

The reading period for *Puerto del Sol* is September 15 through March 31.

We are now accepting submissions of poetry, drama, fiction, non-fiction, translations, artwork and criticism, as well as any interesting combinations thereof, exclusively through our online submission manager. Submit one story, play, essay, set of (or link to) artwork, set of 3-5 poems, or set of 2-4 short short stories at a time, and please wait for our response before submitting again

Birth Parent Anthology. Catalyst Book Press is seeking literary essays telling personal stories of adoption, open adoption, birth parent connections, the adoption triad, and unification with children after closed adoption, for an anthology for and about birth parents. Authors of accepted essays will receive \$50 for their stories and one copy of the publication.

Web site: <http://www.catalystbookpress.com/Guidelines.html>

Catalyst Book Press is seeking literary essays telling personal stories of adoption, open adoption, birth parent connections, the adoption triad, and unification with children after closed adoption for an anthology for and about birth

parents. Authors of accepted essays will receive \$50 for their stories and one copy of the publication.

Submissions can be sent by August 15, 2009 to co-editors Ann and Amanda Angel, 15255 Turnberry Dr., Brookfield, WI 53005. For more information, please email Ann at alan-gel78@gmail.com.

If you wish your manuscript returned, please include an SASE.

Los Angeles Review seeks fiction, nonfiction, poetry and reviews. Mar 1 – Aug 1.

Submission Guidelines:

Issue No. 6 is scheduled to be released in 2009. Submissions accepted from March 1 to June 1 via email only.

Indicate title and word count in the subject heading. Please include a cover letter and bio in the body of the email and attach your piece as a single .doc or .rtf attachment.

Simultaneous submissions are accepted if noted in the cover letter. No multiple submissions, please. Response time is 2-3 months.

Writers published in the 2009 *Los Angeles Review* will receive one contributor copy in exchange for first North American serial rights.

Guidelines:

Fiction and nonfiction: We seek essay, memoir, and commentary told as compelling, focused, sustained narrative in a distinctive voice, rich with detail. Send 1,000-4,000 words or delight us with flash nonfiction that cat-burgles our expectations. In fiction we're looking for to hard-to-put-down shorties under 500 words and lengthier shorts up to 4,000 words--lively, vivid, excellent literary fiction.

Poetry: Please submit 3-5 poems that will surprise us, wow us, and make us wish we'd written them ourselves. We are open to form, free verse, prose poems, and experimental styles. Our only criterion is quality.

Reviews: We welcome reviews of new and recent books of poetry, fiction, and nonfiction, particularly of books that have not received the critical attention they deserve. Send reviews of three to six pages. No need to query the editor beforehand.

Translations: Please submit 3-5 translated poems that open the poet's original vision to an English-speaking audience.

Send all submissions to appropriate department email:

Editor: lareview.editor@gmail.com

Fiction Editor: lareview.fiction@gmail.com

Poetry Editor: lareview.poetry@gmail.com

Nonfiction Editor: lareview.nonfiction@gmail.com

Translation Editor: lareview.translations@gmail.com

Review Editor: lareview.bookreviews@gmail.com

Contest Information

The Writers Alliance of Gainesville will send members information about writing opportunities and monthly contest deadlines. If you know of an available writing opportunity, send information to wagmail@cox.net.

A tip: Writing contests can be expensive and very competitive. Send your best work and look for contests that offer copies of the journal or subscriptions to the magazine as part of the entry fee.

A great place to find the latest contest information for literary magazines is on the Web site, NewPages.com

<http://www.newpages.com/literary/contests.htm>

CRAB ORCHARD REVIEW's Annual Literary Contests The Richard Peterson Poetry Prize, Jack Dyer Fiction Prize, & John Guyon Literary Nonfiction Prize

\$ 1500 prize for Poetry

\$ 1500 prize for Fiction

\$ 1500 prize for Literary Nonfiction

One winner and two finalists will be chosen in each category. The three category winners will be published and the finalists offered publication (with a minimum payment of \$150) in the Winter/Spring issue of CRAB ORCHARD REVIEW. The winners and finalists will also be announced in the March/April POETS & WRITERS and on the CRAB ORCHARD REVIEW Website.

Contest Guidelines — **The postmark deadlines for this year's prize competitions are March 1, 2009 through April 30, 2009.**

Entries must be previously unpublished, original work written in English by a United States citizen or permanent resident (current students and employees at Southern Illinois University Carbondale are not eligible). Name, address, telephone number, email address, and work title (or titles for poetry entries) should appear only on a cover sheet for the entry. The author's name should not appear on any subsequent page. **All entries must be postmarked between March 1, 2009 and April 30, 2009.** Late entries will be returned unread. Enclose a #10, self-addressed, stamped envelope for notification of winners. Do not include an envelope or postage for return of manuscript since entries will be recycled upon the decision of the final judges and notification of the winners.

Page Restrictions:

Poetry entries should consist of 3 poems; 100 line limit per poem. Prose entry length: up to 6000 words for fiction and up to 6500 words for literary nonfiction. **One poetry entry, story, or essay per \$10 entry;** a writer may send up to three entries in one genre or a total of three entries if entering all competitions.

Entry fee:

\$10 for each entry. Please make checks payable to CRAB ORCHARD REVIEW. Each fee entitles entrant to one copy of the 2010 Winter/Spring issue of CRAB ORCHARD REVIEW, which will include the winners of these competitions. If you send two entries with \$20, we will send you the 2010 Summer/Fall issue as well; if you send three entries with \$30, we will send you the 2010 Summer/Fall issue and the 2011 Winter/Spring issue as well.

Address:

Mail entries to: CRAB ORCHARD REVIEW Literary Contests, Dept. of English, Mail Code 4503, Southern Illinois University Carbondale, 1000 Faner Drive, Carbondale, IL 62901. Please indicate on the outside of the envelope if an entry is "POETRY," "FICTION," or "LITERARY NONFICTION."



"look for contests that offer copies of the journal or subscriptions to the magazine as part of the entry fee."



Contest Information (Continued)

American SHORT FICTION – ONLINE SUBMISSION – WEB SITE: <http://www.americanshortfiction.org/>

We love short shorts! Our new contest highlights great work in shorter fiction--stories of 1,000 words or less, to be exact.

First prize receives \$500 and publication.

Second prize receives \$250 and publication.

Judged by the editorial staff of American Short Fiction.

Contest is open from February 16 to May 1. Submissions accepted online via the ASF Submission Manager.

NEW LETTERS **A Magazine of Writing and Art**

Call for Writing

\$1,500: The *New Letters* Poetry Award

\$1,500: The Dorothy Churchill Cappon Essay Award

\$1,500: The Alexander Patterson Cappon Fiction Award

All entrants will be considered for publication and will receive a one-year subscription to *New Letters*.*

Deadline: postmark by May 18, 2009, or enter online at www.newletters.org.

1. Simultaneous submissions are welcome. Please notify us if work is accepted elsewhere. Submit unpublished work only. No refunds will be issued.
 2. Enclose with each entry:
 - a. \$15 for first entry; \$10 for each entry after. \$15 entry *includes cost of a one-year (four issues) New Letters subscription*, an extension of a current subscription, or a gift subscription. Make checks payable to *New Letters* Literary Awards. *Entries from outside the United States receive all contest privileges except the subscription.
 - b. Two cover sheets—the first with complete name, address, e-mail/phone number, category, and title(s); and the second with category and title(s) only. Personal information should not appear anywhere else on the entry.
 - c. A stamped, self-addressed postcard (optional) for notification of receipt and entry number.
 - d. A stamped, self-addressed envelope (optional) for a list of the winners.
 3. Manuscripts will not be returned. No refunds will be issued. No substitutions or revisions.
 4. Entries in fiction and essay are not to exceed 8,000 words. Poetry entries may contain up to six poems. They need not be related.
 5. Multiple entries are welcome with appropriate fees.
 6. Current students and employees at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, and current volunteer members of the New Letters and BkMk Press staffs, are not eligible.
- All entries are considered for publication
 - First runners-up will receive a copy of a recent book of poetry or fiction from our affiliate BkMk Press
 - One winner and one runner-up will be selected in each category
 - Winners will be announced mid-September 2009
 - \$1,500 prize money paid to each winner upon publication in our awards issue
 - Join our community of writers.

New Letters is an international magazine of writing and art. Previous final judges include Philip Levine, Maxine Kumin, Gerald Early, Joyce Carol Oates, Rishi Reddi, Mary Jo Salter, Floyd Skloot, Carole Maso, Cornelius Eady, and Margot Livesey.

THE 24TH-ANNUAL LITERARY AWARDS

Submit electronically at www.newletters.org, or mail entries to:

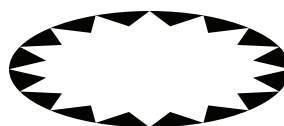
NEW LETTERS LITERARY AWARDS, University House, 5101 Rockhill Road,
University of Missouri-Kansas City, Kansas City, MO 64110

(See Contest Information Page 10)



Writer's Alliance of Gainesville
A not-for-profit Florida corporation
p.o.box 358396
gainesville/florida/32635-8396
352-336-8062/wagmail@cox.net

The Writers Alliance of Gainesville (WAG) promotes, encourages and supports aspiring and experienced regional writers. This goal is accomplished via WAG monthly meetings, public readings, ongoing small critique groups, a literary journal, writers' contests, and collaborations with schools and civic organizations to foster creative expression through the written word.



Contest Information (Continued)

Announcing A CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS:

The Writers Alliance of Gainesville is pleased to announce that we're ready for submissions to our new literary journal, Bacopa. (Want to know what Bacopa is? See the picture below. Maybe you've seen this plant around Gainesville.)

**WE DON'T CARE WHERE, WHEN, OR IF
YOU'VE PUBLISHED.**

We just want quality fiction, nonfiction, and poetry for our new literary journal. Open submissions deadline 6/30/09. Cash Contest entries July 1-October 31, 2009.

Visit WWW.bacopaonline.Com for further
informations

