



September 2016

Fall Is a Time to Refocus



Summer officially ends this month, and it has taken its toll on me as it does every year. Summer saps my focus. It makes my mind wander and keeps me from being productive. I waste time and then get mad at myself because I didn't accomplish a darn thing I had intended to accomplish for the day. For instance, I've been fascinated by this real estate app I downloaded. I keep putting in cities I think I might like to live in to see what homes are selling for. What the heck is *that* all about? I have no intention of moving.

Autumn officially arrives next week, and at this time of year I always think of my father. One of his favorite songs was Frank Sinatra's rendition of "It Was a Very Good Year." When I was a young woman, Dad would tell me he was in the autumn of his life. It made me sad because all I could think about was winter was around the corner for him.

Now that I am in the autumn of my life, I don't find it sad, though I have to admit to occasional wistful longings for days of my youth. I understand Dad more. It is a contemplative time of life. I have time to ponder. I'm not busy raising a family, building my profession, or saving for a house. I no longer think about "getting ahead" but "staying the course."

It seems like only yesterday I was wishing for warming days of spring and the hot days of summer. I turned around, and fall is on my doorstep. It seems like only yesterday I was a young woman wanting to get married and have a houseful of children. I turned around and that marriage took place nearly 45 years ago, and those children are grown and long gone.

This autumn season is a wonderful season of life in many ways. But it is also short, and winter is indeed ready to knock on my door. So I want to savor each day like vintage wine. I want to sip each moment and find something good in it. Like the glorious colored leaves that will be on the trees in a few weeks, I want to adorn my place in this world with a burst of color, a burst of passion. I want to make this a very good year.

To that end, I will refocus my efforts on my writing, restarting the routine of my morning pages, pulling the files of unfinished stories out of my cabinet, redoing the opening of my novel, scanning the newspaper for new ideas. By the time autumn has ended and the winds of winter are upon us, I hope to have something completed that I can be proud of. How about you?

Traveling Pen Series

These 2.5-hour workshop sessions on different aspects of writing are \$10 for HRW members and \$20 for non-members. All workshops are held at the Virginia Beach Tidewater Community College campus in the Blackwater Building, Room CW-134. Here are the last two scheduled for 2016. Don't miss out!

Saturday, Oct. 22nd -- **Advanced WordPress: Template Procurement and Blog Post Demonstration**, presented by [Star LaBranche](#)

WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION: Ready to move ahead in your WordPress author blog or website? This class will show you what to look for in a template and how to find one that suits your needs. Whether your template is free or paid, find one that is perfect for you. Once you have your template nailed down, you need to know how to post a blog. The demonstration will include how to use a featured image, the difference between categories and tags, and how to use metadata.

PRESENTER BIO: Star LaBranche has been writing ever since she could put words on paper. She has never stopped. A blogger for 10 years, Star is currently a writer for ArticleBunny, HealthyPlace, and her personal site, [StarLaBranche.Com](#). Studying at Old Dominion University in their graduate English program, Star is a regular contributor to the student newspaper. Her dream is to live in the desert with a rescue corgi. Visit her website at <http://www.starlabranche.com>

Saturday, Nov. 19th -- **Narrative Time Warp: Managing the Passing of Time in your Fiction and CNF**, presented by [Valerie Wilkinson](#)

WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION: In life, we accept time as a steady, forward-moving state, but you control time when you write. Successful movements in time add interest and depth to your story. It's critical then to decide when to pierce the present with the past, when (or if) to flash forward, and how to keep the present action on track. We'll discuss ways to keep the reader oriented, review flashback protocols, examine effective moments to flash forward, and analyze powerful examples in both fiction and nonfiction. We'll then try our hands at exercises designed to help you move through time with grace.

PRESENTER BIO -- Valerie Wilkinson earned her MFA in fiction from ODU in May 2013. She has published short fiction in *Water-Stone Review* and *Yemassee Journal* where she placed in a national short fiction contest. She has taught multiple craft seminars and fiction classes, co-authored *Whispers from Our Soul*, a book of creative nonfiction, served as a quarterly essay contributor to Moondance.org, and is currently working on a novel. Valerie is a founding member of HRW and serves on the HRW board.

"The character that lasts is an ordinary guy with some extraordinary qualities."

—Raymond Chandler

What Is a Copyright?

by Michael D. Rigg

“Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.”

— Article 27, [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), (United Nations, 1948).

In the previous newsletter, we learned that copyright is a type of intellectual property law. We also learned how important copyright protection is for writers. As the quotation above implies, protecting intellectual property rights is a worldwide concern. Each country deals with copyright in accordance with its national laws. This article discusses the fundamentals of copyright law in the United States.

The U. S. Copyright Office (USCO) administers the copyright laws, which are found in Title 17 of the United States Code as well as in court cases interpreting the Copyright Act. According to the USCO website (www.copyright.gov), “Copyright is a form of protection provided by the laws of the United States ... to the authors of ‘original works of authorship,’ including literary, dramatic, musical, artistic, and certain other intellectual works.” Copyright protection is available for both published and unpublished works. Generally, the owner of a copyright has the exclusive right to do and to authorize others to do the following:

- reproduce the work in copies or “phonorecords”
- prepare derivative works based upon the work
- distribute copies of the work to the public by sale or other transfer or ownership, or by rental, lease, or lending
- perform the work publicly

With some limited exceptions, it is illegal for anyone to violate any of these rights.

Only the author of the work, or someone claiming rights derivative from the author, can claim copyright protection. In the case of works “made for hire,” however, the “author” for claiming copyright protection is usually the employer paying for the work to be done, i.e., not the actual writer. The authors of a joint work are co-owners of the copyright, unless they agree to a different arrangement.

For works first created on or after January 1, 1978, copyright protection begins from the time the work is created in a tangible, “fixed form.” In addition, the copyright immediately becomes the property of the author(s) who created the work. As a rule, an individual author’s copyright protection lasts for seventy years after the author’s death.

Next installment: What works are eligible for copyright protection?

About the Author: Michael D. Rigg is a writer, who happens also to be an attorney. But he doesn’t practice intellectual property law and this article is neither legal advice nor a solicitation of business. You should seek legal counsel for advice and guidance on how the law affects your poem, short story, novel, or other creative work.



Grammar School with Bernadette: Over It

I believe the prefix "over" is overused. Merriam-Webster lists a string of words beginning with "over" that means the extreme state of what follows.

When you're anxious, you're afraid or nervous about something that may or may not happen. Can one really be "overanxious"? Who is able to determine whether your anxiety goes too far?

Can you "overeducate" someone? No way. A full brain is a good thing.

When you exploit someone, you use a person in some way that helps you unfairly. "Overexploiting" seems downright evil.

Imagination is rare and amazing. Does being "overimaginative" entail delusions?

An obvious thing is something clear. What happens when a thing is "overobvious"? Does it bonk you over the head?

I guess when you concentrate too hard, you may "overthink." Does your brain get overworked? Probably the best cure for that is brain freeze.

Can you make yourself look too good? I don't think so. So why do we need a word like "overimpress"?

Does anyone think it would be possible to be overrich?

Over easy. This one I can accept because it's how I like my eggs sometimes.

I'm torn on the word "overwhelm." As it turns out, "whelm" is the same thing as "overwhelm." It is redundant. But I'm not sure I can say, "The half-price shoe sale whelmed me."

Bernadette Kinlaw has been writing for the Virginian-Pilot since 1988. Her column, "Grammar School," appears in the Daily Break and online. She may be reached at bernadette.kinlaw@pilotonline.com. Thank you, Bernadette, for allowing us to print portions of your column.

HRW Keeps Growing

Hampton Roads Writers welcomes the following new members who have joined since the last newsletter:

Susan Hastings
Jessica Kelley
Kelley Midgett
David Sawyer
Belinda Smith
Kay Pedersen
Michael Walbridge
Theresa Nitz
Christy Pettitt
Allie Marie Holmes (writes as Allie Marie)
Teresa Austin
Frances Aylor
Charity Ayres
Minnie Salinas
Shonda Foster (writes as S.A. Foster)
Joseph Barboza
Jennifer Belgrade
Medina Kirkwood
Omenita Gwinn

We Need You

HRW is supported solely through the generosity of our individual members and patrons. If you haven't done so already, please consider joining HRW. We need your time, talents, and tax-deductible financial support so we can continue to provide the quality literary events you've come to know and love. If you would like more information or would like to arrange a meeting to discuss supporting Hampton Roads Writers, please contact Lauran Strait, HRW's President, at HRWriters@cox.net.

Shut Up and Do Something Already!

It's 10:00 in the morning, and I've yet to write a word on my novel today. In a minute I'll take Lady Macbeth's advice to her husband and "screw my courage to the sticking place" and get on with it. I know the first draft is never stellar, but I didn't know how quickly the characters would take over and start writing their own novel, not the version I have in my head. My exciting main plot is getting little attention because their secondary stories are taking over. All they want to do is yammer all day long. They talk and talk and talk and never seem to do anything. Ack! Are they a mirror of my life?

You would think I would have more control, wouldn't you? After all, I created these people. I gave them life. They should be a little more appreciative and do what I want them to do once in awhile. I really do care about their emotional well-being, but if they are having problems, they need to get counseling on their own time and give me back my story. I have things for them to do and places for them to go. I don't have time for their boo-hooing.

Today I vow to get tough with them. Sorry, guys, but you've left me no choice. If you don't cooperate, I may have to kill one of you off.

An Economy of Words, a Bounty of Emotion



Naomi Nye's poem "The Mother Writes to the Murderer: A Letter" is about the murder of a child on her way to the store a block away from her house. It begins with a quote from the *Dallas Morning News*, "Alicia didn't like sadness." The poem is powerful and haunting, vivid in its description of this child. Her death becomes painful to us, the reader, because we know her, and we can never forget her.

Yet, Nye's poem uses very ordinary words, nothing more difficult than a fourth-grader could understand.

The word choice may not be lavish, but the emotions evoked through the simple language are raw and convincing.

In her letter to her daughter's murderer, the narrator writes,

"You don't have her drawings taped to your refrigerator
blue circuses, red farms
You don't know she cried once in a field of cows
saying they were too beautiful to eat"

Another line, so full of meaning in such simple words, is this:

"You don't know where she hid her buttons"

Whenever you struggle to come up with words that drip with emotion, remember this poem and realize that lush language can sometimes get in the way of having your readers see what you want them to see and feel what you want them to feel. Sometimes, simpler is better.



"One day I will find the right words, and they will be simple."

— **Jack Kerouac,**
The Dharma Bums

Sometimes It's Best to Let the Phone Ring

Euphemisms are indirect ways of referring to things that we feel are unpleasant or make us feel uncomfortable. We all use them, of course, mostly because it helps us feel less awkward or embarrassed. When your employer fires you, unless he is Donald Trump, he'd rather tell you that the company is downsizing or restructuring. A woman on a lunch date with friends, instead of coming out and saying she needs to pee, will say she needs to powder her nose. Much more polite and civilized. Remember when pregnant women were said to be "in the family way"?

My brother and I were talking about euphemisms for the "Big D." Okay, I mean death. (The closer you get to it, the more you'd rather not name it out loud.) It seems more than anything else, death is one of those words people avoid talking about. Even people who have a strong faith and feel they know where they're going tend to use euphemisms to describe the trip. Their loved one is "bound for glory" or was "called to be an angel." At the very least, we talk about people "passing away" instead of dying.



However, when my brother and I saw this obituary in our genealogy records, we agreed that euphemisms can go too far. We are stating here and now that if Death calls, we are definitely not picking up the phone. We are going to let it ring and ring. Obviously, people didn't have caller I.D. in those days. Otherwise, when Abijah's wife received the same call, she would have had Death leave a message.

Mrs. Abijah

Answers Death Call

Do you use euphemisms in your writing? If you had a character who always used euphemisms for something unpleasant, what would that say about that character? Would it show, perhaps, that he is easily embarrassed? Prissy? Or does he like to spare people's feelings? Euphemisms can be put to use as a device for characterization. Sometimes indirect language can be a good thing.

Are You Guilty of Killing THE FICTIONAL DREAM?

by Lauran Strait

In *The Art of Fiction: Notes on Craft for Young Writers*, John Gardner discusses the importance of creating for readers what he calls "a vivid and continuous fictional dream." This is the idea that fiction does its job by creating a dream state for the readers. As long as writers do a good job of maintaining that dream state, readers won't "wake up" from it and will continue to read and believe in the fictional world created by the writer. He says that this helps readers "willingly suspend disbelief" and allows them to lose themselves in the story by becoming part of the story.

In order to create the fictional dream, intrusive narrative must be avoided to the extent possible so readers can "see" the setting, characters, events, and thoughts real time through the viewpoint of one character. Readers observe real time those things observed by the viewpoint character and come to discovery about things at the same instant the viewpoint character does. Narrative distance (between the character and the reader) is diminished to the point that the reader almost becomes one with the viewpoint character.

Anything that causes readers to think about the writer and/or the writing rather than the story and its characters disrupts the fictional dream. The dream is stripped away at times when the author raises her head--with tense changes, overwriting, leaps in logic that didn't make sense, etc.. The dream also is disrupted when the narrator becomes too visible and "talks" to readers, recounting what should be live action, explaining why things happened, and/or forewarning readers about what is about to happen.

In a nutshell, when writers SHOW, the dream lives. When writers let the narrator TELL, the dream dies.

It's impossible to extract all narration (telling) from our writing. Nor would we want to. Narration helps readers see who the characters are with, to know who is being spoken to, and orients them as to when and where the characters are. Learning to weave telling with showing into a seamless whole is hard but can be done and is something for which writers interested in achieving the fictional dream always should strive.

"If I waited for perfection... I would never write a word."

—Margaret Atwood