

The Word Weaver

Inside

- ♦ Challenge2, 3
- ♦ Signatures Launch4
- ♦ Sound Echoes.....6
- ♦ The Dreaded Outline8
- ♦ If I Do Say So Myself9
- ♦ Workshops11

A newsletter for writers and editors
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Rhyme and Reason: Foundations of Poetry

By Philippa Schmiegelow



Seamus Heaney uses simple language in his poem "Crossings"; there is nothing high-blown or pretentious here, and nothing superfluous, yet the poem is full of surprises. On the simplest level it records a chance encounter between a man and a fox; on a deeper level it can be read as a political encounter.

It is dawn, the sun not yet up, the rocks still cold. But the rising sun with its promise of warmth stands in direct contrast to the sterility of the "high-up stone-walled country" and the "rocks still cold," and there are "glimpses" of "rainwater" ahead. In a few simple words, using landscape as metaphor for mood, and a pattern of assonance (repetition of vowel sounds within a line or within lines of a verse) to create a near-rhyme, Heaney prepares the reader for the turn that will carry the "I" of the poem through to the rebirth envisaged in the last stanza.

Carefully chosen and skillfully placed words create different levels of meaning in a poem. Line-breaks clarify and intensify the meaning. (This is particularly so for free verse, where the rules that govern more traditional forms often appear to be absent.) As Mary Oliver points out in *A Poetry Handbook*, "put one word on a line by itself in a poem of otherwise longish lines and it becomes a critical word." So why has Heaney chosen to enjamb or to turn the second line so that the logical sequence of words is interrupted? Was there no room for that single "cold" word? Why then doesn't he break the line earlier and move the last four words onto another? Or does that "cold" have some particular relevance to the mood and meaning of the poem? Let's see what happens when the narrator "takes a turn" and meets the fox "stock-still."

Crossings

By Seamus Heaney

Travelling south at dawn, going full
out
Through high-up stone-wall country,
the rocks still
cold,
Rainwater gleaming here and there
ahead,
I took a turn and met the fox stock-
still,
Face-to-face in the middle of the road.
Wildness tore through me as he
dipped and wheeled
In a level-running tawny breakaway.
O neat head, fabled brush and
astonished eye
My blue Volkswagen flared into with
morning!
Let rebirth come through water,
through desire,
Through crawling backwards across
clinic floors:
I have to cross back through that
startled iris.

To "take a turn" has several meanings. It is full of nuances. "Nuance" has its roots in the Latin "nubes" meaning a cloud, and the French "nuer" which means to shade. Such subtle differences can cloud or shift the meaning, feeling or colour of a poem and open it up to different interpretations. While the narrator takes a turn or does an about face, the fox (and it is *the fox* not a fox) introduces a blaze of colour into a cold, more or less colourless landscape. The fox's presence is unexpected. It brings the fast-moving car and its driver to a halt just as the hard "k" rap in "stock" slows down the reader and causes a brief halt in the movement of the poem. Yet Heaney chooses not to end-stop his line here but to wait until the middle line of the stanza to do so. This not only strengthens the word sense, it adds an element of mystery. *Continued on Page 2*

November/December Challenge Winners

Last issue's challenge called for members to dream a little dream.

With a poignant glimpse of nighttime longing in "Night Visitors," Lois Gordon's contribution is both

a dream and a nightmare. Graham Ducker puts a little humour in a raw hangover, while Arlene Terry makes "Magic Music."

Thanks to all who contributed.

Night Visitors

By Lois Gordon

He came to her after dark, slipping under the covers to hold her hand, fingers entwined, the way they'd always fallen asleep.

It was always the same: he didn't speak, but she was comforted just the same.

She could feel the blanket rise and fall over his chest as he breathed. The rhythm soothed her aching heart. His feet were cold, though, as usual. She recalled the nights of the great ice storm, when the power was out for days, and they wore heavy socks to bed and snuggled to keep warm.

He had been away so long this time – she wished she had news to share. Her quiet life was not so very interesting these days. He let her nuzzle in that tender spot behind his ear and whisper I love you's. Words no one else would ever hear.

"Don't stay away so long next time. You're always in my thoughts. You know that. But I need you near me."

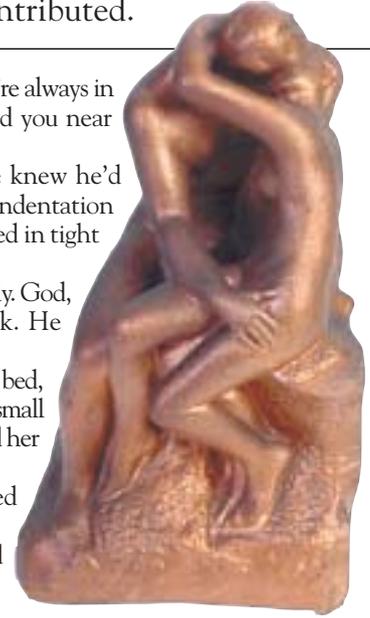
When she awoke, he was gone. She knew he'd been there, though the pillow bore no indentation from his head. The covers were still tucked in tight on his side of the bed.

She hugged the pillow and moaned softly. God, how she missed him. But he'd be back. He would keep his promise.

She dragged her aching body from the bed, smoothing the sheets after her. There was a small mound beneath the covers, and she slipped her hand under to discover what was there.

A pair of socks. Thick wool, with red stripes on the toes and pale grey heels.

She clutched them to her chest and wept.



Foundations of Poetry

Continued from cover

So how and why does this poem work? Just as word choice and line-breaks convey meaning, so too do visual images. Together, they help to move the poem along. Each stanza in Heaney's poem paints startlingly vivid images. Seamus Heaney positions his narrator as a disarrayed observer in the bleak but changing Irish landscape. As the "fox" turns back and melts into the Irish countryside he has occupied for generations, the "tawny" breakaway and "fabled" brush remind the informed reader of Ireland's troubled history, and of the severed brush used in the age-old initiation rites of foxhunters. What we have here then is much more than a casual encounter between man and fox as a middle-of-the-road expatriate Irish poet, a master of metaphor, is caught in the act of defining his present

by confronting his past.

In deceptively simple language, Heaney has created a poem that can be read and enjoyed on several levels. Such skill does not come easily. Writing good poetry is much like doing anything well — it requires practice and an intimate acquaintance with the craft. It also requires that you read widely across time and across cultures, study contemporary poetry, and find out what you like and why you like it: finally, that you learn the rules.

There are many rulebooks out there. Some are reader friendly, most are not. Read one some day but not too soon. First, start a love affair with words, and then learn to extract the essence of each word. Read a poem a day, or a book of poems. Borrow them from friends. Haunt bookshops. When you have found a book you can't

stop reading, buy it.

Hoard words and images; they are the treasure you'll mine one day. Read your favourites out loud and listen to the music. Join a poetry circle. It will save you time and you will learn all about rhyme!

And write.

For the beginning poet, a good place to start might be with our own Lucy Brennan.

Brennan, Lucy. *Migrants All*. Toronto: watershedBooks, 1999

Oliver, Mary. *A Poetry Handbook*. NY, Harcourt Brace, 1994.

The Complete Idiot's Guide to Writing Poetry. Indianapolis, alpha books, 2001

— WCDR member Philippa Schmiegelow's writing draws on the lives of women, both past and present, for inspiration.

For more poetic insight, see *Sound Echoes* on page 6

I Turned The Coffee On

By Graham Ducker, *The Pragmatic Poet*

The persistent clock was not kind to my alcoholic glazed mind when it said that it was time to turn the coffee on.

My aching body felt half dead, which matched the pounding in my head, whose misty messages to me said, "Go turn the coffee on."

Although my body wished to shift, the foggy cranium refused to lift.

My murky thoughts began to drift: 'Go turn the coffee on.'
I saw my shape drift 'cross the floor maneuvering through the open door, and a shaky finger reaching for the button: "Turn coffee on."

The plastic eye stared angrily, gurgled loud, then suddenly slid along and jumped at me, who'd turned the coffee on.

Its long black cord snaked out, evilly hissed, and wrapped about my neck, causing me to shout, "I've turned the coffee on!"

The toaster eagerly joined the fray, through slotted eyes began to spray its crumbs at me, as if to say, "You turned the coffee on!"

They pushed me back against a chair. Each growing larger, meaner, where with one voice said, "How dare you turn the coffee on!"

The situation climaxed. It seemed my hung-over head had just dreamed! I sat bolt upright and screamed, "I've turned the coffee on!"

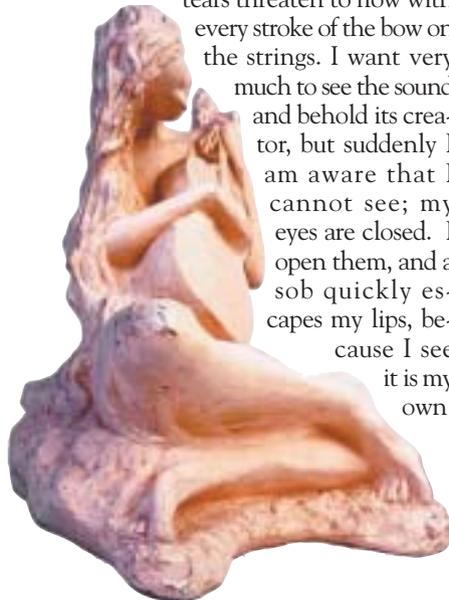
My bleary eyes blinked out in space, relieved to see things back in place, realizing there was no race to turn the coffee on.

It was so wonderful to flop down, to pull the covers up o'er my crown, knowing that I could sleep sound and NOT turn the coffee on.

Magic Music

By Arlene M. Terry

The sound is achingly beautiful, and my tears threaten to flow with every stroke of the bow on the strings. I want very much to see the sound and behold its creator, but suddenly I am aware that I cannot see; my eyes are closed. I open them, and a sob quickly escapes my lips, because I see it is my own



hands which are producing melodious, mournful measures of sound. The instrument is bold and beautiful, claiming its rightful place between my knees and at my shoulder. I play as if I am the cello, and it, I, and we are me and together we are the music.

The sound rises to crescendo, the bow is flying frantically now, and my left hand dances on the strings, trembling here and there in creation of a rich vibrato. My tears are flowing freely now, and I am on a collision course with destiny, the climaxed finale. The notes rush by me, blurred, until at last I play the final bar in triumph. I lift my bow from the string; the sound lingers and lasts as a fading echo in the room.

Then another sound begins to rise: methodical, monotonous, mindless, and I drop the bow as my right hand instinctively tries to silence this invasive noise. I fumble with the volume button and my hand finally hits the snooze bar. I am awake. My beloved cello has disappeared and I am lying on my back, my left hand at my left shoulder.

My pillow is damp and I'm playing F-sharp.

February/ March Challenge

For our next issue: Put two people in a room with two chairs, a table and a light hanging from the ceiling. What's their story? See what you come up with and send to wordweaver@wcd.org by Feb. 1, 2003. Thanks to Grace Stevenson for the suggestion, with a nod to Marjorie Green.



This, That and The Other Thing

Celebrations, a *Chicken Soupesque* book series set for release in January, encourages writers to check out their Web site: www.thedawkinsproject.com for publication guidelines.

Access Copyright is offering a nine-week online course, Access Copyright Online

Copyright Course. The course was prepared by Lesley Ellen Harris, noted copyright lawyer and author of *Canadian Copyright Law, 3rd Edition* (McGraw Hill Ryerson, 2001).

For more details on the course, or to sign up, go to www.accesscopyright.ca, click on Resources, then to go "Access Copyright publications" in the drop-down menu.

Launching a Dream

By Sherry Hinman, Signatures Contributor

"Sign my book?"
"Would you sign my book?" I felt like I hadn't felt since the last day of school, armed with yearbook and pen, as we'd circle the room gathering signatures. "Could I get you to sign, right here beside your story?" Only this time we were signing each other's newly published anthologies.

It was a day filled with the swell of pride that comes with seeing your name in print, as the Writers' Circle of Durham Region (WCDR) celebrated the launch of its first anthology on Saturday, at Ocala Winery.

The anthology, entitled *Signatures*, contains the work of 58 local authors and was made possible by a generous Ontario Trillium Foundation grant.

WCDR is described as "a forum through which [writers] can find support, education

and networking opportunities." It is this and so much more. WCDR is a writers' community, one with its gates flung wide open, welcoming published authors and novice writers alike. In fact, it welcomes those who only wish they could write. It is an organization but it is also a group of individuals who foster a love of reading, a concern for literacy and a desire to bring the joy of writing to everyone who is compelled to write.

In the past year and a half that I have belonged to this community, I have been mentored through the personal guidance of other members, high quality workshops, thought-provoking speakers at monthly breakfasts, numerous networking opportunities, an annual authors' festival, and many opportunities of which I have yet to avail myself: a writer-in-residence, writers' retreats and the list goes on.

The latest of these opportunities led to one of the most exciting moments of my life, the dream of opening a book to see my name and my story on the printed page. *Signatures* contains a fine selection of poems, stories, essays and memoirs, all by local writers. On its cover is Philippa Schmiegelow's exquisite painting of trillium flowers, in honour of WCDR's gratitude for the Trillium Foundation support.

In *A Message from the Editor*, Ruth Walker describes the delights that await the reader: "This anthology is not for the faint of heart. There are stories and poems that will challenge your ideas of grief and compassion. There are essays and memoirs that will prick at your conscience and burst your balloons."

If that's not enough, there's a story by me. And I'd be glad to sign it for you.

A Full House Beats a Nice Blush



WANT CHEESE WITH THAT? ... The *Signatures* launch on Nov. 30, 2002, was a huge success, thanks largely to the efforts of Nora Landry and Lynda Allison, as well as their dedicated team volunteers. Many contributors, members and supporters braved the blustery weather to make their way to Ocala Winery in Port Perry, which was not only a charming setting, but a great place to load up on ice wine for

the holidays. (Or a nice blush, the inspiration for pun-o-rific headline — Ed.)

"The excitement was palpable," said then-president Aprille Janes, who was president of last year's board, which was responsible for the anthology initiative. "What a perfect venue for a launch!"

There was barely a dry eye in the house as Nora Landry (above right) read an excerpt from her *Signatures* contribution, *Ashley's Ornaments*.

— Special thanks to photographer Heber Janes for the pics!



SHE WHO STARTED IT ALL ... Organizers called on Dorothea Helms, a former student of WCDR founder Marjorie Green's (and now a Durham College instructor herself) to dedicate *Signatures* to Member No. 1.

"How appropriate that WCDR's first anthology, *Signatures*, was dedicated to Marjorie Green. In addition to founding the organization, Marjorie is a superb writer and editor who has taught, mentored and inspired countless writers in Durham Region and beyond."

It was some effort keeping the official program out of her hands so as not to spoil the surprise, but we managed!

Said Aprille Janes at the end of it all, "Thanks to Trillium for their belief in our group and the committee for their hard work. Lynda and Nora deserve our thanks as well, for making the launch so much fun — and providing such delicious cake."

Signatures has been a runaway success, virtually selling out its initial 600-volume print run thanks to the efforts of a sales force led by Lois Gordon. Go team!



Anna Therien's Welcome Mat

Although there are only four new members this issue they are a stellar group!

Shirley Merith, Cathy Witlox, Joan Stevens and Lorraine Neal have joined the ranks of the mighty WCDR.

I think it only fair to pick on at least one new member as kind of a hazing. Poor Cathy Witlox didn't know what she was getting herself into when she said she'd be "happy" to be the, er, target of the Welcome Mat. I thought using the phraseology "target" might be a little more enticing than "victim." Guess what? She fell for it. I sent her an e-mail saying, "Okay, spill it baby ... your whole life story. Now." Funnily enough she answered my questions! Additionally I think everyone should know one more tid-bit about Cathy: she prefers Miracle Whip over mayonnaise. That said, here is the rest of Cathy's life in less than 300 words:

Why do you write?

I've never known life without writing. As a child, I wrote 'books' of poetry for my parents, painstakingly binding one page to the next with glue so they look like real books. In high school I dreamt of becoming an author of historical romance. In university I studied English so I could learn more about the craft and those who'd mastered it. Then I went on to study book and magazine publishing, because I wanted to get closer to the world of books — whether it was as an author or as an editor. Mostly, I write because I love playing with the English language and seeing how I can manipulate it.

What do you write?

Currently, I'm attempting to complete a "chick lit" novel. I also write monthly grammar articles, quizzes, and crossword puzzles for the Web site I work on. In the past, I focused on expressing myself through poetry and vignettes.

What size shoes do you wear?

As they are the most attractive part of my body, I encase my feet in the nicest size-six shoes I can manage on an editor's budget.

You work at Harlequin. That's kinda cool. What do you do there?

For the past three years, I've been the copy editor of Harlequin's Web site, eHarlequin.com. I also write some articles for the site. For the two years prior to that, I proofread the books, which to me was as close to heaven as I expect ever to get — I got paid to read novels all day long! The Web site is fun, though, because of the variety of fiction and non-fiction I have to edit.

All right, I think I've picked on Cathy long enough (for this issue anyhow). Here are a few other standard reminders.

New members will automatically receive *The Word Weaver* by snail mail as well as e-mail for two issues. After that, it would be great if you could let me know which way you would prefer to receive it. In the interest of saving trees and money as well as seeing *The Word Weaver* in its full-colour glory, e-mail is the way to go. However, it sure is nice getting the Real McCoy in the mail too! The choice is yours.

Breakfast is the second Saturday of every month at 8:30 a.m. Please call the central phone line (905-259-6520) and leave a message for Nora Landry by the Wednesday prior to the meeting if you intend to join us. Alternatively, you can e-mail Nora at breakfast@wcdr.org. For your convenience we maintain a "Regrets Only" list. If you register for the list, you only have to contact Nora if you are *not* attending. This is much easier for us forgetful ones in the bunch.

If you have any further questions or concerns please feel free to contact any board member.

On behalf of the WCDR board and the members, welcome to the WCDR. Sit back, buckle up, hold on tight, and enjoy the ride!

— Anna Therien, Membership Chick

Welcome to:
Shirley Merith • Cathy Witlox • Joan Stevens • Lorraine Neal

Sound Echoes

Roses Are Red, Violets Are Blue, If Everyone's Rhyming, Should You Do It Too?

By Gwynn Scheltema

The ongoing debate over the merits of traditional verse versus free verse seems often to focus on rhyme or the lack thereof. But wait a minute ... modern free verse is alive with rhyme. Let's take a look.

Rhyme is based on an identity of sound between words or verse-lines, "sound echoes" if you will. Traditional verse relies largely on end rhyme or external rhyme — placing rhyming words at the end of a line:

Tyger! Tyger! Burning bright
In the forests of the night
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?
— The Tyger, William Blake

In traditional verse forms, the end rhyme is usually organized into rhyme schemes. The

rhyme scheme in the excerpt above is aabb. Now compare that with these lines from a "free verse" poem, "The Anniversary", by American poet Ai:

I'm not afraid of the blade
you've just pointed at my head.
If I were dead, you could take the boy,

There are no end rhymes here, but there is plenty of rhyme nonetheless. In the first line we see an example (afraid; blade) of internal rhyme — rhyme that occurs within a verse line. As in a lot of free verse, rhyme also occurs from line to

line, just not necessarily at the end. (head/dead).

These are perfect, strict, full, or pure rhymes- the last fully accentuated vowel and end consonant are identical. Be aware that we are talking sound here, not spelling. — cat/hat; tree/bee; fool/mule; tough/huff.

Perfect rhyme can be further divided: masculine rhyme, where one final stressed syllable rhymes (sang/rang), and feminine rhyme, where at least two syllables rhyme and the final syllable is not stressed (mother/bro-ther; com-par-i-son/gar-ri-son).

Additionally, Ai's poem contains slant rhyme (also known as off rhyme, near rhyme, imperfect rhyme or half rhyme) — words whose sounds are closely related but not identical. If the poet plays with consonants at the beginning of words, that's alliteration; at the end of words, it is called consonance. If the poet plays with similar vowel sounds, it is known as assonance. Blade and head at the end of the first and second lines have the same end consonant sound, although they have different vowel sounds. Other slant rhymes would be bend/hand; home/same; trophy/daffy; fellow/fallow; kind/conned.

Rhyming choices don't end there. Eye rhyme, for instance, plays with sight, not sound: two words that look like they ought to rhyme, but don't. (love/move; lull/full; though/cough).

And there is more. Gwendolyn Brooks' poem "We Real Cool" is chock full of rhyme.

We real cool. We
Left school. We

Lurk late. We
Strike straight. We

Sing sin. We
Thin gin. We



Jazz
June.
We
Die
soon.

I'm sure
you've already
found internal
rhyme (thin/gin); and slant
rhyme (real/cool). We find assonance (sing/sin), alliteration (lurk/late), consonance (real/cool) and repetition (We). This piece also has para rhyme, or rich consonance, that uses consonant blends and the order of consonants to create sound echoes. (left/late; strike/straight; jazz/die-s).

Why so much attention to rhyme? As conventional verse was primarily rooted in the oral tradition, rhyme's function was largely mnemonic. So-called "free verse" is appreciated visually as well as through sound. Rhyme creates emphasis and structural unity, and draws attention to the relationship between words and thoughts. In Brooks' poem, notice how the absence of repetition (We) in the last line emphasizes the thought that their lives will be truncated too. Good rhyme goes beyond the obvious. When used effectively, it adds to the sensory impact of poetry by creating a pleasing network of related "sound echoes."

A Message From The **BOARD**

By *Aprille Janes, Past President*

Those of you who attended the December breakfast meeting heard the announcement that I'm stepping down as president. Lynda Allison will take my place as acting president for the remainder of this year. My reasons for this are many, including demands on my personal time, making it difficult to give WCDR the attention it deserves. As well, after two-and-a-half years running a writing organization, I want to make a commitment to actually writing!

However, it's not without a certain amount of regret that I take my leave. I loved serving as your president and want to thank each of you for the friendship and support you've shown me. I also want to thank the boards that served with me. Without their energy and commitment, the good things we accomplished these last two-and-a-half years could not have happened.

As I contemplated my decision to retire, I realized I feel good about the legacy I'm leaving to the Writers' Circle of Durham Region.

We've achieved a level of professionalism that has brought recognition and respect from the community around us, including other arts groups, the larger writing community, the general public and government agencies.

Organizationally, we implemented such things as a central phone number and e-mail addresses for continuity, a presence on the Web, board job descriptions to clarify roles, better record-keeping and a number of other initiatives that are unseen but essential. On that foundation, we built some stellar programs.

Our commitment to supporting and providing opportunities to our members is evidenced in the quality and quantity of our workshops. We even offer a yearly retreat to recharge the writing batteries.

Because we are professional in our approach we've been able to attract breakfast speakers of the highest calibre who are well-known in the industry. Our members have benefited from our guests' knowledge and experience as well as the opportunity to connect face-to-face. Plus we've gone from an average of 30 members at a breakfast to almost triple that number of members and guests.

We have a sell-out with *Signatures*, a directory advertising our business members, and were able to offer the services of an excellent

Writer in Residence. The Dan Sullivan contest is listed in Writers' Market and is known across Canada.

Our own *Word Weaver* is a professional-quality publication that goes way beyond a mere newsletter. You can even choose between an electronic version in full colour or a hard copy to hold in your hands. Add to that form of communication our e-notices of contests, markets and members' accomplishments and we provide a wealth of opportunities to connect.

We've made our mark on a larger stage as well. Words in Whitby is recognized among award-winning authors as a place to be seen. Pierre Berton was so impressed with us he agreed to be our Honorary Patron!

Outside of our group, we have a reputation for being a dynamic and unique organization. I've even had phone calls from other groups asking how we do it. I've heard from writers in other geographic areas, including the U.S., asking how they can form a circle of their own. They want what we have in Durham Region.

So, am I proud? You bet your boots I am.

As I say good-bye, I just want to add that I'm glad to be part of WCDR's history. These last two-and-a-half years have been rewarding. It was a privilege to serve as your president. Thank you for the opportunity.

Odds & Eds

Ah, the new year's resolution. Such fun to make, and such fun to break.

At the top of my list of resolutions for 2003 is finishing my two-thirds of a novel, which has been languishing on disk for the better part of a year.

(I have also resolved to start eating vegetables, but I digress.)

Many writers cite a lack of time as their primary obstacle, and I'm tempted to jump on that too, but when I take a look at my schedule, it just isn't the case. Yes, I have a demanding full-time job and a relationship to maintain (thankfully less demanding). Yet I still find time to play with my friends; I still find time to take Spanish lessons; I still find time to sit on my ever-expanding you-know-what and play video games until my eyes bleed.

The fact is that what I lack isn't time, it's discipline, and where do I look for that? How can I keep my resolution from derailing yet another year?

I tried cajoling myself. "Self," I said slyly, "just sit down and do this for half an hour every day, and I'll get you a little something. A spa day maybe, or a vacation."

"Nope," said Self. "We can have that anyway. Deprivation is not exactly our long suit, is it?"

"Okay," said I with a sigh. "What then? What will it take?"

"Guaranteed results," said Self. "Promise me that if we sit down and do this, it'll all be worth it."

I was aghast! "Is that it? You don't think the writing itself is worthwhile? You don't think the act of creation, the betterment of your soul and the enrichment of your mind is reward enough???"

"No way," said selfish Self. "We want actual, tangible results. Money. Glory. A charge account at Holt."

"Well, that's just not possible," I said. "That's not the way the game is played. You have to do the work and take your chances."

"Poop," said Self. "Where's the remote?"

"Okay, okay," I relented. "What say we make a deal — you help me out with this one little resolution, and I, in return, will let you have Thursday nights off for *Survivor*."

"Well ..." hedged Self.

"Please?" I entreated.

"Oh, all right. But no Thursdays."

Wish us luck.

— *Annette McLeod, editor*

Your Two Cents



Last month's topic, Taste, was such a hit with readers, *The Word Weaver* mailbox didn't receive even a single response. Still, never one to give up without a fight, we'll try once more to get this op/ed feature off the ground. For next issue, *The Word Weaver* wants to know what's on your mind. What's the biggest issue facing writers today? Send your opinions and suggestions for future "Two Cents" questions to wordweaver@wcdr.org.

If you want a forum to voice your opinion, you're going to have to participate, folks. (Feel free to request "anonymous" or initials only as your sign-off. We don't want to start any fist fights at breakfast.)

E-Word Weaver

Thanks to those who have opted to receive *The Word Weaver* by e-mail. This helps the WCDR save printing and mailing costs. If you'd like to give it a try, contact Anna Therien to try the test PDF file (it's in full colour, folks!), then let her know if you'd like your name added to the E-Word Weaver list.

Paeans

The editors of Durham Region's first literary journal are proud to announce that *lichen* has been accepted as a contributing publication for The Journey Prize, Canada's most prestigious award for developing writers. Awarded annually, the \$10,000 Journey Prize, now known as The Writers' Trust of Canada/McClelland & Stewart Journey Prize, is given to a new and developing writer of distinction for a short story published in a Canadian literary publication.

The winner of the Journey Prize is chosen from among the stories appearing in the current volume of The Journey Prize Anthology, published each fall by McClelland & Stewart, Ltd. As a contributing journal, *lichen* joins such

esteemed company as *Descant*, *The Antigonish Review* and *PRISM International*, and will nominate three stories from the outstanding fiction published by *lichen literary journal* during 2002. In May 2003, *lichen* celebrates its fifth anniversary.

WCDR members **Gwynn Scheltema, Andrea Stone, Ingrid Ruthig** and **Ruth Walker** are all on *lichen's* editorial board. This is an outstanding achievement, and the WCDR salutes you!

Congratulations to **Sue Reynolds** and **Dorothea Helms**, who traveled to Amherst, Mass., in November to study with Pat

Schneider.

They attended an intense four-day workshop to become certified to lead writing workshops using the Amherst Writers & Artists (AWA) method Pat describes in her book *The Writer as an Artist*.

Dorothea and Sue will be offering a series of AWA workshops in the new year.

It's a fact — **Dorothea Helms** had an article appear in the *Globe & Mail's* Facts and Arguments feature on Jan. 3, 2003. Dorothea's encounter with a former student is a touching reminder that sometimes a favour granted is a favour returned.

The Dreaded Outline

Why Should You Bother? Because It's Good For You

By Dorothea Helms

If you don't have enough frustration in your life, order a Taurus to do something she doesn't want to do and see what happens. Award-winning author Robyn Davidson did just that earlier this year, when she *made* me write an outline for the novel I'm working on. Robyn was my mentor in the Humber School for Writers Correspondence course I recently completed. Through snail mail and e-mail, she guided my progress in churning out part of my first draft. We had our initial interaction in early February, and by the middle of the month, she asked me to write an outline of the book.

I said no, because I had this dreamy idea that I would allow my characters to play out the book for me as I went along. I told her I didn't want to steer them in any direction by preconceiving a plot.

She wrote back and said (in nicer words than this) — *baloney*. You're floundering. Write an outline. You can always change it as you go along, but you have no direction and it's holding you back.

My husband's comment at this point: "Ha! She's got you good!"

Well, he — and she — was right. I admitted that I was changing my mind daily about all manner of character and plot, like a snagged literary fish flopping around to get from the dock back into the water. In un-typical Taurean fashion, I gave in and promised I'd write an outline. I told Robyn, however, that I wouldn't

enjoy it, and that I had no intention of outlining the ending (because at that point I didn't know how my controversial novel might conclude).

As happens so often in my life, synergy intervened. In March, I took a one-day workshop on Substantive Editing from Rosemary Shipton at the Editors' Association of Canada. After that enlightening day, the idea of outlining my book seemed so good, I wished I'd thought of it myself.

I learned how to look at a book in a "big picture" way, and I attacked my outline with an enthusiasm that startled me. In addition to coming up with an innovative technique for presenting the "chapters," I realized I had far more characters than I needed to achieve my desired impact. I faced the fact that my main character was too weak to withstand the challenges I had in store for her, so I laid her off and recruited someone different to play the lead.

I didn't outline the ending, though. I mean, some things are sacred.

Wouldn't you know that, before long, that changed too?

I've always had my best ideas for writing while driving. Don't know why — I just find operating heavy machinery inspiring. This time, however, the ending came to me while I was showering. As soap suds trickled down my back, there it was — etched in permanent

cranial ink on my frontal lobe. I *knew* how the book *had* to end.

Then, at one of Sue Reynolds' Write Now sessions, I wrote the ending. It was as if someone else controlled the pen, and by the last line the writing implement felt so hot that I had to toss it aside and stop. That happened in the same

room in the Uxbridge Library where the ghost touched me a couple years ago, so I did feel like I was in an Alfred Hitchcock movie — but that's another article.

The point is the outline has helped me a lot in writing my novel draft. Those of you who have taken my creative writing course are probably flashing smug grins right now. I tell my students that when they receive an assignment they don't want to do, it's because they need it. Well, fine. I needed it. I did it. I even enjoyed it. Now if I could just find some *time* to finish the draft ...



If I Do Say So Myself

Q: Frank Young • A: Don Buxcey

I understand you are now retired. Do you find that you have more time to revise and edit your book, which sounds as if it is in the final stages of development?

I found that re-writing takes about as much time and energy as did the first draft. After four years putting the book together, I thought the work was about finished. But reflection, research and re-writing have become an intense occupation. My work is theological and will probably take another four years to polish.

Retirement has not been what I thought not working would be. Dreams of writing for at least eight hours a day have not come true.

Maintenance of self is a big part of living, and while I had a job, it was just something done of necessity — part of the routine. But now I don't have a routine and the task of living has taken on a very important role, to which I must pay much more attention.

Can you describe your book? What was the response from publishers you approached?

God's D.N.A. is my attempt to update theology, which I perceive as (having become) stagnant in our fascination with Victorian grandeur. A few scientists attempted to bridge the gap between science and religion, but the efforts of theologians to reciprocate is almost negligible. My work is a response to fill that void.

Augsburg Press sent me two personal letters but indicated that my book goes beyond the Evangelical Lutheran publication guidelines.

Anglican Book Centre said, also in a personal letter, that the book is too long for their requirements. Both stated that this was only the opinion of one editor and to submit it to other publishers.

Have you known any well known authors and were you inspired at all?

After writing alone in my bedroom for 30 years unaware of any local writers, I accidentally read a Farley Mowat book. His address was in Port Hope, so in 1996 I wrote to express my frustration with the conflict between needing solitude in which to create, and the requirements of a large family, which prevented me from writing. Farley wrote back with encouraging words that inspired me to keep going. From a copy of *Quill and Quire*, I discovered C.A.A. Toronto, which I joined immediately.

There I met my great inspiration, Marjorie Green, who introduced me to WCDR.

And at breakfast meetings I met numerous writers. You and I, Frank, have conversed many times over sausage and eggs, where it has been a pleasure to get to know you.

What specific authors or books have inspired you to write?

Victor Hugo's character Jean Val Jean, *The Idiot* by Dostoyevsky, and the convict in William Faulkner's *Old Man*, are simple men of great ethical stature, with whom I wanted to identify. Carl Jung wrote *Answer to Job*, and that changed my whole direction in life when I read it. But I found that I was writing almost the same as Teilhard de Chardin, or Canadian native theologians, and this encouraged me to delve deeper into theology in an effort to create new myths, which would serve our modern thirst for truth. I do not have an academic education, therefore my writing reflects the working man's language, in which express myself.

It is my feeling that this gives me the ability to reach a broad Canadian audience, with some theological insight.

I write because I have to and I cannot explain it. There are many people who do not believe such a thing as a "muse" exists, but I am forced to concede that I am possessed by a muse, and so I write.

GrammarPuss



Me, Myself and I

Dear GrammarPuss,

I am hoping you can lay this one to rest. Is Sally taller/smarter/more charming than "I" or than "me"? I know that "me" is quite acceptable but is it correct?

I hope your reply will help settle a difference of grammatical opinion between myself and my mother, who believes she is more highly educated than me — or is it I?

Thanks!

Yours grammatically, Sherry

Dear Sherry,

I don't even know Sally, but I'm pretty sure she is, indeed, taller than I. (I'm only five-foot-three.) While it helps to know that "I" is a subject and "me" is an object (subjects *act*; objects are acted *upon*), the most helpful tidbit I ever got came from a substitute teacher I had in seventh grade: to make the I/me conundrum clear, finish the clause. Sally is taller than I (am). The "am" is implied, making "I" the way to go in this case. (You'd never say "Sally is taller than me am" would you?)

A similar trick will help you figure "me" out. Take this sentence: Dad told Mom and I he'd be back in time for supper. To decide whether "I" or "me" is the right way to go in this case, try taking out "Mom and." What we're left with is, "Dad told I he'd be back in time for supper." Makes it pretty clear that, in this case, we should have used "me":

Dad told Mom and me he'd be back in time for supper.

So, Sherry, your Mom in fact thinks she's "more highly educated than I (am)." Bear in mind that while "me" may do in conversation, unless your character would use bad grammar, you should get it right in writing.

(Just to carry on with the theme a bit, I notice you use "myself and my mother." "Myself" should be reserved for two purposes only: to make a verb reflexive — I was kicking myself — and for emphasis — I couldn't believe it myself! Otherwise, the word you want is "me," and you should always put the other person first. The phrase therefore becomes, "... help settle a difference between my mother and me ...")

Hope this helps!

Dear GrammarPuss,

Here's a Canadian Style question for you. Is the accepted Canadian spelling "gray" or "grey" or does either work?

Thanks! Nancy

Dear Nancy,

Almighty Oxford says either will do, but if you're writing for Canadian periodicals, CP (Canadian Press) prefers "grey."

Send your grammar, style and punctuation question to GrammarPuss at wordweaver@wcdcr.org.

Writers' Circles



To join one of the circles below, please call the contact person indicated. For general information, write to Sherry Loeffler at loeffler@primus.ca or call her at 905-640-6315. Group leaders, please notify editor of changes to dates, times or locations.

Christians Who Write

The second Saturday of each month after the breakfast meeting
Call for location
Caroline Davidson
905-683-4854

Circle for Children's Writers

First Wednesday of each month
Next meeting, Jan. 8
7 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Oshawa Public Library
Northview Branch
250 Beatrice St. E., Oshawa
Mike Ward
wardswords@hotmail.com

Durham Write-On

Tuesdays, every other week
Next meeting, Jan. 14.
7 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Call for location
Ruth Walker, 905-728-7823

Inkwell

Formerly Bowmanville Writers' Group
Third Tuesday of each month
Next meeting, Jan. 21
7 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Offices of Hamilton and Mutton
1 Division St., Bowmanville
Lynda Allison, 905-623-0365

Markham Village Writers' Group

Monthly
Next meetings, Jan. 8; Feb. 5; March 5;
April 9; May 7; June 4
Donna Marrin
donna.marrin@staples.ca

Newcastle Poetry Club

Third Monday of each month
Next meeting, Jan. 20
7 p.m. to 9 p.m.
261 Mill St., Newcastle
Philippa Schmiegelow, 905-987-4856

Northword Edition

Tuesdays, every two weeks
Next meetings, Jan. 7, 21
7 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Uxbridge Public Library
Dorothea Helms, 905-852-9294

Oshawa Scribes

First and third Tuesday of each month
Next meetings, Jan. 7, 21
1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Oshawa Library, Northview Branch
250 Beatrice St. E., Oshawa
Grace Stevenson, 905-725-0760

Richard Ferrier Writers' Group

Formerly Volume Two
Third Tuesday of each month
Next meeting, Jan. 21
2 p.m. to 4 p.m.
History Room at Pickering Central Library
Tina Ivany, 905-427-1270
or tdivany@sympatico.ca
Ron Dixon, 416-284-5673
or retro@pathcom.com

Senior Scribes of Uxbridge

Second and fourth Friday of each month
Next meetings, Jan. 10, 24
1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Township Hall, Uxbridge
Joyce Whitney, 905-852-3414

Word

Players

Newcastle Writing Group
Call for dates
7 p.m. to 10 p.m.
261 Mill St. S., Newcastle
Philippa Schmiegelow, 905-987-4856

Write in Whitby

Second and fourth Tuesday of each month
Next meetings, Jan. 14, 28
7 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Whitby Public Library
Lloyd Blair, 905-430-0075

Write Now

A group for on-the-spot writing
Every second Thursday
Next meeting, Jan. 16
7 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Uxbridge Public Library
Sue Reynolds, 905-985-1962

Writers' and Editors' Network

Breakfast meeting
Third Saturday of each month
Next meeting, Jan. 18
9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
Canadiana Restaurant and Banquet Hall
5230 Dundas St. W.
Six Points Plaza
Toronto
Mickey Turnbull, 905-824-5035
or mickeytc@ica.net

Workshops

I Do Different Voices Part II

Rachelle Lerner
Saturday, March 1
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Location TBA

Members: \$50; Non-members: \$55

This full-day workshop offers hands-on explorations of different poetic forms using a variety of different writing exercises.

Extend the range of your poetic voice, and sharpen your poetic tools.

Participants should bring some of their own work to class.

— Facilitator Rachelle K. Lerner, PhD, has been published in literary journals, including *The D.H. Lawrence Review*, *Descant*, *Signal*, and *lichen*, and in the CPA Anthology *Oval Victory* (2002). As a writer, editor, and independent scholar, papers have been presented at conferences for the Narrative Organization, Modern American Poetry Foundation, and New York University. Following several years as co-editor of *Descant*, she is a senior editor/writer in government. Work in progress includes a collection of poems, *In the Space Between*, and finalizing a biography of American poet Kenneth Rexroth entitled *A Rage to Order*.

Life Stories Into Fiction

Margaret Slavin Dymant
Saturday, March 22, 2003
10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Durham College - Whitby Campus
\$60 Members; \$65 non-members

Your life provides the raw material to write fiction. But how do you move from “what really happened” to the “story?” In “Life Stories Into Fiction,” you’ll take a memory and transmute it into fiction. Learn distancing, changing, shaping — why you do it, how you do it. Bring along your memories and pen and paper.

— Margaret Slavin Dymant’s collection of short fiction is *Drawing the Spaces* (Orca). Her stories and poems appear in literary magazines and anthologies. She has taught creative writing at Carleton University and at Trent University as well as, for 15 years, through her own company, *Write Away!* To register, contact Lois Gordon (see last page) or Margaret Slavin Dymant, 705-749-1544 (writeaway@nexicom.net) Box 842, Peterborough Ont. K9J 7A2.

Substantive Editing for Writers

susana gomes
Saturday, March 29, 2003
Location to be Announced

Tired of hearing that your fiction doesn’t “work”? Fed up with rejection letters from editors who claim to like your writing but who aren’t willing to buy it?

Make your writing work for you! Learn how to substantively edit your own writing with an eye to improving readability and “sellability.”

This course shows you how to evaluate your writing, edit fiction and non-fiction, and identify problems with voice, tense, point of view and cliché.

There’s an editor in every writer. Give your editor the skills to make your writing shine!

— susana gomes is professional editor and indexer. She is a member of the Editors’ Association of Canada and the Indexing and Abstracting Society of Canada. She edits for the legal and corporate markets and also works with fiction, non-fiction and poetry writers. She is also a “just for fun” writer who has had her poetry and short fiction published in various literary journals. You can reach susana at editingink@rogers.com.

Telling Lies Creatively

Paul Lima
Saturday, April 12
Oshawa Public Library
Northview Branch

This fiction-writing workshop focuses on various techniques, such as Freefall, Clustering, Modelling, Word Photography and Dialogue to help you draw on your imagination and sift through memories and experiences for material you can use in writing short stories. Learn how to write freely, discover and develop ideas, turn ideas into stories, and create dialogue that sings!

— Paul Lima is a freelance writer and professional member of the Periodical Writers Assoc. of Canada, for which he conducts writing workshops. He is a regular speaker at Ryerson, and currently writes articles for *The Toronto Sun*, *The National Post*, *The Financial Post*, *Time Canada* and many other online and print publications. He has had short stories and poetry published in a variety of literary journals.

Write-Up Kids
Jan. 23 to March 13
Oshawa Library
Northview Branch
Lynda Allison

\$80 for series

On Thursdays, Jan. 23 to Mar. 13, Lynda Allison of Write-Up Writing Services presents Write-Up Kids (grades 6-8), 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., and Write-Up Teens (high school), 7:30 p.m. to 9 p.m., at the Northview Branch of the Oshawa Public Library. Eight workshops designed to give flight to the creative spirit and inspire youth to write stories that soar.

For workshop flyer and registration brochure contact Lynda Allison, 905-623-0365 or lallison@durham.net.

Upcoming Breakfasts

January 11

Featured Guest: **Karen Levine**
CBC Radio Producer, First Person
Singular segment and author of *Hana’s Suitcase*, 2002 Governor General’s Literary Award nominee for Children’s Literature

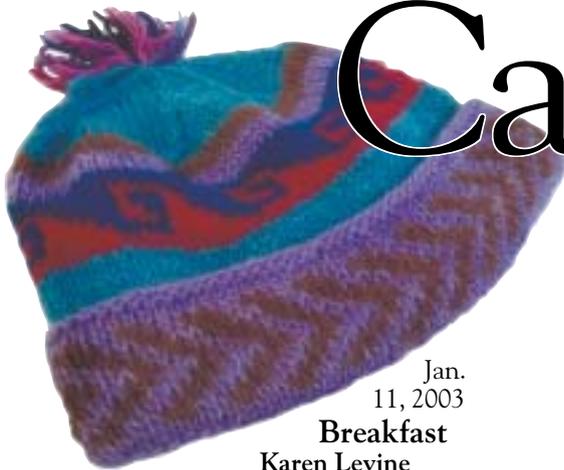
Hana’s Suitcase is the story of a young Japanese woman who discovers the truth behind an artifact from the Holocaust. Her story intertwines with the story of Hana Brady, a young girl from Czechoslovakia whose life ended tragically in Auschwitz. The story is heartbreaking but it also whispers of hope as an old inert suitcase is connected to the living vibrant child Hana, and as the hearts of Japanese children are linked to her.

February 8

Featured Guest: **Lorraine Filyer**
Literature Officer with
The Ontario Arts Council

Lorraine will talk about the Ontario Arts Council and their function. She will concentrate on the two programs they have for funding professional writers. She will also bring application forms for both programs and discuss the application process.

Breakfast meetings run from 8:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. at Iroquois Park Sports Complex 50 Victoria St. W. (at Henry Street) in Whitby • Members, \$12; guests, \$15
If you are not on the regrets only list, your place **must** be reserved no later than the Wednesday prior with Nora Landry at 905-259-6520 or at breakfast@wcdcr.org



Calendar of events

Jan.
11, 2003
Breakfast
Karen Levine
Author and Radio Producer

Feb. 8, 2003
Breakfast
Lorraine Flyer
Literature Officer

Jan. 23 to March 13, 2003
Workshop
Write-Up Kids
Lynda Allison

March 1, 2003
Workshop
I Do Different Voices II
Rachelle Lerner

March 22, 2003
Workshop
Life Stories Into Fiction
Margaret Slavin Dymet

March 29, 2003
Workshop
Substantive Editing For Writers
susana gomes

April 12, 2003
Workshop
Telling Lies Creatively
Paul Lima

For workshop information, see page 11 or
contact Lois Gordon at workshops@wcdr.org
To register for breakfast meetings, see page
11 or contact Nora Landry at
breakfast@wcdr.org

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Send comments and submissions to
wordweaver@wcdr.org or
c/o WCDR, P.O. Box 323
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We reserve the right to edit or reject
submissions at our discretion

Famous Last Words

The only way to spend New Year's Eve is either quietly with friends or in a brothel. Otherwise when the evening ends and people pair off, someone is bound to be left in tears.

— W.H. (Wystan Hugh) Auden