

The Self Publisher's Newsletter

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Contents

Can You Hear Me Now?	2	The Real Publishing Rules.	4
Writing in Parallels	2	Final Thoughts	6

Can You Hear Me Now?

As you may have noticed this newsletter is an occasional thing. And this is one of those occasions. We have two things to offer in this issue. The first is the copyrighted and award winning article "Writing in Parallels" penned by yours truly. It is worth sharing I hope. 1stbooks.com paid me money for it and Freelance Writing Organization International gave it an award. See my website:

[**WexfordPress homepage**](#)

or the FWO site:

[**Freelance Writing Organization-Int'l**](#)

The other is a letter we wrote in white heat to one of the publishing mailing lists. Good authors study and polish each word. But this

writer has to be turned on by the topic and when that happens not much editing is required.

Writing in Parallels

I once knew a high school footballer who also was a premier wrestler. When he tackled someone, the other guy went down for sure. His wrestling experience gave him techniques of leverage and weight shifting that made him more effective in a very different sport. Similarly, writers can use the methods of one form of writing to improve their work in a different category.

Parallelism is one such technique and it is borrowed from poetry. Don't let the fancy name turn you off. It is really a very simple technique. Chances are you already use it without

realizing it.

The Judeo-Christian bible (the Torah or Old Testament) is full of poetry, and that poetry is full of parallelism. A statement is repeated in different words, or explained further in the following line. The epic poets of the Anglo-Saxons actually made parallelism their art form. Every line had two parts with a distinct pause in the middle. Politicians will use repetition and parallelism in speeches, building to a climax.

But how can we use this technique in the modern novel? Try this version of an old nursery rhyme for starters:

"Jill had always loved Jack. From their first meeting she had given her heart to him. But Jack did not return her affection. He only cared about his bucket and the water it would contain. Thus when they went up the hill together their fate was sealed. Jack's obsession was to cause their downfall."

Well it's not deathless prose. But it does illustrate parallelism. There are six sentences in three parallel pairs. Each pair deals with the same thought in two alternate ways.p>

There is parallelism even in the above paragraph. Can you spot the parallel pairs? Once you start writing in parallel sentences or phrases it becomes addictive. It is hard to stop writing in parallels.

Sometimes you can have parallels within parallels:

"He was tall and blond, tanned and fit, handsome and charming."

And, of course, it is possible to parallel three sentences or phrases instead of two. There are some threesomes in this article. Parallelism can involve restating the same thought, or just putting one phrase or sentence after the other in a rhythmic pattern. There is rhythm in prose

writing just as there is in poetry or music. Try to sense the rhythm. One way to pick up the rhythm is to read aloud. (Explain what you are doing to family members so that they won't be calling for men in white coats!)

Parallelism need not be forced or artificial. After some practice it becomes almost second nature. So take some of your own writing and look for unconscious paralleling of phrases, sentences or thoughts. If they don't exist try inserting some. Develop your own rhythm of parallels. It is an easy, painless way to add variety and color to your writing.

The Real Publishing Rules.

OK here are the real rules.

Category 1: Memoir, Family History, Autobiography, Church History.

Your markets are family, friends and descendants. Print about 50 or so copies, but on good paper and possibly hard bound if you can afford it. Sell or give the copies away to F & F, church buddies etc. Don't bother with an ISBN. Do bother with an LCN and send two copies to the LOC. My grandfather's book is in the LOC and perhaps 60 years after his death my sister the PhD dug it out. I don't know that he ever sold a copy of his "privately printed" memoir, but we are glad to have access to it. Your descendants will be glad too.

Category 2: Genre fiction.

If at all possible find a publisher who actively promotes their backlist. I have such a publisher in Genesis Press, for whom I typeset romance novels. They specialize in African-American and interracial romances, with some explicit content. They have their audience and they print their current publication schedule and their backlist in every book along with three

order blanks. They don't even bother with an LCN. They promote and sell directly to their market and I am sure a book of blank pages would sell plenty of copies just on the basis of the publisher. They deal directly with their stable of authors, who typically produce one or two new titles a year. Genesis produces two a month, regular as clockwork.

There are probably Western and SciFi houses with similar programs.

Sadly, even excellent genre fiction doesn't often make it self-published. One of the best police procedurals I ever read was and is *Holy Orders* by ex-cop Michael Redding. The review copy got passed around in the family from household to household. Ever hear of it? I thought not.

Category 3: General fiction

This is even tougher. Try to interest an agent and try to get the agent to present your book

to several publishers. If by chance the lightning strikes and someone publishes your work then be prepared for a hefty promotional effort, author signings, radio shows etc. At the end of the year, if you are successful, you will find that you earned about 50 cents an hour.

Category 4: Guru books.

This category includes all those self-help, new age and financial books. The trick here is to present an entire package, starting with the lecture and including BOR sales of tapes, books, reports etc. Dan Poynter is a very successful example. The book is just part of the package. This is not a book—it is a career.

Category 5: Howto books, travel guides etc.

This is another prime self-publishing territory. One lady earns well year after year with a tome titled *New Jersey Day Trips*. She never wrote a second book; she just keeps updating the first

one. I suspect she also concentrates hard on distribution to appropriate outlets.

Another lady tops the sales at booklocker.com with a book on how to make gel candles. Sexy? No. Lucrative? It can be.

So there you have it, the real rules by category and market. None of these categories are bad or to be avoided if you have the urge. Just sense your market, make plans and adjust your expectations accordingly.

John Culleton

Final Thoughts

This is newsletter numbr 4 and we are not sure we ever sent out number 3. No matter, we will send it out presently. However chaotic our publication schedule we hope the content is worth your valuable time.

Remember, welcome your input and will include it in a newsletter if you wish. Just write: selfpub@wexfordpress.com

and share your views with the rest of us!

Take care.

John Culleton, Editor
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