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English III

18 May 2023

### Ironic that the Glass Slipper's Existence is Technically a Plot Hole

Feather quills, sharp wooden sticks dipped in ink, and sheets made of a manila, rags, and straw mix, have grown into mesmerizing technologies such as computers, programmed to know one's next word, and artificial intelligence that will type one's essay itself. Communicating with editors and critical readers is no longer based on the only local reviews of one's work first seen in the small town newspaper; it is, instead, as easy as sending one email, reaching potential readers, editors, and publishers miles away, rather than limiting it to minutes. In the past writing has been a lonesome career, the closest existence of collaborative books and writing projects being government plans and documents, or combinations of different authors who write from the same time period. However, with the expansion of technology and a growing platform for writers everywhere, remote and live workshops for writers from anywhere are available. Author Courtney Maum of *Before and After the Book Deal: A Writer's Guide to Finishing, Publishing, Promoting, and Surviving Your First Book*, and author Amy Jones of *Novel and Short Story Writer's Market* expand on the new technologies and current developments across the writing industry. Regularly a career spent in solitary, writing workshops create a sense of community, a shoulder to lean on, and an opportunity for new and experienced writers to learn from one another and their ideas. Writing and publishing has expanded into a dynamic industry featuring

greater access to instant technologies related to the editing process, ranging from publishing platforms, and online writing workshops.

Picking up the pen and grabbing a notebook, this process is easier said than it may be done. Questions of what to write, where to start, and even how to write it, plague writers of every kind new and old. Whether it is one's first piece of writing or one's twentieth, the process of getting the piece started or completed could scare the most fearless and brave monster slaying hero away. After publishing her fair share of books, from spreading her knowledge and advice to writing multiple creative fictional pieces of her own, Maum shares her encounter and experience with the most ferocious and deadliest beast, the sleep paralysis demon of all writers known to man, writer's block. A beast that creeps back into every writer's mind when least expected, frequently accompanied by the monstrous feelings of envy, comparison, self-doubt, and low self-esteem. Bestowing her wisdom on the ordinary writer, Maum recommends, "Combat the envy monster by switching up your habits. Leave your computer at a friend's house and write longhand for a week. Read writers you can't easily compare yourself with: start with writers who are dead" (196). Writer's block is nothing but a mind game, a mental bump in the road most published and unpublished writers experience. Jennifer De Leon's article speaks to the impediments associated with distractions: "Even with minimal distractions at a residency, the reality is that there are still many psychological and emotional barriers to fully immersing oneself in creative projects." Most of the writing process is simply based on one's environment, and the distractions one lets in and one pushes out, these distractions prevent the writer from completely focusing on the project at hand. Maum writes frequently on her experience with making mistakes, and how important it is to make mistakes: "And take heed if you're paralyzed by the idea of a bad draft: a good book usually takes about seven shitty versions, not one" (14).

Allowing oneself to make mistakes or write a piece that may not be one's best is a crucial part of the writing process, as much as it may make the writer uncomfortable. Author, Christopher Grobe, explains his perspective on writing: "This is what I value most in writing: the way it carries me from confusion to understanding, enforcing standards of clarity and persuasion along the way". Elaborating on his personal values when it comes to writing, and getting himself started, Grobe recommends letting the words fall out, letting the paper almost write itself.

According to Krysten Godfrey Maddocks of Southern New Hampshire University, a MFA, (Master of Fine Arts Degree), is "a graduate-level college degree earned by students who study and practice visual arts, performing arts, design or creative writing" (Godfrey Maddocks). Although not all professional and published writers have MFA's, Maum speaks on the benefits of one as well as what to consider when applying, "If you do apply to MFA programs, consider those that give equal teaching experience to their students" (26). Although generally the same, MFA programs may vary from school to school. She elaborates on the program some more stating, "An MFA—even at the most prestigious program—is a privilege you must rise to meet" (Maum 26). An MFA is a college degree, courses and classes are offered and required in order for one to acquire a MFA. American novelist Tadzio Koelb continues on the benefits of writing workshops for writers of all backgrounds. Koelb pushes the importance and the possibilities of improvement, all presented by writing workshops: "That doesn't mean workshops are without other values. Some effectively teach you about the writing process and the publishing process; all thicken your skin against the strangely vicious responses you can expect from agents, reviewers and (the ultimate indignity) 'bookstagrammers'." Koelb opens up to the idea of harsh and constructive criticism one may experience in a writing workshop, what to prepare for, as well as how helpful that feedback may be. Show Mei Lin, Associate Professor at Tennessee State

University, expands on the idea and importance of writing workshops: “This study aims to explore the benefits as well as the difficulties ELL writers encounter while they are interacting, collaborating, and constructing knowledge with other learners in the online writing environment.” There is so much to learn about writing no matter how long one has been pursuing it as a career or a hobby, and writing workshops present a whole new environment, and so many opportunities for writers of all kinds.

Try and try again, writers write and rewrite, and then write again. Editing the same piece from font to font, and minor spelling error to not-so-minor spelling error, the editing process is a never ending spiral. Maum establishes the topics of editing over all platforms: “In addition to conditioning youtube the rebuffs coming down the pipeline, submissions start to get your name in front of editors whose support and advice will be so necessary when you have a project to promote” (41). Finding the proper editor or one at all can be tough, but the personal standards one holds one's work to, play a direct part in what kind of editors take notice. Every editor is different, just as is every book. One editor may be more skilled in the world of nonfiction, the other in the world of fiction: “Each of these covers the fundamental elements of fiction in sections dedicated to point of view, plot and structure, character, revision, and so on. In the fourteen clearly constructed chapters of *The Making of a Story* LaPlante looks at both fiction and creative nonfiction” (Dodson). Adding the process of finding an editor, or rather the editor varies on a specific and certain skill set and which genre or genres each piece falls under. However, nothing is worse for an editor than turning in an unedited and untouched first draft: “It’s not done when it’s your first draft, and it isn’t done when it’s your second. And if you’re proud of how long your book is, it’s definitely not done. In most cases, a bloated manuscript is the sign of sloppiness, not genius” (Maum 94). Any editor, any genre from fantasy to tragedy, the length

means nothing but more work for an editor. However, what one editor may laugh at, another may seem unprofessional: “This is what I value most in writing: the way it carries me from confusion to understanding, enforcing standards of clarity and persuasion along the way. I learned this by writing essays for my own humanities professors--and it's what I now try to teach my students” (Grobe). The importance of finding an editor with similar values or one that is experienced in the genre or writer has written about, a step that makes or breaks the writer's final piece.

Perhaps an issue for the writer is not not knowing what to look for, instead finding it in a real, living and breathing editor. The search of an editor is where the importance of an agent comes into the picture: “Most writers do have agents, and most editors require agented manuscripts, it’s also true that the perceived importance of agent-having causes many a writer to sign with an agent before they need to, and/or to sign with the wrong one” (Maum 88). Highly recommended, however, not required, plenty of editors will only take manuscripts that are under an agent, the same way many corporations will only see agented actors auditions. It is up to the writer to decide what is best for the piece and where it fits: “Many writers find it necessary to ‘break the rules’ found in craft books in order to render their experiences in fiction and to tell stories that speak to their own communities” (Dodson). Depending from editor to agent, defiant or controversial pieces of writing may have drastic changes heavily encouraged, but it is up to the writer to decide if that is the piece they envision. However, it is not always about the writer or one's values: “Many of the agents listed here have said they are open to working with new, previously unpublished writers as well as published writers” (Jones 91). At the end of the day, editors are simply there to edit work that may hold potential, and whether that potential is found in Shakespeare's diaries, or buried deep in the Google Drive of a random college student, the work itself is what catches the editor’s eye. Although, a writer will get nowhere in the editor and

agent hunting process if missing in action: “While you are away at a residency, the rest of the world may or may not know you're gone. You may want to set up an automated message on your e-mail and perhaps post something on social media” (De Leon). If not willing to reach out or communicate with a potential editor or agent, one may find it nearly impossible to successfully get feedback on one’s work.

If a writer is willing to send and reply to countless emails that may go everywhere or nowhere, then the first step of the editor hunt is completed. Due to the fact that “many publishers are willing to look at unsolicited submissions”, finding an agent is more of a bonus than a necessity (Jones 91). However not necessarily a do or die for a writer, Jones claims, “Most feel having an agent is in the writer's best interest” (91). Although highly encouraged, an agent is not needed in order to find an interested and qualified editor. Before submitting one’s work to an editor, a writer should consider the help and advice created and provided by Artificial Intelligence: “Docs are capable of encouraging students to apply writing processes, including prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. Today, the use of online technologies to support writing has been widespread” (Lin). With the help of technology, writers do not have to wait until a normal and reasonable time of day to get feedback from an editor. As well as if a writer is struggling to find an editor willing to work on one’s piece, it is possible that AI could be a filler for the time in between. However, AI can only know so much, such as the target audience and what it means to write informally on purpose in the name of characterization and voice: “There’s an editor out there right now—sorting stacks of pitch letters, book proposals, and manuscripts, thumbing through literary agents' submissions, reading selections of manuscripts she requested from authors directly—who is seeking to buy a book similar to yours” (Jones 81). Hopeless writer after hopeless writer has waited by a computer waiting for an email from an

editor, a real human one that breathes, instead of a smart computer. As brilliant and all-knowing as technology is, the effects it has are not always as amazing: “As software that can simulate human thinking, it may indeed create some thoughtless students who rely on it too heavily” (Grobe). A writer must find a balance between being reliant and being dependent, to rely on AI for corrections on minor grammatical and sentence structure is healthy, however depending on AI’s such as autocorrect as the main support system of the piece, could break a writer.

Editors do exist, as hard to find as one may be. Once found, an editor may take a writer’s work, eat it up and spit it back out again, but that is the editor’s job. The writer’s job is nearly done, besides to turn focus on the little details that, at the start of a piece may have appeared insignificant, “Before getting into the nitty-gritty of the importance and role of titles, a brief history into the naming process of some best-selling stories of all time provides much entertainment and insight” (Jones 32). Depending from writer to writer, finding a title may be the easiest or the hardest part of the process, however minor it may seem, with a title the writer is practically naming one’s child. Although Millennials appear blissfully unaware of what is and is not an acceptable name for a child, writers have a bit more freedom: “Creative writing’s... uncertain status invalidates the accusation that creative writing students occupy an ivory tower where the study of dusty old books means people never have to worry about ‘real life’” (Koelb). Creating a title unique to one’s piece is important, but establishing a place in which that title stands under the genres of fiction or nonfiction literature is the basis of every eye-catching title. Terms of creating a jaw-dropping and creative title is not always a piece of cake: “Unfortunately, no perfect formula exists for creating an effective title; the process involves a combination of hard work, research, creativity, and sometimes just plain luck” (Jones 34). A title may be the first thing a writer creates, it could come to a writer in a dream, or even an online generator.

Wherever and whenever a writer finds a title, deciding the function of that title is up to the readers. Although to brace oneself, writers may seek creative writing textbooks for help: “Creative writing textbooks and less formally organized books may consider all the formal elements of fiction writing--point of view, characterization, narrative structure--or they may examine only one element” (Dodson). In order for something to be creative it has to be created, whether a title is created by a writer by staring at a blank wall for hours on end, in the middle of a history lecture, or with the help of creative writing resources and professionals, the title can not be worse than no title at all.

With the help of new technologies related to the editing process, developed publishing platforms, and online writing workshops, the writing and publishing industry has had a dynamic and complex expansion. With the advance of artificial intelligence and technologies new platforms for writers of all kinds have expanded and given more opportunities for writers everywhere, from getting a MFA, or attending writing workshop after writing workshop, or online literary conferences, the writing and publishing industry has developed into a powerful and inclusive community. The availability of potential readers, editors, and agents has dilated due to online platforms and communication, and writers from any background have the possibility to share one’s work at the touch of a button. As stressful as it may be, finding the perfect editor for a writer is like Prince Charming and Cinderella’s glass slipper, trying and trying again, journeying on a search high and low for the perfect fit. As of now, the writing industry can only expand from where it is and it can only benefit the writing prodigies yet to come.



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