

WRITER'S ALLIANCE
OF GAINESVILLE

TOPICS
COMING
IN FUTURE
ISSUES

- Writing for
the Theater
- The Art of
Effective
Critique

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The WAG Digest

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 8

SEPTEMBER 7, 2009

Wag Members Read from Their Works

Join us!

The September 27 monthly meeting showcases Wag members reading from their own work. At our July and August meetings we invited members to sign up to read from their published or submitted writing. About 15 speakers will read for exactly four minutes. When the bell rings, they sit down, finished or not! Don't miss the opportunity to hear original poetry, and fiction and non-fiction excerpts at this delightful literary smorgasbord

Sunday, Sept. 27 – 2:30 p.m.

Tower Road Branch – Alachua County Library
3020 S.W. 75th Street, Gainesville, Florida

Directions to Tower Road Branch Library

Go west on State Rd 26 (University Ave/ Newberry Rd). Pass under I-75. Turn left at next major intersection onto 75th St. (Tower Rd). Go about 2 miles. Library is 1/4 mile beyond traffic light at SW 24 Ave, on your right. Use LEFT driveway (righthand driveway goes to church.)

The WAG monthly meetings are free and open to the public. Come out and explore the benefits of local talent! We hope to see you there.



Please join us for a special event, **Pen to Paper & Beyond:**

A Panel Discussion on Becoming an Author

On Sept. 20 at 2:00 p.m., at the downtown branch of the Alachua County Library. This panel will include invited Florida authors answering your questions about the writing life.

David Maas, WAG poetry editor for Bacopa Literary Magazine, will lead the discussion on poetry. Stephanie Seguin, WAG Vice President, will discuss memoir and non-fiction. This special event is free and open to the public. The event will include guests from across the North Central Florida area. The main branch of the library is downtown at:

401 East University Avenue
Gainesville, Florida 32601
352-334-3900
Sunday, Sept. 20, 2009 - 2 p.m.

Bring a friend and bring your questions!
Light refreshments will be served.



Don't Use Adverbs and Adjectives to Prettify Your Prose

By William Noble



“... attention to detail is precisely why Raymond Carver acquired a reputation as a short story master; rarely, if ever, was a word or a series of words purposeless and uncertain.”

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

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

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

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

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

She zoomed around the oval speedily...

He stuttered haltingly...

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

The stone sank quickly...

The fire truck bell clanged loudly...

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

Don't Use Adverbs and Adjectives to Prettify Your Prose

It isn't only redundancies that adverbs can generate. They also encourage lazy writing. Take the earlier example, "he whispered to her lovingly ..." I suppose he could whisper many things, including words, which are loving, but somehow the adverbial tail seems a lazy way out. By using "lovingly" the writer is really—and we've heard this before—telling instead of showing. Far more dramatic would be to write:

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

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

"Most adverbs," says William Zinsser, "are unnecessary."

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

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

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

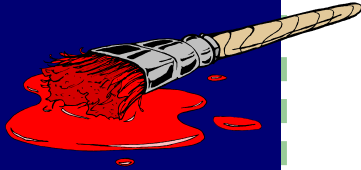
The house had an empty feeling to it, the air stale with undefined kitchen odors ...

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

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



Don't Use Adverbs and Adjectives to Prettify Your Prose



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



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

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

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

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

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

Consider:

He was cheered by the friendly smiles ...

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

Do the adjectives "friendly" and "dirty" add anything to the sentences? Read the words without adjectives ... Now read them with the adjectives inserted. Is anything more provided by including the adjectives? They contain the thought that's already in the noun they modify, so they aren't doing anything for the sentences except taking up space. Aren't smiles usually "friendly"? Aren't street-urchins usually "dirty"? Why the adjectives, then?

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

But misplaced adjectives can do as much damage as botched-up syntax. If the adjectives are there only to prettify the prose, they should be eliminated. The key is, adjectives should be used only when they highlight something the noun can't highlight. For example:

He slipped into the darkened alley ...

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

He slipped into the narrow alley ...

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

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

Carefully, he meant, so carefully.

You can buy William Noble's: **Book of Writing Blunders (And How To Avoid Them)** Format: Hardcover

At this site:

[http://www.fwbookstore.com/
product/1398/writing](http://www.fwbookstore.com/product/1398/writing)



Creative Nonfiction: How To Stay Out Of Trouble

What is creative nonfiction?

Lee Gutkind, editor of *Creative Nonfiction* magazine, sums it up best: “This is perhaps creative nonfiction’s greatest asset: It offers flexibility and freedom while adhering to the basic tenets of reportage. In creative nonfiction, writers can be poetic and journalistic simultaneously.”

Creative nonfiction is a genre that holds great creative possibilities. It involves the use of factual events or characters to create dramatic nonfiction using techniques such as dialogue, scenery, and Point of View (POV). It combines the fact-finding of journalism with the literary techniques of the fiction writer to create a dramatic story that just happens to be true. This is also called literary journalism, and, like journalism, it is a genre based on truth.

Suppose an author has written her memoir under the guise of creative nonfiction, but she has spiced things up with a near-death experience and perhaps a rape scene—things that never actually happened in her life. Ethically, this author must redefine her piece as fiction. The basic facts must be true in creative nonfiction.

If the same author wrote a biography about her great-grandfather, she has some license to fill in the blanks, as long as it doesn’t affect the outcome of the story. She most likely doesn’t know what her great-grandfather’s farmhouse looked like on the inside or what he liked in his coffee—ethically, the author has the right to create dialogue and other “facts” that make up the

creative element of creative nonfiction.

Some authors use disclaimers to make sure their readers don’t feel duped if names or minor details are changed.

Readers must assume that they are reading a biased interpretation of events as they view them through the author’s eyes. The basic facts are there, but the author is reporting his or her own version of those facts. The implied pact between writer and reader is this: I am telling you the truth, but the truth as it is filtered through my eyes.

Legal pitfalls:

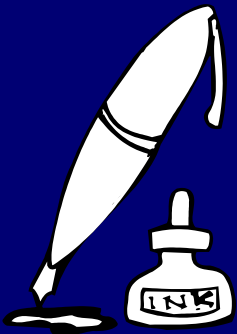
While the people and places mentioned in creative nonfiction pieces are still around, writers often change the names of characters in their work to avoid conflict. As long as it doesn’t impact the story, changing Linda, the waitress at the Burger Barn, to Cynthia from the Hamburger Hut might save Linda some awkwardness. And if you’ve fudged the facts about her, changing Linda’s name just might save you from a lawsuit, but there is no guarantee. Linda can still sue you for defamation if she is obviously defamed, regardless of the name you give her in the book. Changing a person’s name is not a guarantee of protection, but it might help.

Other ways to stay out of trouble:

Stick to the truth. In a defamation of character suit, an offending statement must be false for a plaintiff to prevail against you or your publisher. Untrue facts that negatively affect a person’s reputation or credibility are considered defamatory.



“And be prepared for an invasion of privacy lawsuit if you are exposing embarrassing or private facts about a person, even if they are truthful.”



Creative Non-Fiction (Continued)

Be careful not to report facts that may cause damage to another person’s physical being or business. Revealing that Johnny from the bank is actually a mob snitch, even when the facts are true enough, can lead to physical harm to Johnny and legal hot water for you. And be prepared for an invasion of privacy lawsuit if you are exposing embarrassing or private facts about a person, even if they are truthful.

Protect yourself by getting written permission from people you wish to write about. And if they are no longer living, make sure you aren’t setting yourself up for a lawsuit from their family. (Obviously, you are fairly safe in writing about people who died long ago.) If the person is a public figure whose actions or background are a matter of public record, then you do not need permission, but be judicious about the facts you report. Senator Mucky-Muck may have an obsession with women’s feet, but leave his foot fetish out of your story, especially if it’s merely something you’ve thrown in to add some excitement to your story.

This article is for informational purposes only. For expert legal advice about your own publishing questions, always consult an attorney. Thank you to Writer’s Relief for the use of this article:



Upcoming Conferences and Workshops

Woodstream Writing Marathon ... in Gainesville

On Saturday, October 3rd, join us at a lovely, private home in Haile Plantation, Gainesville, for a half-day Writing Marathon where, from 9:30 a.m. until 3:30 p.m., all writers will be invited to work from writing prompts and participate in an Amherst Artists & Writers-style critique session.

Guided by Central Florida's first and most experienced AWA-certified writing workshop leader, experienced writers are encouraged to grow, to take risks that lead them into new territory, while newer writers discover surprising levels of confidence as they produce vivid work from the stuff of their own lives and imaginations.

"Jamie Morris is a master of the Amherst Writers method. Her innovative prompts and positive critique techniques jump start my writing engine every time!"

—Nancy Wayman Deutsch, author of *Between the Lines*

Now, we invite writers at all levels of experience, working in any genre, to participate in Gainesville's first-ever AWA writing event!

Woodstream Marathon attendee Marge Clauser, former "Write On!" columnist for *The DeLand-Deltona Beacon*, says, *"The writing marathon was one of the best experiences I've had. At the marathon, I experienced a shift in my mind, spirit, and writing. When the marathon was over, I wanted to stay in touch with the new possibilities the day had brought both to my writing and my life."*

Join us. Discover your own new possibilities!

The cost for the day, \$125, includes breakfast and lunch, as well as snacks and beverages.

Pre-registration is required, and we will accept no more than ten writers for this event.

Register with Jamie@WoodstreamWriters.com or 407-644-5163 for more information.

About Jamie Morris

A College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA)-certified Master Level Writing Consultant, a repeat presenter for—and member of—Florida Writers Association (FWA) and The Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI), and a graduate of the Rollins College Writing Program, Jamie is also Central Florida's first Amherst Writers & Artists (AWA)-certified affiliate and creative writing workshop leader.

With a community-oriented leadership style—and what some call a literary sixth sense—Jamie Morris helps writers achieve their next steps whether they are just beginning the writer's journey or have been traveling that path for some time.

Learn more about Jamie and the Woodstream Writers' community at www.WoodstreamWriters.com



Upcoming Conferences and Workshops

Lighting the Way

October 23 -25, 2009

8th Annual Florida Writers Conference
Lake Mary, FL

☐ Orlando Marriott Lake Mary Register **now** for the best rates
1345 East Scots Avenue
Merritt Island, FL 32952

For details on the conference and the RPLA competition,
see the FWA website: www.floridawriters.net or query

FWAconference@yahoogroups.com

For more information, please go to the
Florida Writers Association Web Site:

<http://www.floridawriters.net/>

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



Writers Contests, Submission requests

Check out the **Southeast Review**. This journal and Web Site, created at Florida State University, contains unique articles and interviews with famous writers and:

The SER Writing Regimen

Our all-new [Adult Writer's](#) Regimen begins **October 1**

The Southeast Review's 30-Day Writer's Regimen (for adults)

Catch an **all-new content** Writer's Regimen starting October 1.

The Southeast Review Writing Regimen is for poets, essayists, and fiction writers who want to produce a body of work by establishing structure to their writing life, and, at the same time, finding new and innovative ways to approach their craft.

Sign up for *The Southeast Review* Writing Regimen and you will get the following:

- **daily writing prompts**, applicable for any genre, emailed directly to you for **30 DAYS!** Use these to write a poem a day for 30 days, to create 30 short-short stories, or to give flesh to stories, personal essays, novels, and memoirs
- a **daily reading-writing exercise**, where we inspire you with a short passage from the books we're reading and get you started writing something of your
- A **Riff Word of the Day**, a **Podcast of the Day** from an editor, writer, or poet, and a **Quote of the Day** from a famous writer on writing
- **Flashback Bonus Craft Talks**, where, as a little something extra, we repeat an earlier regimen's craft talks from more writing heavyweights
- **weekly messages** from established poets and writers—including tips and warnings on both the craft and the business of writing
- a **FREE copy of the new issue of** *The Southeast Review* (vol. 27.2), featuring intimate conversations with **Ethan Canin & Elizabeth Stuckey-French, Ron Hansen, and George Singleton.**
- a chance to have your work [published](#) on our site.
- membership in a web forum where you can share your work and get **feedback** from other Writing Regimen participants.
- access to our **online literary companion**—www.southeastreview.org—for interviews with up-and-coming and established poets, fiction writers, and memoirists, podcasts of readings from the Warehouse Reading Series, including such writers as Ann Patchett, Jennifer Knox, Matthew Zapruder, Barry Hannah . . . as well as essays on the reading life of writers, book picks, web picks, and much more . . .

All of this for **just \$15.00**. That's a mere 50 cents per day! Join us for a month and walk away with a new body of work!

If you're a poet and interested in hearing poetry read aloud, the **SER Web site** also features podcasts of local Tallahassee poets reading their favorite poems by heart. You can find the podcasts here:

http://poemsbyheart.org/poems_by_heart/Poems_by_Heart.html

Writers Contests, Submission requests

Mid-American Review accepting submissions for 30th Anniversary double issue.

Web Site:

<http://www.bgsu.edu/studentlife/organizations/midamericanreview/index.html>

Stories, poems, and essays will generally be returned or accepted within one to five months, depending on our publication schedule. *MAR* does accept and read submissions year round.

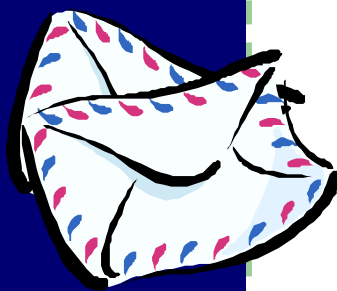
Cave Wall publishes the best contemporary poetry by emerging and established poets. Each issue features black and white artwork, as well. *Cave Wall* is accepting poetry submissions during the month of September 2009. <http://www.cavewallpress.com/submit.html>

UPCOMING THEME: Animals

postmark deadline Nov. 13, 2009

Creative Nonfiction seeks new essays about the bonds—emotional, ethical, biological, physical, or otherwise—between humans and animals; stories that illustrate ways animals (wild and/or domestic) affect, enrich, or otherwise have an impact on our daily lives. *CNF* editors will award one \$1000 prize for Best Essay and one \$500 prize for runner-up. Reading fee includes subscription.

<http://www.creativenonfiction.org/thejournal/submitcnf.htm>



Writers Contests, Submission requests

SOUTHERN THEATRE
P.O. Box 9868
Greensboro, NC 27429-0868

Phone: (336)292-6041 * E-Mail: deanna@setc.org * Web site: www.setc.org
Contact: Deanna Thompson, ed.

About

Quarterly magazine covering all aspects of theater in the Southeast, from innovative theater companies, to important trends, to people making a difference in the region. All stories must be written in a popular magazine style but with subject matter appropriate for theater professionals (not the general public). The audience includes members of the Southeastern Theatre Conference, founded in 1949 and the nation's largest regional theater organization. These members include individuals involved in professional, community, college/university, children's, and secondary school theater. The magazine also is purchased by more than 100 libraries.

Freelance Facts

- Established: 1962
- 100% freelance written
- Circulation: 4,200
- Byline given.
- No kill fee.
- Publishes ms an average of 3 months after acceptance.
- Buys first North American serial rights, first rights, one-time rights, second serial (reprint) rights, electronic rights.
- Editorial lead time 3 months.
- Submit seasonal material 6 months in advance.
- Queries accepted by mail;e-mail
- Responds in 3 months to queries. Responds in 6 months to mss.
- Sample copy for \$10.

Guidelines available online.

Nonfiction

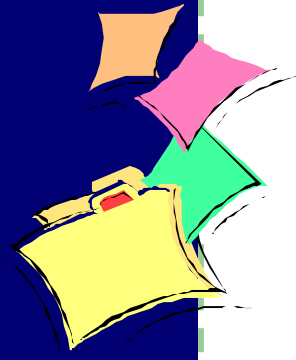
Looking for stories on design/technology, playwriting, acting, directing--all with a Southeastern connection.

Needs:

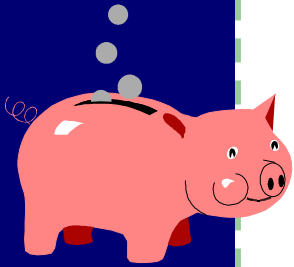
- general interest
- innovative theaters and theater programs, trend stories
- interview
- people making a difference in Southeastern theater

Special Issues: Playwriting (Fall issue, all stories submitted by January 1)
No scholarly articles.

Buys 15-20 mss/year



Writers Contests, Submission requests



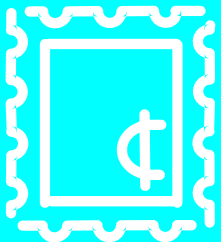
Long Poem Prize

The Malahat Review, Canada's premier literary magazine, invites entries from Canadian, American, and overseas authors for the **Long Poem Prize**. Two awards of \$500 CAD each are given, plus payment at the rate of \$40 CAD per printed page upon publication. Poets contributing to *The Malahat Review* have also won or been nominated for National Magazine Awards for Poetry and the Pushcart Prize. The Long Poem Prize is offered every second year, alternating with the [Novella Prize](#).

2011 Deadline

The deadline for the 2011 Long Poem Prize is **February 1, 2011** (postmark date).

http://www.malahatreview.ca/long_poem_prize/info.html



Writers Contests, Submission requests

Crazyhorse

The *Crazyhorse* Fiction & Poetry Prizes

\$2000 / category + pub

Postmark: September 1 - December 15 (annual)

Fee: \$16

<http://crazyhorse.cofc.edu/>

The Crazyhorse Fiction Prize

and the Lynda Hull Memorial Poetry Prize:

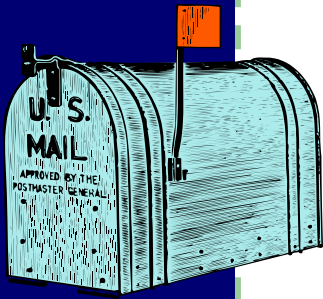
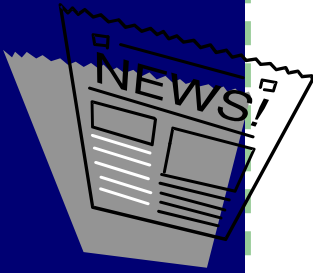
Winners receive \$2000 each and publication in *Crazyhorse*.

Submit Entry Online or By Mail

Each year *Crazyhorse* offers the *Crazyhorse* Fiction Prize for a single short story and the Lynda Hull Memorial Poetry Prize for a single poem. The competition is open, the prize awards are currently \$2000 for each genre, and the winning poem and piece of prose are published in *Crazyhorse*.

To enter:

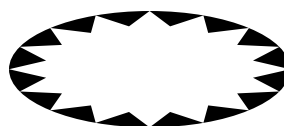
Please upload or mail in a manuscript of up to twenty-five pages of fiction or up to three poems (up to 10 pages of poetry).





Writer's Alliance of Gainesville
A not-for-profit Florida corporation
p.o.box 358396
gainesville/florida/32635-8396
[352-336-8062/wagmail@cox.net](mailto:wagmail@cox.net)
<http://writersallianceofgainesville.org>

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



Announcing A CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS:

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

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

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

Visit **WWW.bacopaonline.Com** for further information

