

Edition

The journal of the Editors' Association of Canada, Toronto branch

NOVEMBER 2008

Procrastination: Why we procrastinate and how to overcome it

- Past program report:
Sometimes editing
reduces you to tears 4
- Upcoming seminars 10
- A sunny, summery
Word On The Street in
Toronto & Kitchener 12
- Freya's Grammar food
for thought: Rules
reconsidered (2) 19
- Review of *Regret the
Error: How Media
Mistakes Pollute the
Press & Imperil Free
Speech* 22



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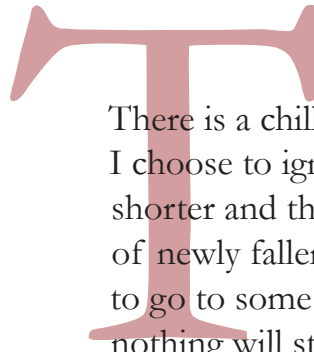
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Editor's Note



There is a chill in the air but the sun is shining, and I choose to ignore the fact that the days are getting shorter and the crunch under my shoes is the sound of newly fallen leaves, not popsicle wrappers. I plan to go to some of the branch seminars this month and nothing will stop me! This month's issue of *Edition* offers a pleasant read for those chilly evenings when you prefer not to venture out: You can catch up on branch news and events, such as September's branch program (I heard that the *A Project from Hell* skit, which I sadly missed, was indescribable); learn how to cope with a nasty disease that plagues us all from time to time: procrastination; reconsider some grammar rules with Freya Godard; and check out the latest in editing-related books reviewed. Thank you to all of the dedicated and tireless volunteers who make this newsletter possible.

Sara Promislow

Newsletter chair

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Contents

November 2008

Past program report 4

Sometimes editing reduces you to tears

By Nancy Foran

Your Toronto branch 6

The Toronto executive

For your diary

NEC branch representative report

Upcoming seminars

Membership report

Hotline report

A sunny, summery Word On The Street in Toronto and Kitchener 12

By Jen Govier



Procrastination: Why we procrastinate and how to overcome it 15

By Elizabeth Trew

Grammar food for thought: 19 Rules reconsidered (2)

By Freya Godard

Book review 22 *Regret the Error: How Media Mistakes Pollute the Press and Imperil Free Speech*

Reviewed by Joe Cotterchio-Milligan



The 2008 Word On The Street: Toronto & Kitchener.

Sometimes editing reduces you to tears

By Nancy Foran

ULTIMATELY WE'RE EDITORS because of things we love: words, writing, literature, language, even math or science, and the list goes on. However, there are those inevitable things that we don't love so much—the things that sometimes make us want to toss our computer out the window and have a good cry. September's program addressed those very things, and audience members were invited to share their thoughts and vent their spleens. We learned much, including that sometimes those tears come from laughing far too much...

September's meeting marked our first assay at the new format, so things began with an information session rather than a business meeting. Krysia Lear updated us on the certification process, and those who missed out can find additional information at www.editors.ca/certification/index.html. John Green then spoke about the 2009 conference, and members interested in volunteering, particularly those who can help with planning and coordination, are once again invited to contact the conference committee at conference@editors.ca.

The program portion of the evening started off in fine form, with an encore presentation of the skit *A Project from Hell*. Ruth Pincoe, David Peebles, and Elaine Melnick catalogued *Day One to Day 60* in the life of a textbook being written by three authors. They took us down a hellishly funny road as they traced nearly every possible problem that can crop up during a project: the authors can't agree on anything, one author goes AWOL, proofs are nearly thrown out with the recycling, and editors turn to the bottle. I don't think any of us who attended will look at our recycling bin the same way again.

I then had the pleasure of assisting Ruth as she took the reins to facilitate what turned out to be a lively, and at times downright hilarious, discussion of the many little nightmares we editors face. Spirits were high as we kicked things off with deadlines (too far away! too soon! changing too often!). The importance of using a written contract to formalize the terms and conditions of a project was rightfully discussed at length, and we could probably all benefit from following the



advice of a member who suggested we shouldn't take ownership of problems that are the client's fault.

The discussion then turned to absentee authors, as we discussed everything from authors in different time zones to authors in war zones. The solution came down, once again, to having a clear and equitable contract. The perils of needy authors were also addressed, including how an editor can become an author's shoulder to cry on (on the plus side that particular relationship led to a long-term client). The hybrid needy author who becomes an absentee author once the invoice is sent out was also cheerfully dissected.

The discussion turned to the "piling-on syndrome" when a straightforward copy edit project with a trusted colleague became a full substantive edit that required long conversations with the author. Once again the answer to our problems (and perhaps our prayers) was a contract. Our happy assembly then moved on to discuss language barriers—when they're encountered, how they can be overcome, and who should cover any additional cost. Ruth reminisced about an author who was knowledgeable about music but not a native English speaker, with whom she had a very happy and fruitful relationship,



demonstrating that, sometimes, potential language barriers aren't barriers at all.

Inevitably the conversation turned again to authors, and we got down to the real nitty-

gritty: should contracts include a danger-pay clause for those particularly thorny clients? While many in the room nodded in agreement, the level of laughter suggested such a clause is unlikely to be worked into any contracts any time soon... A member sagely advised that making the author see you as a person can often help improve a difficult relationship. (And I suspect every once in a while we editors could benefit from making ourselves see our clients as people.)

The night can probably best be summed up by quoting, albeit perhaps not quite verbatim, one attendee, "I don't think I've ever heard so much merriment and laughter coming from that room. It's good to hear." If you weren't able to make it to September's meeting, try not to miss out on the merriment to come!¹ ■■■

Nancy Foran, Program chair,
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1 Audio-recordings of past programs are available at: www.editors.ca/branches/toronto/news/eac_toronto_recordings/index.html

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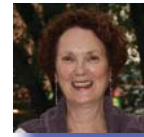
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■ For your diary pages

Executive Meeting

Monday, November 10, 2008
6:30 PM
EAC National office,
27 Carlton Street, Suite 505
All members are welcome
RSVP: edition@editors.ca

General Meeting

Monday, November 24, 2008
6:45 PM New members Q & A
7:30 PM Program: To be announced
9 PM Mix-and-mingle

The Women's Art Association of Canada
23 Prince Arthur Avenue
Members free/non-members \$5

■ Welcome new members!

As of October 1, 2008, the Toronto branch has 690 members: 358 voting (including 2 life members), 275 qualifying (formerly associate category), 46 student members, and 9 emeritus members. 6 members identified themselves as Francophone. 11 people have joined since September. The new members are:

Jordan Bargent
Diana Boye
Mizan Ibrahim
Berbard McCann
Marjory McLeod
Teresia Mutuku

Punam Patel
Sheree Pell
Deanne Puder
Michelle Schultz
Jose Sevilla

Hotline Report	October 2008
Members registered	10
Clients registered: Hotline opportunities	1 (non academic book: Business/Popular Culture)

Hotline Registration

Clients call to be matched with branch members who have registered with the Hotline for work.

When you register, please note these guidelines:

If you are listed in the EAC Directory of Editors (print or online), note any changes to your listing.

If you are not listed in the Directory and have not previously registered with the Hotline, send your resumé in Directory or Hotline style. You can find guidelines to the Directory format at www.editors.ca/hire/ode/search_tips.html.

Hotline style follows the Directory format. However, you may include as many interests as you wish and write your profile in point form.

Please limit your resumé to one page.

If you have registered before, send your resumé only if it has changed.

Hotline registration begins on the first of each month. Please contact the branch every month to be listed again.

Telephone: 416 975-5528 Fax: 416 975-5596
toronto@editors.ca (.rtf attachment; subject: Hotline)

NEC branch representative report

By Ken Weinberg

THERE'S NEVER A DULL MOMENT on the National Executive Council (NEC). Our meetings may be three months apart, but there's lots of activity every day. Planning is well underway for the June conference in Toronto; a call for Fairley nominations has gone out; new standards are being developed; membership drives and marketing programs are in full swing; and two certification tests are running this month. At the end of November, the NEC meets in Toronto to prepare the budget for the new year. As usual, a Saturday night dinner/social is planned and branch members are welcome to attend. It's on the 29th, so mark this date on your calendars. Details will follow. ■■■

Ken Weinberg,
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Upcoming seminars



BEAT THE WINTER BLUES and brush up on basics with November's great lineup of seminars! Join Jenny Worden on November 22 to polish your proofreading skills. Or if substantive editing is more your style, check out Rosemary Shipton's seminar (November 25) for everything you need to know to get started. Rounding out the month is Mike Tanner's Eight-Step Editing, the patented process for improving any text quickly and efficiently. This one-day seminar will be held in Kitchener on November 29. The Toronto offering, on December 10, follows Anne Stilman's On-Screen Editing (December 6) to close the fall term.

Don't miss out on your chance to improve your current skills or add some new ones to your repertoire—go to www.editors.ca/branches/toronto/seminars for more information or to register online. You can also contact the EAC Toronto branch administrator at **416 975-5528**.

Proofreading **Jennie Worden**

Saturday, November 22; 10 AM to 5 PM

Designed to provide an overview of professional proofreading, this seminar looks at how this skill fits into the process of producing print documents of all kinds—in particular, book publishing. You'll learn the difference between copy editing and proofreading, and what to do (and not do) at each stage of production. You'll try your hand at proofreading short sample texts.

Instructor: Jennie Worden's career has taken her from cartographical research for a publisher of maps to proofreading insurance textbooks and sports novels. A past chair of EAC's Toronto branch, she currently copy edits and proofreads for a variety of academic, educational, and corporate clients, and teaches grammar and punctuation at George Brown College.

Substantive Editing **Rosemary Shipton**

Tuesday, November 25; 10 AM to 5 PM Substantive editing is the first step in the editing process. There is no point in copy editing a text that needs substantive work. Little has been written about this type of editing. This seminar outlines the basic steps in substantive editing, offers tips on ways to win writers' and clients' confidence, and provides realistic in-class exercises. Enjoy a stimulating discussion and return home with a truly fine handout.



Instructor: Rosemary Shipton is one of the founding coordinators of the Publishing Program at Ryerson University and has taught there for 17 years. Rosemary has won the Tom Fairley Award for Editorial Excellence and three awards from Ryerson for excellence in teaching. In May 2007 she received an honorary doctorate from Trinity College, University of Toronto.

Eight-Step Editing

Mike Tanner

**Saturday, November 29 (Kitchener);
9:30 AM to 4:30 PM**

Eight-Step Editing breaks the editorial process down into a series of tasks that will improve the readability of the final product. If you're an editor, whatever your experience level (from novice to expert), this seminar will help you develop a systematic approach and identify functions you may have been performing only intuitively. If you're a writer, the Eight-Step process will give you techniques for improving your manuscript before it goes to an editor.

Instructor: Mike Tanner has created and delivered business writing and communications workshops for both private and public sectors since 1991. Mike has published three books: the novels *Acting the Giddy Goat* (Cormorant Books, 2002) and *Resurrection Blues* (Annick Press, 2005), and a nonfiction work called *Flat Out Rock: Ten Great Bands of the '60s* (Annick Press, 2006).

On-Screen Editing

Anne Stilman

Saturday, December 6; 9:30 AM to 5 PM

This seminar demonstrates how to create, edit, and format documents using Microsoft Word 2003, with emphasis on the functions most likely to be needed by writers and editors in their daily work. Less experienced users will be introduced to functions they have never known how to handle or didn't know existed; more experienced ones will learn shortcuts, troubleshooting techniques, and other tricks that will help them work more efficiently.

Instructor: Anne Stilman is a writer and editor who works exclusively on-screen. She has taught workshops on Microsoft Word for several years.

Eight-Step Editing

Mike Tanner

**Wednesday, December 10 (Toronto);
9:30 AM to 4:30 PM**

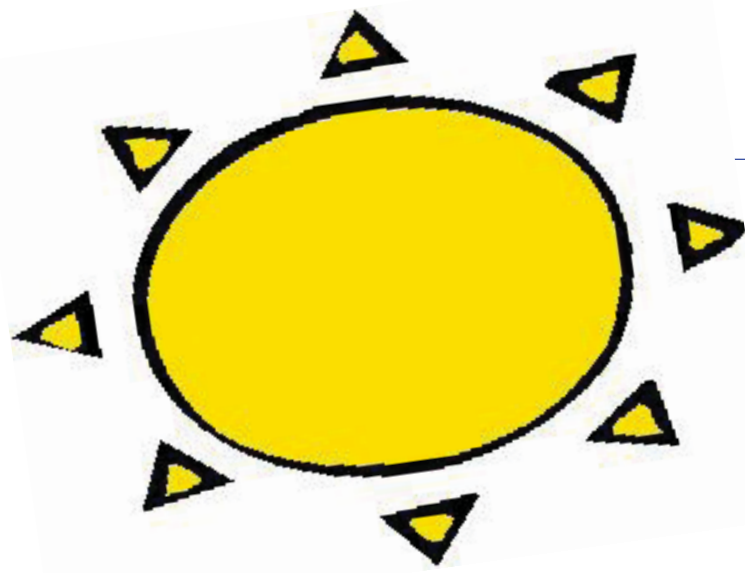


A sunny, summery Word On The Street in Toronto and Kitchener

By Jen Govier

THE SUN SHONE BRIGHT AND unseasonably warm on this year's Word On The Street (WOTS) book and magazine festival in Toronto and in Kitchener on Sunday, September 28, where Toronto branch volunteers spread the word about EAC. Busy crowds took advantage of the beautiful weather—not to mention fewer hindrances to travel in Toronto than last year—to browse for books and see their favourite authors. Visitors to the EAC booths found kindred spirits who were eager to answer their questions. The new postcards created by the national office were a huge hit with many closet editors who were thrilled to discover they're not alone. Said one potential editor, "See, there's a place for people like me!"

At the nineteenth annual festival in Toronto, Queen's Park was teeming with around 200,000 enthusiastic fans of books and magazines, as well as wildlife. And not just the usual





squirrels, EAC volunteers discovered, as they observed a hawk keeping watch over the booth throughout the day. In the many tents strewn throughout the park, illustrious authors such as Austin Clarke, Nino Ricci, and Giller nominee Mary Swan gave readings, signed books, and discussed their trade. Children are a huge focus at WOTS, and they were treated to readings by Shane Peacock, Tish Cohen, and Mariko Tamaki, among others, and to lots of performances at the massive TVOKids Stage. For those willing to venture beyond the traditional book, Sony invited visitors to its tent to test drive its new digital reader.

Kitchener was just as energetic as Toronto for its seventh annual festival, and the volunteers at the EAC booth talked to many interested visitors. The lineup of authors and guest speakers was also star-studded. Gil Adamson read from her novel *The Outlander*, which received the Amazon.ca/Books in Canada First Novel Award later that week. Other authors that attended included Andrew Pyper, Edeet Ravel, and children's author and illustrator Ruth Ohi. There were many workshops for budding writers, journalists, and illustrators, as well as a concert featuring



songwriters playing and discussing their music.

The Word On The Street is a perennial success for the Toronto branch, attracting many new members, due to the help of our volunteers. Many thanks to Ken, Rachel, Marcel, Matthew, Vivien, John, Ann, Elske, Lenniel, Nathan, Mila, Karin, Annie, Deirdre, Nancy, Jennifer, and Lou for your assistance and enthusiasm. ■■■

Jen Govier

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Note: Photos courtesy of Sharon O'Brien, Annie Leung, and Ken Weinberg



Kitchener 

PROCRASTINATION

Why we procrastinate and how to overcome it

By Elizabeth Trew

DO YOU USUALLY DO THINGS AT THE last minute? Do you wait until you feel like doing projects before you tackle them? Do you spend more time *thinking* about doing tasks than actually *doing* them? Then you could be a procrastinator! Procrastinators avoid or put off tasks. They fully intend to do them but do not motivate themselves within the expected time frame. Discomfort, stress, and guilt are associated with procrastination, further adding to one's malaise.¹ Procrastinators need to find out why they procrastinate and develop constructive solutions before their problem gets out of hand.

Why do people procrastinate?

Some people rationalize that they work better under pressure. Often tasks are put off because one doesn't feel like it

today and maybe one will feel more like it tomorrow. Others like the rush and excitement of doing things at the last minute. Sometimes we procrastinate simply because we don't know how to do the job. We procrastinate because we feel like a failure and don't want to risk rejection. Or we are perfectionists and fear criticism from others. Then, once we get feedback on our work, we rationalize that we couldn't have done a good job because we didn't have the time to do the work properly. What self-defeating prophecies!

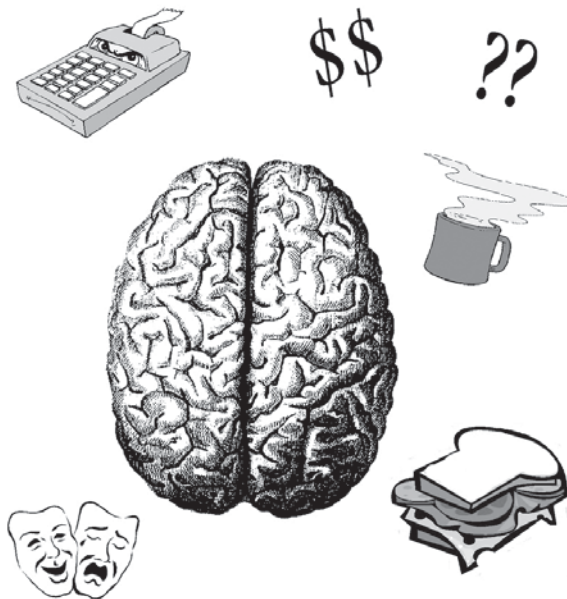
Dr. Timothy Pychyl, associate professor of psychology and director of the *Procrastination Research Group* at Carleton University, learned about procrastination the hard way, as he once was a procrastinator. Instead, he now helps others with procrastination through his work. He explores the factors that lead to procrastination and provides self-help techniques, practical advice, and tools for change, challenging procrastinators to explore the choices they make to act or to

¹ Ackerman, D.S., & Gross, B.L. (2007). I can start that JME manuscript next week, can't I?: The task characteristics behind why faculty procrastinate. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 29, 97-110.



Pychyl says procrastinators are masters of self-deception. They spend more time thinking about a task than doing it.

postpone acting on their intentions. Dr. Pychyl's Procrastination Research Group Web site (<http://server.carleton.ca/~tpychyl/>) includes research, self-help, and intervention techniques, links to resources and a series of podcasts. Pychyl says procrastinators are masters of self-deception. They spend more time thinking about a task than doing it. He says we lie to ourselves to excuse ourselves from the lack of action. Chronic procrastinators use procrastination to define their well-being. "That's just the way I am", they say. Procrastination is often used as a futile attempt to escape responsibility and to avoid getting on with life itself. He notes that procrastinators, just like gamblers and substance abusers, do not self-regulate their behavior. It's as if they feel they do not have a choice over their behaviour.



In *The Problem of Procrastination* at www.webhome.idirect.com/~readon/, Toronto-based therapist Dr. Timothy Quek indicates that certain behavioural characteristics are common to procrastinators. Firstly, procrastinators have four main areas of disorganization. They have a poor distinction between urgent and priority tasks as they tend to focus on tasks which are convenient, interesting or close by. Other tasks pile up and then they become urgent and the procrastinator must give these tasks priority. It becomes

increasingly difficult for the procrastinator to distinguish between tasks that are priority/urgent, priority/non-urgent and non-priority/urgent, while the comfort level of the non-priority/non-urgent tasks lurks close by. Procrastinators are also easily distracted and leave tasks unattended to because "something



else came up”. Procrastinators are often forgetful. They try to overcome this forgetfulness with either more than one appointment book or scheduling device or none at all. The last part of procrastination-oriented disorganization is in the form of “lumping” tasks or believing that tasks come as a whole and cannot be subdivided and dealt with systematically. An office worker with a messy desk and filing system may not think of breaking the task into parts and tackle one drawer at a time; and so, she would procrastinate over starting to clean her desk as she feels she has to do it all at once.

Procrastinators are often motivated by fear, notes Quek, and delay doing tasks or wait until after they are due, so they no longer need to be dealt with. Procrastinators have internal struggles. “I know that I should, why can’t I just do it?” or “I *planned* to do it, but when the time came, I *just didn’t feel like it*” plays over and over again in their heads. Attempts to resolve this conflict means confronting these fears. Quek says many procrastinators are perfectionists, but they don’t usually think of themselves as such. This type of perfectionism is marked by three major characteristics: the desire to do things yourself because others just can’t do it right; the attitude that one cannot start to do something if one can’t do it well; and the need for closure, indicated by discomfort over an uncompleted task.

How does one overcome procrastination?

Just being honest with yourself and realize that you procrastinate is the first step in overcoming procrastination. Recognizing the fear and what accompanies that fear is necessary in taking charge of procrastination. Here are ten tips from a variety of experts you can use to overcome procrastination:

1. Identify clues that you are putting off doing something. Listen to your “self-talk.” If you feel you are avoiding the task, don’t give in to your self-doubt and remove yourself from the situation. Realize that you are having an emotional reaction and deal with the task at hand.
2. Jump into your work by promising to work for 15 minutes. Don’t delay doing tasks until you are in the mood. Once you get started, your mood brightens, your self-esteem increases, and the momentum to finish the task takes over.
3. Do unpleasant tasks first thing in the morning. Then reward yourself by doing more pleasant tasks.
4. Minimize disruptions like e-mail and the telephone by turning them off for a specific time.
5. If you don’t know how to do something, ask for help instead of stewing over it.
6. Tell someone about your deadlines. Once you are accountable to someone,

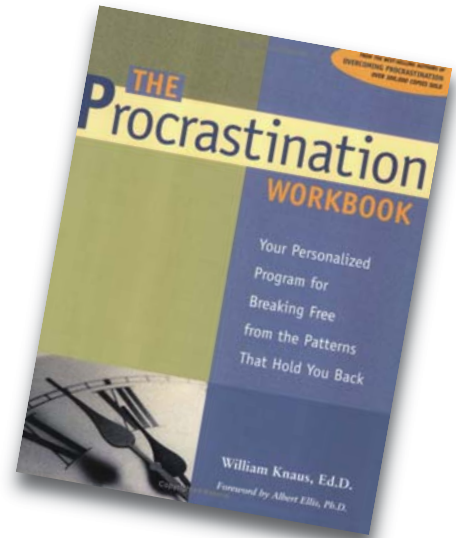


you will find it easier to meet your deadlines.

7. Make mundane tasks more challenging, rather than using the fact that time is running out, to increase your motivation to do them.
8. Engage in mindfulness meditation. Proponents of meditation believe that willpower is like a muscle that needs exercise to develop.
9. Use one daily appointment book to write down things you are going to do or have already done. Use your book to break tasks down into tangible goals with reasonable deadlines and write these in your appointment book. Write your daily “to do” lists in your book and check off the tasks completed as you do them.
10. Break tasks with distant deadlines into manageable “chunks” and set sub-deadlines for these small tasks. Start by

breaking down tasks into 15 minute chunks to begin with and then increase the time. Use your appointment book to plan this “dechunking.”

Procrastination has a way of ruling our lives, sabotaging our careers, and hindering our relationships. If you need help with procrastination, there are



many resources available to you, such as Pychyl's *Procrastination Research Group* Web site, which can direct you to many sources of information on this subject. Pychyl also highly recommends William Knaus's workbook, *The Procrastination Workbook: Your Personalized Program for Breaking Free from the Patterns that Hold You Back*, by New Harbinger Publications. This workbook includes a self-assessment, an individualized plan and tips and techniques to keep procrastinators motivated to get to the root of the problem and overcome it.

Overcoming procrastination is about tackling lifelong fears and habits and making choices to engage in a full and productive life. So, why not start now?! ■■■

Elizabeth Trew
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Grammar food for thought

An editor's observations on grammar and usage

Rules reconsidered (2)

By Freya Godard

Like most grammatical purists, I would never dream of using the reflexive (or emphatic) pronoun *myself* or *yourself* instead of *me*, *I*, or *you*. However, this usage is often encountered in speech and informal writing. So, for example, a salesperson might ask a customer, “Is it a Christmas present or is it for *yourself*?” Or the writer of a thank-you note (or e-mail) might write, “I want to thank you for inviting my wife and *myself* to spend the weekend at your cottage.” In those two examples, *yourself* and *myself* are used as the object of a preposition and the direct object of a verb respectively; as a subject this usage is less common but is sometimes seen as part of a compound subject, as in “My parents, my sisters, and *myself* are going on a cruise next winter.”

This use of the reflexive pronoun has almost never come my way in a manuscript, but editors who work in such genres as fiction (where it might occur in dialogue) or speeches or informal newsletters may sometimes encounter it. At one time I might well have replaced the offending word in such contexts, but I have recently stopped condemning it and have begun to think of it as simply an interesting phenomenon. That's because I've been noticing it more and more often in good writers of the nineteenth and early twentieth century that I admire, admittedly most often in diaries and letters but also in literary works.

Out of curiosity, I turned to *Webster's Dictionary of English Usage*¹ because it can usually be relied on to give a



¹ *Webster's Dictionary of English Usage* (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, 1989).





short historical survey of the word or grammatical point in question and to summarize or quote the opinions of various grammatical authorities. According to *Webster's*, the use of *myself* or *yourself* instead of *me* or *you* seems to have been criticized for well over a century. The earliest such comment it quotes is from 1881. But after discussing who has condemned the usage and why, *Webster's* says, “The handful of commentators who have done real research have found the usage surprisingly widespread in literary sources.” It then gives some 40 examples covering four centuries and including the Bible (Authorized, or King James, version), Shakespeare, Boswell, Samuel Johnson, Jane Austen, Byron, Thackeray, Lewis Carroll, Emily Dickinson, Samuel Butler, James Joyce, Robert Frost, E. M. Forster, George Bernard Shaw, and T. S. Eliot. Many of the examples, to be sure, are from letters, but a good number are from more formal or literary works.

My own attitude now is that although I would never use *myself* or *yourself* in place of *me* or *you*—it just isn’t natural to me—I would not object to it in speech or informal writing, and even in formal writing I would consider the context before replacing it.

Another turn of phrase that many editors probably consider to be incorrect is *try and* in the sense of *try to*. And in fact most authorities characterize it as colloquial and undesirable in writing. Bernstein, for example, in *The Careful Writer* (p. 456), describes it as “generally acknowledged to be characteristic of spoken language, i.e., colloquial”.² And *The Globe and Mail Style Book*, under “try and” (p. 422), says simply, “try to (not try and)”.³ In *The Gregg Reference Manual* the rule is “In written material use *try to* rather than the colloquial *try and*” (p. 303).⁴

Recently, however, I’ve come across *try and* in contexts

2 Theodore Bernstein, *The Careful Writer: A Modern Guide to English Usage* (New York: Atheneum, 1965).

3 J. A. McFarlane and Warren Clements, *The Globe and Mail Style Book*, 9th edition (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2003).

4 William A. Sabin, Wilma K. Millar, Sharon L. Sine, and Wendy G. Strashok, *The Gregg Reference Manual*, 7th Canadian edition (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 2006).





where it surprised me, that is, in literary works by late-nineteenth or early-twentieth-century writers. Once again I turned to *Webster's Dictionary of English Usage* for a historical survey of this rule and usage. It appears that the earliest recorded use of *try and* is from the seventeenth century and that it may even be older than *try to*. The earliest condemnation of the usage seems to be from the 1860s. *Webster's* argues, however, that *try and* “has actually been common in print for about a century and a half”, though it points out that its 20 or so examples are “not from highly formal styles; many are from speech and fictional speech and from familiar letters.” It argues that “these examples”, the first of which is from a letter by Jane Austen written in 1813, “show that *try and* has been socially acceptable for these two centuries” (p. 920).

Among the prominent authorities that *Webster's* cites in support of its position are Follett (p. 334)⁵ and Fowler (p. 666),⁶ both of whom recognize *try and* as a well-established idiom. The former says, “Not suitable, perhaps, for the highest reaches of eloquence, *try and* is nevertheless an idiom in good standing that need not be avoided or changed to *try to*.” He also makes the perceptive remark that *try and* expresses a more casual and less determined intention than *try to*, pointing out that no one would say, “I will try and climb Mount Everest.”

As in the case of *myself* and *yourself*, the “correctness” of *try and* depends largely on the context in which it is used. ■■■

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5 Wilson Follett, *Modern American Usage* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1970).

6 H. W. Fowler, *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926).

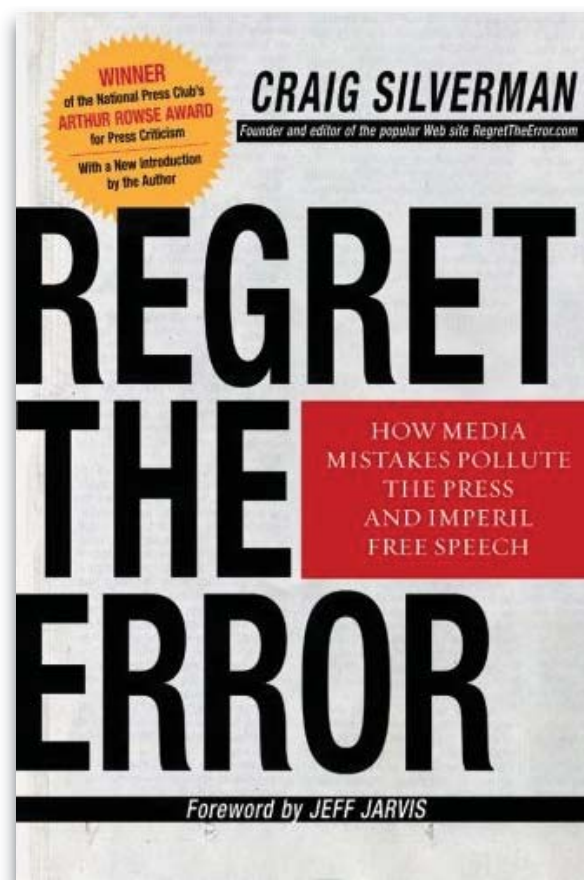
Book Review:

REGRET THE ERROR: How Media Mistakes Pollute the Press and Imperil Free Speech

Reviewed by Joe Cotterchio-Milligan

THE MEDIA IS FALLIBLE. WE KNOW that. From the regretful errors of typos and mistaken facts to the malicious fabrications of a Jayson Blair or a Stephen Glass, the print and broadcast media are rife with examples of tainted information. Information that then gets disseminated to the public and archived or added to a database without any re-examination of the truthfulness of the information in these articles. This misinformation only then serves to repeat inaccuracies of the past, as writers and fact checkers regurgitate the false, archived information in new, more relevant stories, thereby ensuring that the cycle of false facts and unchecked errors becomes a staple of the collective media conscious.

These sorts of errors and corruptions of public discourse are examined in Craig Silverman's work *Regret the Error:*



How Media Mistakes Pollute the Press and Imperil Free Speech. Perhaps the perfect example of Silverman's work in this text is the dichotomy that opens Silverman's book. In one part, he cites the extraordinary 2004 apology of Kentucky's Lexington Herald-Leader for neglecting to cover the civil rights movement in any way, shape, or form. This sort of admission of neglectful reporting is, and seems in our current media climate, such a shockingly self-aware piece of honest journalism that seeks to uphold the very integrity of the industry itself.



The juxtaposition to this then comes in Silverman's historical account of the spawning of the newspaper. In recounting the growth of the press we are asked to recall seminal names like William Randolph Hearst, Joseph Pulitzer, and Adolph S. Ochs. All their stories are directly tied to a media climate where papers fought, connived, or outright made up sensational stories in an effort to sell papers and outdo the competition. Silverman's collage of the presses' growth seems so eerily similar to the machinations of our own current press that an admission of error, like the one in the Lexington Herald-Leader, seems all the more remarkable. Though, what often seems forgotten is, as Silverman cites, that 80 percent of a paper's valuation relies on the goodwill of its readership leaving a mere 20 percent to the actual contents of the paper itself. A media outlet is only as successful as its public believes it to be an honest and verifiable oracle of facts and events.

Silverman's work is full of such intuitive yet oft forgotten realities of a media outlet's reliability and survival. Most of this is shown in quotes that vacillate between comedy and Blair-ish or Glass-esque incidents of rather despicable fabrications. Fabrications, whether malicious or unintentional, Silverman cites as the result of declining standards at the media outlets themselves, and the lay-offs and cutbacks in the number of editors and proofreaders

on staff at many media houses. With the slow disappearance of the fact checkers and proofreaders, Silverman's portrait of the newspapers and the media begins to look like the mythical Hydra—a Hydra whose tongues are rarely kept in check by the creature itself, but are more and more reliant on the Internet world of blogs and wikis, which have arisen to place an overseeing eye on the media's claim to truth. While lamenting the media's lack of a self-reliant means of editing or correcting errors, as part of the Web 2.0 world himself, Silverman sees many positives in the technologies that have arisen to



allow the public to become an involved participant in ensuring the accuracy of the media's disseminated information and discourse.

As well intentioned and passionate as Silverman is about the media's need for accuracy and accountability, his tone and the book's presentation only leave the reader feeling as if the current media climate is a tragi-comic vision ripped straight from a folio of Shakespeare. With the media becoming a metaphorical Caliban where the only advantage of its being given language "[i]s I know how to curse. The red plague rid you/For learning me your language."¹ So much is presented as farcical, and the media as an ignorant accomplice to falsity, that it appears beyond reconditioning.

The author does little to dispel this feeling, as his suggestions for improving a self-monitored media come in a very brief epilogue-like trailer at the end of the work—a set of suggestions, which are vague at best and mildly infuriating

after having been presented with so much error. Silverman's constant affirmations throughout the work that the press must do more, be more vigilant, and input changes to their practices in order to thrive are also of little comfort. All of this to be concluded with a few very vague and undeveloped suggestions left this reader greatly disappointed.

Yet, for all those in the publishing world who value honesty, integrity, and the publication of well-edited material, *Regret the Error* will be an entertaining and, in many cases, enlightening read—a refreshing take on how dangerous the press can become when the public's, or its own, implemented chains to truth and accuracy are loosened. *Regret the Error* can unleash a discourse that exists in a netherworld between truth and fiction. ■■■

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1 Shakespeare, William. "The Tempest." The Norton Shakespeare. Stephen Greenblatt, et al. (Eds.) 1997. New York: W. W. Norton & Company. 3066, 1.2.367-368.

