

"I admire anybody who has the guts to write anything at all." —E. B. White

ink QUARTERLY

Writers Studio: 2008 Year in Review

by Donna Brauda

The Writers Studio celebrates its third successful year with the release of its third annual anthology; Sweetbay Review, 2008: Anthology of Virginia.

This anthology was designed and edited by Writers Studio Director, Gene Curtis who dedicates the book to the retired founder, Scott Foran. The anthology contains 240 pages of Poetry, Fiction and Non-fiction from over twenty Virginia authors. Some of the contributors include Ron Miller (President of Convergence Art Guild), Ruthann P. Anderson (The Duck Lady), Andy Coe, Margaret Covington, Shirley Mandel, Tanya Oliver, Jack Peachum, Barbara Shaver, Gertrude Slabach, Tammy Tillotson and M. Edward Wilborne, III. The 2008 Anthology's judges were Pocahontas Press, Gryphonwood Press, and Virginia author Laura Wright.

The theme for 2008 was "The Editor Within," focusing on the process of editing and improving one's own writing through craft and revision. The Writers Studio Newsletter was the first to reap the rewards of the 2008 theme by its revised design and name, Ink Quarterly. Other WS events in 2008 included World renowned artist and author Ron Miller as a guest speaker in April, a summer Poetry Workshop with Andy Coe and a very successful "Meet the Authors" event in July which hosted over a dozen local authors for a day of Readings, Signings and door prizes.

The 2009 Poetry Journal is also now available. It is a 52 page journalizing calendar featuring twelve poetic works from Writers Studio members. Each poem's theme corresponds to the twelve months of the year. This is the third year for the Poetry Journal and it has also received a new look with inspirational quotes and calendar page

designations. The 2007, 2008 and 2009 Poetry Journals are all designed and edited by D. S. Curtis, Writers Studio Assistant Director.

The Writers Studio's new Young Authors Anthology, Bull Bay Review will be released in the spring of 2009. Bull Bay Review will feature works from Virginia authors between the ages of 14-19. Submissions of poetry, fiction, children's stories, non-fiction, and drama are welcome and will be accepted for submission through January 15, 2009. Cover art submissions from Virginia Young Artists will also be considered. Bull Bay Review's editor Tammy Tillotson can be contacted by email at bullbayreview@yahoo.com

Writers Studio first meeting was in September 2005, since then it has continued to serve as a platform to educate, inform and encourage local authors and to increase their knowledge in all aspects of the art of writing. The Writers Studio is made up of a large group of writers with all levels of experience and it is open to anyone with the desire to improve their writing skills whether it is fiction, non-fiction, poetry, drama, children's stories, Internet publications, magazine or newspaper articles and each writer keeps all rights to his or her own works. The 2006, 2007 and 2008 Sweetbay Review anthologies all represent talent from artists and authors of Virginia. The 2006 Sweetbay Review cover art is "Country Walk," a watercolor painting by WS member Dianne Hills. The second anthology The 2007 Sweetbay Review, Anthology of Virginia cover art entitled "In the Mood for Jazz" was furnished by local Artist Wyatt Ramsey and the 2008 Anthology's cover art is a painting, "Wanchese Fishing Boat"

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Ink Quarterly

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provided by Artist Pat Nottingham of Chesapeake Virginia.

The theme for 2009 is "Release your Muse." Your writing muse is the creative spark that ignites your imagination and motivates your mind. Your muse may be a little creative tickle (or a sledge hammer) that inspires you beyond your normal artistic process, sometimes taking a whimsical 180 degree turn.

The 2006, 2007 and 2008 Sweetbay Review and the 2007, 2008 and 2009 Poetry Journal are available locally and online. Bull Bay Review, the Writers Studio young adult anthology will be available in the spring of 2009.

The planning for the 2009 Sweetbay Review has already begun and if you would like to participate, the Writers Studio meets at 2:30 p.m. the second Sunday of each month at the South Boston-Halifax County Museum of Fine Arts and History in downtown South Boston at 1540 Wilborn Avenue.

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The Inauguration of President Barack Obama Observed In a Little White House In Rural Virginia

There is an echo,
rustling among the dead leaves
this frozen January morning.

There are squirrels,
scampering about in preparation,
undeterred by the chill in the air.

There are granite headstones,
in unmoving rows,
whose silence glistens in the sunshine.

Some Famous People Who Have Been In Touch With Their Muse:

Geoffrey Chaucer
John Milton
Shakespeare
Homer
Robert Graves
Benjamin Franklin
Mark Twain

It is said Dante had two glimpses
of his muse, Beatrice in his life.



There are shouts of laughter
as little children count cents,
balance Lincolns into their piggy banks.

There are venison roasts and tenderloin
in the freezer, while knowing smiles exclaim,
Really? No deer in Statuary Hall!

There are fluffy snowflakes dancing,
as delicately as the swirling details
which blanket the First Lady's Inaugural Ball gown.

Yes, there are secrets
in the security of our little white house –
and a wrought iron eagle, watching as we gather in.

by Tammy Tillotson

Release Your Muse

By Donna Brauda

The Writers Studio theme for 2009 is “Release your Muse.” Your writing muse is the creative spark that ignites your imagination and motivates your mind. Your muse may be a little creative tickle (or a sledge hammer) that inspires you beyond your normal artistic process, sometimes taking a whimsical 180 degree turn.

The muses of Greek mythology are said to represent the arts and sciences. Traditionally, there were nine muses; they were believed to be the inspiration of all artists’ song and stage, writing and dance.

From their name come words such as music, museum, mosaic, amuse and the phrase; musing upon.

As for myself, I don't actually believe in the muse whispering in my ear, but I do concede that there is beauty in the dream of one. For me, writing is a solitary effort. I feel that my inner muse is my inner consciousness speaking to my everyday self, the part of me that breathes in and out without even thinking about it. Yet, once again the dream of how wonderful it would be to have a muse standing over my shoulder inspiring and motivating me and telling me what to write down --that would be the World’s next Best Seller, well that is stuff that dreams are made of.

My advice is write what interests you or use your troubles or sadness to dive into your emotions. Spin that spark of inspiration from a bee dancing on a daisy, or use something as simple or complex as a picture in a museum. Process those thoughts that grow while out walking your dog or just out spending time with family and friends. Focus on those lingering dreams that are snapshots in your head and develop them.

At times the inner muse cannot be coaxed from its inner depths, not with the promise of monetary reward or even global recognition. A muse cannot be purchased or handed down from generation to generation but I do think that time restraints and deadlines are things that make our inner muse become ignited and suddenly creative juices begin to flow. There are also those times (and you know what I mean) when the all consuming creative muse is in control. Your hands work furiously to get the thoughts down and you set back exhausted from your work, and say “Wow, did I really write that?”

Mythical Greek Muses

Calliope Muse of Epic Poetry

Clio Muse of History

Erato Muse of Love Poetry

Euterpe Muse of Music

Melpomene Muse of Tragedy

Polyhymnia Muse of Sacred Poetry

Terpsichore Muse of Dance

Thalia Muse of Comedy

Urania Muse of Astronomy



Musas Dançando Com Apolo by: Baldassare Peruzzi (1481-1536)

Poet's World

Jack Peachum: An Internet-Savvy Poet with a Many-Varied Background

by Shirley Mandel

Jack Peachum is a modern day poet who prefers to publish much of his work on the Internet. "The Internet is a wonderful place to publish poetry. It is a medium in which you can reach a lot of people." He also likes the fact that there is no limit to how many poems they can publish. However, in spite of the convenience and ease of publishing through today's digital technology, he has not lost his love of book publishing and print media in general. "I'm old-fashioned enough to think that print media is a superior power. You can hold a book in your hand at 2:00 in the morning even if the electricity goes out." He added, "Book publishing has been around so long because it is so successful."

He draws on his extensive and colorful background to get material for his poems. "I've been a soldier, student, archeologist, detective, fruit-picker, newspaper-stacker, model, bookstore clerk-- many many other jobs," he said. Peachum has also done some work as an actor, appearing in several plays and films; writing and directing one. He is also well-traveled; hitch-hiking from coast to coast and traveling in Europe.

Jack has been an avid reader since childhood and he has read everything he could get his hands on. "I never learned to read-- I just always read. As a child, I had a book of nursery rhymes-- I perused it until the covers of the book fell off!" He draws on his vast background as a reader for poetic inspiration.

Peachum's favorite themes for his poetry are romance, love, and the human condition. "I like to get inside another person and be able to describe what they're experiencing in a crisis," he said.

T. S. Eliot has been a seminal influence for Peachum; he prefers to write more formal,

structured poetry, but he does write free-verse poetry from time to time. "Everything I write is a surprise. I start with a blank slate when I write." He is also influenced by oriental verse saying, "It is open to interpretation."

One of Peachum's favorite places to publish is the website about.com, a NY Times site. They publish seasonal poetry, and he has recently published a poem for every season.

Another important place that he has published is the Clark Street Review Magazine. There, he has published several dramatic monologues, one of his favorite forms of verse.

The Writers Studio has been important to Peachum and is, "One of the best things I have found in this area. Writers are social people-- the group is a sounding-board off which to bounce our ideas and works," he concluded.



DAVID'S LAMENT FOR ABSALOM

What voice is that cries out beneath the wild thorn trees,
Where birds go up and broken branches swing?
Ah, words out of a dead mouth cannot reach
The ears of a waiting king!
And the frightened mule runs on alone,
Oh, Absalom, my son, my son!

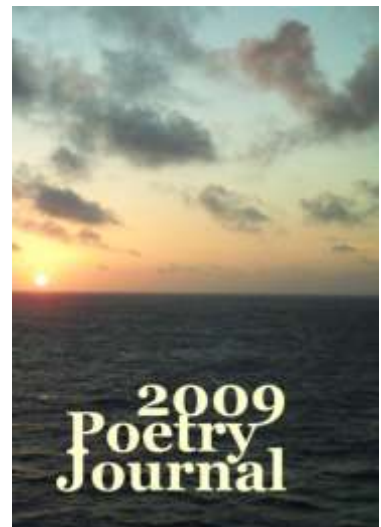
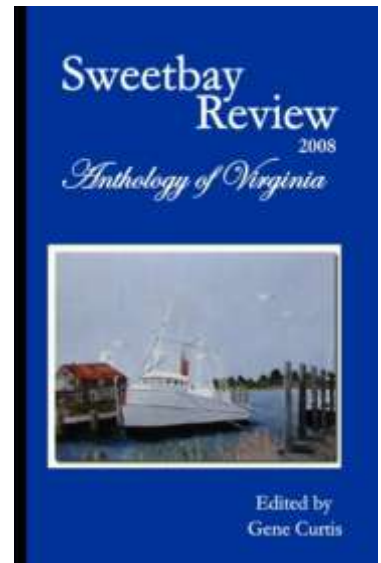
Behold, and what a vision here I see
Before the frightened animal is met--
A figure hangs upon a tree,
With head befouled and bloody yet!
And the frightened mule runs on alone
Oh, Absalom, my son, my son!

It is a dreadful thing to lose
A son and heir so featured and so young,
And were it given me a head to choose
Mine own beneath that bough was hung!
But the frightened mule runs on alone,
Oh, Absalom, my son, my son!

Let him who thinks this death were somehow fair,
Let him give over kith and kin,
To dangle upright by a hair
And be an awful plaything to the wind!
And the frightened mule runs on alone,
Oh, Absalom, my son, my son!

I see the coming ages yet unborn
Where kings from out my house take their stride--
And all within are capped by a crown of thorn
And bloodied at the side!
But the frightened mule runs on alone,
Oh, Absalom, my son, my son!

by Jack Peachum



Book Review

The Shack

by Donna Brauda

William P. Young, the author of *The Shack* (Windblown Media 2007) calls himself an accidental author, that he along with the help of his three friends, Wayne Jacobsen, Brad Cummings and Bobby Downes; orchestrated a Gift of God to the world.

The Shack began as what William Young calls a parable for his children. Young uses his life experiences to build his story which revolves around a man searching for the answers of life and death, good and evil. The story begins with Mackenzie (Mack) Allen Philips' youngest daughter Missy, disappearing while the family is on a camping trip. The worst is supposed and the time for mourning or "Great Sorrow" begins. This mourning is not only for the lost child but for the family as a whole that is left devastated from the pain of loss. Who is to blame for this horrific crime?

Four years pass and on an icy day in March, Mack receives a note in his mailbox, apparently from God, inviting him back to the shack where Missy was thought to have been killed. Eventually he persuades himself to go, only telling his plans to his good friend Willie. At the end of his weekend experience he has a terrible car accident and after he regains consciousness he relays his story of his incredible time at the shack to Willie. He tells him he has seen God whom he calls Papa, Sarayu the Holy Spirit and Jesus at the shack and that they have helped him deal with the "Great Sorrow." The story changes Mack's life and all the lives that he comes in contact with.

It took Young four months to write the first draft of his book, finishing it in August 2005. Like so many authors he had a stack of notes and bits of paper and legal pads to wade through, eventually becoming his story. It took another 16 months of re-writing assisted by Mr. Cummings and Mr. Jacobsen to fashion the story into what we can read today.



On January 23, 2009 *The Shack* celebrated its 35th week on the *NY Times* Best Seller list. Its total count of sales at the time were approaching 6 million and it all started when William Young's wife suggested he write a story as a Christmas gift to their six children.

It usually takes me a while to read a book. Catching moments for a relaxing read is something that I hardly ever get to do anymore. This book simply read fast to me. William P. Young's characters are not easily dismissed from my mind. His descriptions and interactions with these characters are beyond the usual with a personal feel. There is a dark side to his story too. Young masterfully frames in our minds the horror that little Missy must have faced without coming right out and telling us.

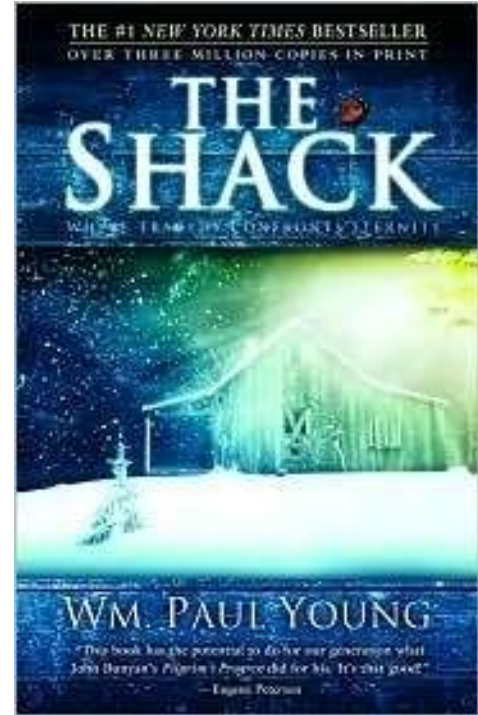
The Shack is a work of fiction that attempts to answer religious theology questions that have been posed almost since the beginning of mankind: What are our responsibilities to God? How can God allow evil to injure those that He loves? These questions also pose other questions: What would you do if a life-altering tragedy occurred in your life? Would your sorrow compel you to look for the face of God, whether to accuse or to find solace, and if you find God's face will He find fault in you? Could you forgive the unfounded or founded accusations of others and then, in love pray for them, or would you possibly withdraw into self-pity and bitterness? Mack's "Great Sorrow" is something that most of us will not have to endure, but "the shack" is a representation

of a place that all may go to expose their hearts and straighten their lives.

Not surprising, this story seems to bring out some of the most unusual conversations. It is not a read-it-once and put-it-on-the-shelf kind of book. Young's novel has been labeled everything from heretic to a blessing. Some people read it and pass it on to a loved one, some buy ten more and pass them on and some people want to throw it in the fire. Upon reading it, will you take offence or will you receive a big hug?

About The Author:

William P. Young, "Paul" completed his undergraduate degree in Religion, Summa Cum Laude from Warner Pacific College in Portland, Oregon. He and his wife, Kim have 6 children.



The Shack: Self-Published NYT # 1 Bestseller

by Gene Curtis

In the last edition of *Ink* I wrote about the war going on behind the scenes between the major players in the print-on-demand publishing world and made a strong case for using print-on-demand as a publishing tool. In this edition I'm taking a closer look at the traditional method of doing a print run for self-publishing. There are many examples of success using the print run method of publishing, and for every success story there are hundreds, or maybe even thousands of failure stories. It is not a method of publishing that can be taken lightly, but under the right circumstances it can be lucrative.

A print run is generally considered a printing of a thousand or more copies of a book and that adds up to a fairly hefty upfront outlay of cash to have the books printed. Virtually all success stories of using a print run have one thing in common: they generated the funds for the printing of the books by pre-selling a substantial

number of the books before they went to press. Almost all of the failure stories involved having the books printed before any marketing was ever done, hence all the stories about self-publishers ending up with a garage full of books they can't sell. The bottom line is that to succeed you have to let the readers tell you what they like.

A print run success story that I particularly like is the one about William Paul Young's *The Shack*. The reason I like it is because the book I bought says in bold, gold letters right across the top of the dust jacket, "THE #1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER."

Mr. Young was fairly broke in 1995 and decided he'd write a story for his kids as a Christmas present. He was more of a technical writer than a creative writer, so when he finished the first draft he made some copies and sent it to a few friends for comment. His friends were so enamored with the story that they made copies of

the manuscript and sent it to more people and some of those people did the same thing. It seemed everyone that read the story loved it.

Mr. Young also sent a copy of the draft to an author friend, Wayne Jacobsen [author of *So You Don't Want to Go to Church Anymore* [self published], who liked the manuscript so much that he wanted to send it to other people. Among these were Brad Cummings, author of *The Fingerprints of God* and *Resurrection of the Divine: Compelling Evidence for the Risen Christ* [both self-published] and Bobby Downes, who with his brother Kevin Downes produce films for their Christian production company, Signal Hill Pictures.

The friends got together, polished the story and when they felt it was ready for publication [May 2005] they put up a website and started selling pre-orders. Due largely to Wayne Jacobsen's and Brad Cumming's podcast, *The God Journey*, they sold 1,000; enough, in my estimation, to pay for their first print run of 11,000. They sold this print run in just a few months, did another print run of 20,000, sold it and then another of 30,000. Just after the book made the *NYT* Bestseller List, Hatchet Book Group [Warner Boos - FaithWords, Center Street - Little, Brown and Company - Little, Brown and Company for Young Readers - Hatchet Book Group DIGITAL Media and now Windblown Media] negotiated to purchase the non-exclusive rights to publish *The Shack* and ended up buying the imprint the book was originally published under, Windblown Media.

This group of friends followed the best marketing model for any self-published title whether the title is print-on-demand or is printed thousands of copies at one time; they established that there was a market for the book before they sold the first copy.

I'll leave you with a bit of wisdom from our own Ron Miller, "I certainly have nothing but admiration for people who can pull off something like *The Shack*. But I have to admit that I have my reservations about going that route. Certainly it's the best thing to do for a special interest book, but I'm not so sure if it's the best tactic otherwise. Certainly, there have been people who have created best-sellers with self-published books, but it's taken enormous investments in time and

money. As I point out in the Lulu forums, someone who self-publishes has to take upon their shoulders all the responsibilities of a publisher: editing, copy-editing, proofreading, design, art (including photo research and reproduction rights), advertising, marketing, distribution, etc. Few people have expertise in all of these areas or have the resources to farm jobs out to experienced professionals. A traditional publisher, on the other hand, offers all of these benefits at no cost to the author at all. The publisher also absorbs all the losses, too, if a book fails. If a self-published book fails, the author is stuck with a garage full of books and a lot of bills.

"Completely aside from the matter of money is the issue of time: one has to be willing to devote themselves to the promotion and marketing of a single book. This is all well and good if that's the only book they ever want to do. But if what they want to be is an author, wouldn't all that time be better spent being creative?"

"So, while I always think anything is worth a shot, I'm still a little unconvinced. At best, I think self-publishing is something to consider only after every traditional route has been tried."

* * *

NEAR DISTANCE

You live 3,000 miles away,
And yet my thoughts of you are
As close as if you were next door.

You live 3,000 miles away
But your e-mails arrive in an instant.
I can even hear your voice and see you
Sitting at your computer as we talk in cyberspace.

You live 3,000 miles away
But I feel as connected to you as
When you were a lad and needed me.

You live 3,000 miles away.
We can communicate instantly.
I am emotionally connected with you.
But I cannot touch you.

by Barbara Shaver