

The 'Why' of an editor

Submitted for assessment as Writing on the Web Assignment 2, 30-Oct-2019.

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Despite carrying around a battered hard-cover notebook half filled with notes and ideas and, sometimes, explanations and writing tips, I've always thought I lacked a true muse. Writing doesn't come easy for me.

I struggle to put my own words to page. Perhaps it's more a lack of discipline than it is a lack of direction; I have had some success with word sprints in the past. And, true, I won NaNoWriMo (www.nanowrimo.org) a few years ago, though that endeavour needs a lot of work before it ever meets a reader. Neil Gaiman says that when he's writing he will only allow himself to write or stare out the window. Nothing else. That's the level of discipline I need. Maybe we all do.

Editing, though, is a different thing. While I fear I have no original ideas, I can see yours. I see the shape of them, and the direction you want to take them. My grandfather was a blacksmith, and I like to think I work words the way he worked metal. I enjoy helping you twist and shape that idea on the page, refining it until it's the best we can make it.

Yes, we. You and I. Some writers worry about hiring an editor because they'll be critical, adversarial, even, and that can be true. My criticism, however, is always with a view to present the best version of your work to the world. You and I are on the same side. I'm here to help you. I just want to make you look good.

I've studied—a lot—but I certainly don't know everything, and I'll admit to mistakes from time to time. To me, it's not so much about always knowing the answer, but knowing what to question. After that, it's easy. Simple, even.

I still write, when I can. It's a way to keep learning. To keep pushing.

If I'm not challenging my writing skills, how can I help you challenge yours?