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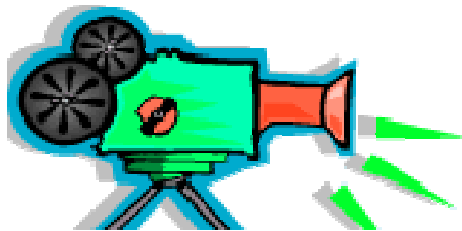
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[www.calwriterssfv.com](http://www.calwriterssfv.com)

January 2009

**PITCH YOUR MANUSCRIPT  
TO THE BIG LEAGUES:  
w/ Michelle Wallerstein**

Let Michele Wallerstein help you kick your writing up a notch at our **January 10 meeting**. As a former Hollywood literary agent, she'll give insider tips on what it takes to get your work ready to



be shown to industry professionals.

As a highly sought-after screenplay consultant, she has helped many writers improve their work, therefore increasing their chances of selling a screenplay or getting an agent. Her clients have written for "Booty Call," "Leprechaun III & IV," "Anastasia," "The Parent Trap II," "Battlestar Gallactica," "Star Trek: DS9," "Fame," and many others.

She offers expert suggestions on structure, style, characters, plot, how to



your material, and understanding the inner workings of the entertainment world.

She also works as a career consultant to writers, directors, filmmakers, and producers who want to know the right moves to get into the business. Wallerstein says that, if your project has the right stuff, she can get it to major industry producers, agents, and studio executives. "If you believe in your material, I'm sure I will too. A strong sense of self-confidence is as essential in writing as it is in all endeavors," says Wallerstein.

So come to our January meeting and get one step closer to your dream.♦♦

*--Leila Morris*

## **Song Writing!** **w/Jimi Yamagishi**

Eloquent descriptions, flavors, shapes & textures of language are essential to properly communicating a thought or experience. Sometimes it's obvious, such as the lyrics to a song. But how about a review of the song or the artist who performs it?

Our "Featured Member," Jimi Yamagishi is the executive director of the Los Angeles Songwriter's Network ([www.thesongnet.org](http://www.thesongnet.org))

He will share some 25 intense and valuable minutes with us, talking about the rapid and constant change occurring in the entertainment industry. He has realized that, while there are many new alternatives to traditional marketing & distribution, there will never be a better set of tools than a handshake and a smile.

Spoken word goes beyond poetry. A screamed command or a whispered request has a specific prosody that communicates beyond the words alone.

There are many places where a songwriter may be able to create beautiful flowing lyricism, but cannot describe the whole package. There are instrumentalists who do not understand the shape of the language and need a lyricist who understands that lyrics and poetry are not the same.



Understanding what is required is the heart of creating your own opportunities by thinking outside the box.

Using out-of-the-box niche marketing ideas, Jimi's projects typically recoup their original investment within 100 days. Applying these ideas to everything he has helped in his songwriting as well, with over a thousand titles in his constantly growing catalog.

The words to music reach across borders. Come reach across your own literary borders on January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2009 and share a successful new year at CWC with Jimi Yamagishi.◇◇

**-- Pauline Williams**

# Viewpoint

## On the Art of Forgiveness

by Scott Alixander Sonders

We are taught that “to err is human, to forgive is divine.” But do we really understand this phrase? Is this a mere platitude? If not, is the significance true for every one of us? In what context will we abide by its consequences?

Wow, “consequences” - for “forgiveness?!” An odd thought, at first. But let’s see. We are also acculturated by popular dialogue to believe that we must forgive others so we might let go of the anger that binds us. By forgiving we are released of deleterious emotions and feelings. It is not my purpose here to argue this worthwhile thesis. However, this notion might be further examined within your answers to the following questions:

- Can we forgive someone who is unaware they’ve transgressed?
- Can we forgive someone who does not know they are being forgiven?
- Can we forgive someone who does not want forgiveness or offers no apology?
- Can forgiveness be given, granted or bestowed without first receiving an offering of contrition or penance?
- Moreover, what if the act of forgiveness is perceived as an accusation?
- Worse yet, what if this “accusation” cautions the transgressor that the forgiver is haughty, prideful, or sanctimonious?

- Finally, what if such negative feelings in the transgressor provoke retaliation?

The English poet, Alexander Pope, said in “An Essay on Criticism” that “All people commit sins and make mistakes. God forgives them, and people are acting in a godlike (divine) way when they forgive.” Perhaps Pope had examined the first verses of Genesis and concluded that if Man is created in the “image of God,” and God is forgiving, then Man is acting divinely when he forgives. So let’s look at the word “forgive” and try to extrapolate a means to the “Art of Forgiveness.”

In effect, “forgive” is the combination of the prefix “for,” which indicates purpose, and the root word, *give* or *gift*, from Old English *forġiefan*. The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language® tells us that “forgive” means: “1. to excuse for a fault or an offense; to pardon. - 2. To renounce anger or resentment against. - 3. To absolve from payment of.” The Dictionary provides, as clarification, these synonyms: “pardon (and) excuse.” And it further explains that, “these verbs mean to refrain from imposing punishment on an offender or demanding satisfaction for an offense. More strictly, to forgive is to grant pardon without harboring resentment.”

Oscar Wilde said, “Children begin by loving their parents; as they grow older they judge them; sometimes they forgive them.” Crucially, a child must first “judge” the parent before that child can forgive that parent. But must the parent first accept their guilt, admit their transgression and apologize, before the child can offer forgiveness? It must be concluded that if someone (“the parent”) does not want forgiveness, or remains unaware of their transgression, then the “the child” can not offer or bestow forgiveness.

Arguably, William Shakespeare, put forth this same conclusion. King Lear begs forgiveness from his daughter, Cordelia, in these often quoted lines: "Pray you now, forget and forgive; I am old and foolish."

Ralph Waldo Emerson who, in his 1844 essay on "Gifts" said, "We do not quite forgive a giver. The hand that feeds us is in some danger of being bitten. We sometimes hate the meat which we eat because there seems (in it) something of degrading dependence."

Add to this the words of Abraham Lincoln. "On principle I dislike an oath which requires a man to swear he has not done wrong. It rejects the Christian principle of forgiveness on terms of repentance. I think it is enough if the man does no wrong hereafter." Clearly, Lincoln agrees that forgiveness implies a presumption of guilt. And most of us know that we do not win anyone's favor by making them wrong.

Moreover, the British novelist, Samuel Richardson, said in 1751 that "Nothing can be more wounding than a generous forgiveness." And Albert Camus, the French author, is attributed from his 1951 "The Regicides," with: "Absolute virtue is impossible. And the republic of forgiveness leads, with implacable logic, to the republic of the guillotine." Of course, this is being made wrong to the extreme of, ahem, losing your head over forgiveness.

So perhaps the more cautious approach is simply not to offer forgiveness to anyone who does not first ask for it. In this way, we neither condemn, judge nor construe guilt. In this way, we are not made sanctimonious by demanding penance from another. But how then do we "let go of the anger that binds us?"

The answer and the theme of this essay, is essentialized in these words from

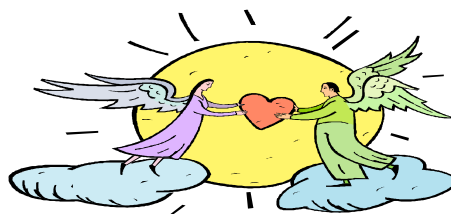
theologian, Paul Tillich, in his 1963 *Forgetting and Being Forgotten*:

We cannot let go of the destructive force of our own anger with "moral arrogance." We cannot avoid the deleterious havoc wrought on our own emotions through the "enforced humiliation on the other." But we might proactively reach to our own serenity if we "accept who has hurt us."

Acceptance is a hard row to hoe. But it is that seed that yields the tastiest fruit. As Stephanie Marston, U.S. educator and author of "The Divorced Parent" parallels the thesis of this essay: "You can't change what happened between you and your ex-spouse, but you can change your attitude about it. Forgiveness doesn't mean that what your ex did was right or that you condone what he or she did; it simply means that you no longer want to hold a grudge. Forgiveness is not a gift for the other person; it is a purely selfish act that allows you to put the past behind you."

Forgiveness is less a bequest and more a request. So let's accept the "purely selfish act" of forgiveness. Let's try, as Bob Dylan put it, "to know too much to argue or to judge." If we look beyond forgiveness as a platitude, if we recreate forgiveness not as naive intention then we can imagine how to "abide by its consequences?" And then, this paradox becomes truth: the entirely "selfish act" is transformed into the purely generous deed.

And if expressed as "a purely generous deed," forgiveness will not be perverted into, as Sophocles aptly said, "a misery of (one's) own choosing." And finally, as Sartre exhorted, "If you are not already dead, forgive. Rancor is heavy, it is worldly; leave it on earth: die light." ♦♦



# The Poet's Internet

There's more to the Internet than Craigslist.

Don Hagelberg from our CWC sister branch collected this terrific list for us...

**About Poetry:** [http://poetry.about.com/od/poets/Poets\\_AZ.htm](http://poetry.about.com/od/poets/Poets_AZ.htm)

**American Academy of Poets:** <http://www.poets.org>

**American Poems:** <http://www.americanpoems.com/>

**American Literature:** [www.shsu.edu/~eng\\_wpf/amlitchron\\_index.html](http://www.shsu.edu/~eng_wpf/amlitchron_index.html)

**American Poetry, Contemporary:** <http://capa.conncoll.edu/>

**American Verse Project:** <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/a/amverse/>

**American and English Literature:** <http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/online.htm>

**B B C Poetry Videos:** [www.bbc.co.uk/arts/books/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/books/), **Ballad Anthology:** [www.bbc.co.uk/arts/books/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/books/)

**Bartleby-Verse Anthology:** [www.bartleby.com/verse/](http://www.bartleby.com/verse/)

**Beat Poetry:** [http://dir.yahoo.com/Arts/Humanities/Literature/Periods\\_and\\_Movements/Beat\\_Generation/](http://dir.yahoo.com/Arts/Humanities/Literature/Periods_and_Movements/Beat_Generation/)

**Berkeley, U.C. Lunch Poetry Videos:**

<http://video.google.com/videosearch?q=owner%3Aucberkeley+lunch+poems#>

**British Poetry Archive:** <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/britpo.html>

**Canadian Poets:** [www.library.utoronto.ca/canpoetry/index\\_poet.htm](http://www.library.utoronto.ca/canpoetry/index_poet.htm)

**Children's Poetry:** <http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/pochild.htm>

**Craft of Poetry:** [www.uni.edu/~gotera/CraftOfPoetry/](http://www.uni.edu/~gotera/CraftOfPoetry/)

**Criticism & Theory:** [www.dmoz.org/Arts/Literature/Poetry/Criticism\\_and\\_Theory/](http://www.dmoz.org/Arts/Literature/Poetry/Criticism_and_Theory/)

**E-Poetry:** <http://epc.buffalo.edu/e-poetry/>

**English Mystical Verse:** [www.bartleby.com/236/](http://www.bartleby.com/236/), **E-Server Poetry Collection:**

<http://poetry.eserver.org/>

**Every Poet:** [www.everypoet.com/](http://www.everypoet.com/), **Golden Treasury:** [www.bartleby.com/106/](http://www.bartleby.com/106/)

**Haiku Poetry:** <http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/haiku.htm>

**Harlem Renaissance:** [www.csustan.edu/english/reuben/pal/chap9/CHAP9.HTML](http://www.csustan.edu/english/reuben/pal/chap9/CHAP9.HTML)

**Hyper texts:** [www.thehypertexts.com/](http://www.thehypertexts.com/)

**IPL Literary Criticism:** [www.ipl.org/div/litcrit/](http://www.ipl.org/div/litcrit/), **Internet Poetry Archive:** [www.ibiblio.org/ipa/](http://www.ibiblio.org/ipa/)

**Jack Foley's "Cover To Cover:"** [www.kpfa.org/archives/index.php?show=106&type=all](http://www.kpfa.org/archives/index.php?show=106&type=all)

**Library of Congress Broadcasts:** [www.loc.gov/today/cyberlc/results.php?cat=5](http://www.loc.gov/today/cyberlc/results.php?cat=5)

**Literary History:** [www.literaryhistory.com/index.htm](http://www.literaryhistory.com/index.htm)

**Modern American Poetry:** [www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/poets.htm](http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/poets.htm)

**Open Directory List:** [www.dmoz.org/Arts/Literature/Poetry/](http://www.dmoz.org/Arts/Literature/Poetry/)

**Oxford Book of English Verse:** [www.bartleby.com/101/index.html](http://www.bartleby.com/101/index.html)

**Poet Links:** [www.lit.kobe-u.ac.jp/~hishika/otherpoet.htm](http://www.lit.kobe-u.ac.jp/~hishika/otherpoet.htm)

**Poetic Terms:** [www.poeticbyway.com/glossary.html](http://www.poeticbyway.com/glossary.html)

**Poetry Daily:** [www.poems.com/](http://www.poems.com/), **Poetry Magazine, Chicago:** [www.poetrymagazine.org/](http://www.poetrymagazine.org/)

**Poetry Magazines & E-Zines:** [www.dmoz.org/Arts/Literature/Poetry/Magazines\\_and\\_E-zines/](http://www.dmoz.org/Arts/Literature/Poetry/Magazines_and_E-zines/)

**Poetry Magic:** [www.poetrymagic.co.uk/](http://www.poetrymagic.co.uk/), **Poetry Portal:** [www.poetry-portal.com/](http://www.poetry-portal.com/)

**Poetry Society:** [www.poetrysociety.org.uk/](http://www.poetrysociety.org.uk/), **Poetry Searcher:** [www.glaced.digitalspace.net/](http://www.glaced.digitalspace.net/)

**Poets and Performers:** [www.thepoetryforum.org/poets.html](http://www.thepoetryforum.org/poets.html),

**Poets' Corner:** [www.theotherpages.org/poems/](http://www.theotherpages.org/poems/)

**Pulitzer Prizes:** [www.shsu.edu/~eng\\_wpf/amlitchron\\_pulitzer.html](http://www.shsu.edu/~eng_wpf/amlitchron_pulitzer.html)

**Reference Dictionary:** [www.bartleby.com/reference/](http://www.bartleby.com/reference/), **Shakespeare:** [www.bartleby.com/70/](http://www.bartleby.com/70/)

**Sonnet Central:** [www.sonnets.org/](http://www.sonnets.org/)

**Toronto Poetry Resource:** <http://rpo.library.utoronto.ca/display/>, **Victorian Anthology:**

[www.bartleby.com/246/](http://www.bartleby.com/246/)

**War Poetry:** [www.bartleby.com/266/](http://www.bartleby.com/266/), **Women Poets, List:** [www.fact-](http://www.fact-index.com/l/li/list_of_women_poets.html)

[index.com/l/li/list\\_of\\_women\\_poets.html](http://www.fact-index.com/l/li/list_of_women_poets.html)

**World Poetry:** [www.pmpoetry.com/worldb.shtml](http://www.pmpoetry.com/worldb.shtml),

**Writer's Almanac:** <http://writersalmanac.publicradio.org/>

**Writing:** [www.writing.com/](http://www.writing.com/)

# Viewpoint

## So, What's The Story

by Michele Wallerstein

Every agent is waiting for you to bring them the next big saleable screenplay that will knock the business off its axis. They want you to show them that piece that will have producers and studios panting at their doors with huge offers of money and multiple deals of future movies. Agents want the best for you, because it means the best for them. I happen to believe that this relationship is a great one. It is an honest quid pro quo - if you are successful, I am successful. How bad is that?

OK, so how do you make that happen? How do you deliver the perfectly written project that will make the town sit up and take notice? It's not as difficult as it sounds. The first thing you have to do is STOP thinking that you have to write the most unusual script of all time. This kind of thinking will destroy your chances of not only selling the script, but of keeping your agent. I've found that new writers often have the tendency to try to impress people by "thinking outside the box." Well folks, the "box" is there for a reason, it works. Throughout movie history, audiences have loved certain types of films. They go to see them over and over again. When you are working to get in to the business, go with the flow. Perhaps, after you've established yourself as a player, you might be able to expand your horizons, but it's not the way to get into your chosen field.

Insofar as your early spec scripts are concerned, here are some rules to live by:

**1. No Togas.** By this I mean to say period pieces. Keep your early scripts contemporary. Period pieces are extremely difficult to sell. They go in and out of favor with the studios by the minute. You never know whether you are too early or too late with your piece. They are not good as writing samples since they are too specifically time/era dependent. This means manners, customs, morals, societal relationships, styles of speech, etc.... Oh, and by the way, try to stay on this planet.

**2. Keep it simple.** Stay away from twins. Don't make a script too complicated to produce. As soon as a development executive or producer sees this they will toss it into the "circular file." It is too much of a pain in the neck. Try not to write a script that is so complicated that it would make the casting a horror. Another example, besides twins, is a multi-generational story of the entire cast. This means a nightmare of casting as well as costume and set changes that are a financial pain. Don't go there. Besides, no one really wants to watch Brad Pitt or Ashton Kutcher age before their eyes.

**3. Keep 'em young.** If you really want to kick start your writing career, try to have your early scripts feature a fairly young cast. In my mind the term "young" means any age up to 29 years old. Not one minute older. The youth market is what is the most viable today. Actually if you can write a script for 9 year old boys, you are really in good shape. The research shows that those boys will return to see the same film over and over again with different friends and family members. Recidivism is the word. Let's not forget our little friend, Harry Potter.

**4. Location, location, location.** This is not simply a rule in real estate. This is a real consideration in movie making. A studio never has a problem putting their money in a viable movie star who can “open” a movie. That means that any movie starring a particularly huge actor is guaranteed a certain bottom line of huge dollars at the box office in its opening weekend. Foreign or multiple locations do not promise this type of money for the film and they are very expensive. It is not a hard and fast rule to keep everything set in one location but simply something to keep in mind. You always want to be realistic in your writing. Think bottom line.

**5. The Star.** Here are the rules for your main character and they are hard and fast. These points apply to all genres. Do not try to change them for any reason.

- a. The Star’s character is on every page.
- b. The Star’s character resolves the problem
- c. The Star’s character has the most lines
- d. The Star’s character gets the girl or the guy
- e. The Star’s character is the smartest person in the cast
- f. The Star’s character has the last word in the film
- g. The Star’s character must grow as a person
- h. The Star’s character must learn something about him/herself

**6. Coincidences.** They only complicate the plot. Coincidences never, ever resolve the problems. When you have a coincidence resolve a plot point the audience feels cheated.

**7. Depressing/Dramas?** There is a fine line between being depressing and being dramatic. You need to understand the difference in your early writing career of dramatic film writing. I love a good dramatic relationship film.

I hate depressing movies that have no other saving grace but to be sad. “HUD” was a great drama starring the late Paul Newman, another great drama was the 1957 film titled “A FACE IN THE CROWD” starring Patricia Neal and Andy Griffith. These are films that must be seen by serious film writers. As an agent, some years ago a client brought in a brand new script that he had never discussed with me. He proudly handed over a large box of them, with leatherette covers with gold embossed titles. This sent a clear message that I was not to give him any notes and that he wanted them to be sent out just the way they were. The story in those scripts was about the murders of elderly, helpless people in an old age home. It was so depressing that I could barely read it. Not only couldn’t I submit this well-written script, but I had to let the client go.

**8. Choices.** Write a contemporary drama, comedy, suspense, thriller, murder/mystery, teen-comedy, romance, etc. Keep your characters interesting and believable- make us care what happens to them. Try to write “up” to the audiences’ intellect and emotions. We want to leave the movie theater feeling like we were entertained and that we learned just a little bit about the human condition. The movie studios like this too.◇◇

*Michele Wallerstein is a former Literary Agent who now works as a Screenplay and Novel Consultant. She can be reached at: email: [novelconsult@sbcglobal.net](mailto:novelconsult@sbcglobal.net) Website: [www.Novelconsult.com](http://www.Novelconsult.com)*



## January Meeting

**CWC:**  
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**Saturday the 10<sup>th</sup>  
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