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The Lifewriter's Digest

Don't Give Your Gold Away

by Denis Ledoux



When a writer talks too much and too revealingly about a story s/he wishes to write—especially at the early stage before the writing has taken enough shape—the energy to get the story written is can be scattered and even lost.

People everywhere have an urge to make their stories public—in any format that will satisfy the impulse. Because in human development, speech comes first and writing later, the impulse to make a story public is almost certainly to be initially to speak and only subsequently to write it. Talking over a cup of tea may be just as satisfying a release for the tension inherent in needing to tell a story as shaping a memorable written lifestory—or poem or novel. But...

This can be a dissipatory prospect—in terms of succeeding at writing your stories.

More novels were lost in the rambling and endless conversations that took place in the charming, congenial cafés of Paris, Hemingway once remarked, than were ever written in the city's famed garrets. It had not escaped Hemingway's attention (as perhaps it would not you!) that it is easier to talk eloquently about writing—especially over a glass of *vin rouge*—than it is to climb resolutely to a chilly, walk-up garret, enter it alone, and really write.

Thankfully, few of us live in chilly walk-up garrets, but Hemingway's observation is still valid today. And it can be extended to your lifewriting efforts: more lifestories are lost in the talking than are saved in the writing. The obvious lesson: if you want to succeed in writing your stories, be careful about the talk—and write.

Robert Bly, poet and men's consciousness advocate, has been quoted as saying, "Don't give your gold away." While Bly was not speaking about writers, he is referring to the same process of dissipating creative energy as Hemingway was and as I am. When a writer talks too much and too revealingly about writing-in-process—especially at a certain stage before the actual writing is completed—a writer can loose all the energy, all the *élan* of a project, necessary to get stories preserved. In other words, you will give your gold away!"

Your task is to channel your need to make your stories public. This need comes from a deep impulse which stories have to leave the private space of soul and enter a public arena. The soul does not care how the story gets publicized (i.e., made public)—only that it gets its story out regardless of the channel. For the soul, following its thrust to become public, talk over a cup of tea is just as acceptable an avenue for making stories public as converting a story into a memorable poem or novel or lifestory This dissipation of energy is perfectly ok as a choice for you if you do not care particularly about succeeding at writing your lifestories, but if you want to write your stories, you must not speak them away, not "give your gold away." Of course...

If remembering or reminiscing is your goal, then you will not be dissipating energy when you talk your stories. You will not have any problem with conversation. But, if your goal is to shape your stories into interesting and memorable autobiography that can be shared with future generations or a wider audience, **keep your stories to yourself, at least during the crucial early stages as they are taking shape.** Only in that way will the energies that are thrusting to be made public be channeled into writing.

By keeping the story to yourself, the energies that are thrusting to be made public can be channeled into writing. Otherwise, like someone who nibbles chocolate all afternoon, you will find yourself with little appetite left for supper—no matter how delicious and nutritious it may be. It's the same with writing, if you talk yourself out all the time, you will find yourself with little energy to write later. You will resemble the writers who spent their stories in the cafés of Paris rather than write them down for posterity.

Is that really what you want?

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If you want to write your stories, you must not speak them away before they are written.

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