

## Thoughts on Endings – Paula Cizmar

So endings. John's novel came to an end yesterday---HURRAH! Congratulations, John! And about two months ago, Pat's novel came to an end—also HURRAH! Congratulations, Pat! And both these authors expressed a strong desire to not want to tie up every little loose end in a pretty little bow. And they are right. It's wonderful to leave the reader with something wanting, with something to admire. It's just that.....

Well, I think our objections to the endings of both these books came from a few natural responses. First, we had fallen in love with the characters and these books, and we were reluctant to let them go, just the way it's hard to say goodbye to a treasured friend. So naturally, we just wanted to live with these stories forever. Often, when I see that I'm getting close to the end of a book I love, I delay reading the ending. I'll go for a walk. Or only allow myself to read it after I've taken care of some other tasks, etc. It's because in a book that has characters we love, we hate to end the relationship. So that's a good thing—that means the author has done his/her job.

Second, we all have natural curiosity, and we want to know EVERYTHING—because we're human, because we love the gossip, because we want to know all's right with the world. BUT: The author has the right not to tell us everything. And so an ending that leaves us a little up in the air is a wonderful thing—because it actually keeps us engaged and lets us know: Life goes on, things change, and there is no one conclusion.

The thing is: Writing endings is sooooo hard. Writing a satisfactory ending is probably the most difficult part of writing—even harder than the awful difficulty of getting the book started in the first place.

However, I think the ending we were asking from John yesterday, and the ending we asked for Pat several weeks ago, are not right either. Their authors' instincts were correct----don't tell us everything.

Nevertheless, as written, the first drafts of these endings wasn't quite it either. As I mentioned to Pat: It's not that I minded the boyfriend showing up on the last page of the book and then not developing this any further. What I objected to was the speed with which the main character accepted that the danger was over .....

Sometimes it just takes the author going back and fleshing out a lot of things, and then discarding much of it, to get us to a place where the abrupt ending is earned.

Re: John's ending.....as I was walking out the door, Diane was saying something to John that was similar to what I had said to Pat weeks earlier: It's not that the last chapter about the main character is the problem. That unresolved ending we can live with. It's the stuff leading up to it. There are too many other loose strings, and if only one or two of them could be ended—or an ending hinted at—then the ending would be just great.

It's all a question of balance. You can get away with an ending that leaves something to the imagination, as long as TOO MUCH isn't left to the imagination.

Anyway, great strong writing, John. Your last chapter, even though we all objected, was fabulous. We were all just in shock. But I think, if you can give us a few hints before that chapter that other things are going to be discovered or complicated....then we will all not only accept the final chapter, but we'll say, YEAH!

And Pat is going back to the drawing board, too. Because though we objected to the first abrupt ending, it's true that there's too much resolution in the rewrite. Sigh. Sorry about all the extra writing, people—but it's the only way to discover the ending. We, as writers, might know “the ending” in our heads, but we also have to come up with something that will satisfy the intellect and emotions of the readers.....even if we don't make them completely sated!

Paula  
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