

The Journal, 2020

The Journal: If It's That Easy...

[January 1, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * A quick roundup
- * The Coming Year
- * Topic: If It's That Easy...
- * How I Came to Writing Into the Dark
- * Yesterday and Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Well, first a quick roundup since I was reporting fiction numbers a day late:

| | |
|---|--------|
| Total fiction words for December..... | 55128 |
| Total fiction words for 2019..... | 452693 |
| Total nonfiction words for December... | 21570 |
| Total nonfiction words for 2019..... | 324830 |
| Total words for 2019 (fiction and this blog)..... | 777523 |
| | |
| Calendar Year 2019 Novels..... | 10 |
| Calendar Year 2019 Novellas..... | 1 |
| Calendar Year 2019 Short Stories... | 4 |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 45 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 197 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

The Coming Year

For me, 2020 is the final year of the decade that began with 2011. So the next decade doesn't begin until January 1, 2021. Why? Because our current calendar began with 1 A.D., not 0 A.D. Duh. (grin)

So for me, the decade will run from 2021 through 2030. Which is good, because in that allows me to use 2020 as a transition year, twelve months during which I can produce at my highest level yet, and during which StoneThread Publishing can gear up to being a licensing company.

By contract, STP will license-in (from me) my novels, novellas, nonfiction books and short story collections. For a variety of reasons, my individual short stories will remain under my control.

STP will then license-out (for a fee) those novels, novellas, nonfiction books and short story collections to ebook vendors (and maybe paper book vendors), audio vendors, film and gaming rights, and anything else we can think of: calendars, stationery, toys, board games, t-shirts, coffee mugs, shower curtains, etc.

And we have all of 2020 to begin setting that up. The contracts will come first. All the rest will build over the year and then into the new decade that begins in 2021.

And by May 2021 or 2022, we'll be ready to attend the Licensing Expo in Las Vegas. Maybe by May 2020, but barring a lightning strike, I think that would be pushing it.

Topic: If It's That Easy...

More questions came in about the last two topics. The most interesting regarded my writing goals for 2020 and the math that accompanied yesterday's topic. The question was, "If it's really that easy, why isn't everyone doing it?"

The answer is twofold:

One, a lot of writers ARE doing what I'm doing, or something similar, though most of them aren't advertising it. In fact, a lot of writers are doing far more than I'm doing.

But even Dean Wesley Smith and Kristine Kathryn Rusch speak only in vague terms about their production, word-count goals, etc. And other major long-term writers who write into the dark blog only very occasionally. When they're actually writing, they disappear from the blogosphere altogether. Witness JA Konrath, Lee Child, Stephen King, Neil Gaiman, and many, many others.

Two, those who aren't doing something similar to what I'm doing don't believe it's possible. Why? Because they're mired in the myths.

Instead of just writing stories (or even trying to just writing stories), they make excuses:

"I want to turn out 'quality' stories."

This is my personal favorite. It implies, haughtily, that nobody (present company included) can turn out "quality stories" unless they follow the myths: outline, revise, rewrite, workshop, polish, and do multiple drafts, or any combination of any of those. Yet those same writers assume that I'm turning out less-than quality work without having bothered to read any of my books. An assumption, happily, that's negated by my first readers, not to mention my sales numbers. (grin)

Never mind that they're losing a LOT of practice time by revising, etc. They're also making their story "same," more like everything else out there, with every revision pass and every rewrite.

And finally, they're making another false assumption: that they know what "quality stories" are. Only the reader can determine that, and the eventual reader's opinion is much more valuable than the writer's opinion. After all, he's paying money to read your book.

"I don't have time."

For that one I'll just refer you back to the math. Of course, you have to do the math for yourself, but the time is there. You just have to care enough to look for it and find it.

"Whatever works for me is best."

What a silly cliché this is. Seriously.

Yes, you should write and publish in the way that works best for you. I have no dispute with that. None.

But how do you know what way works "best" if you haven't tried other ways? These are the same folks who, when they were kids, pushed spinach around on their plate and never tasted it, yet proclaimed to anyone who would listen how bad it tasted.

I too was mired in the myths at one time. I outlined, revised, rewrote, participated in critique groups, etc. right on down the list.

But once I had the courage to try writing into the dark, and once I realized that any story or novel I wrote was nothing more important than a few minutes' or hours' entertainment, it all boiled down to math. How many hours are there in a day? And how many of those hours can I realistically use to write? Nothing else factors into the ability to "write fast" and turn out quality stories. Nothing.

A prime example of a writer mired in the myths landed in my email in-box yesterday. I won't mention the writer's name, but he wrote this:

I'm happy to report that I'm this close to completing Act II of this draft of [title of WIP]. Either today or tomorrow, I'll finalize the last scene—it's actually the next-to-last scene, but it's the last one I've written—and call it good. For now.

Then it's on to building the outline for Act III, the last quarter or so of the book, followed by actually writing it all.

A great way to end the year.

All right then. Obviously this writer is dedicated to the three-act structure. I have nothing against that. But now that he's internalized the structure, why not just trust that knowledge and write the book?

Instead, he's anticipating moving very cautiously forward "today or tomorrow" to "finalize" the penultimate scene of Act II and then, ostensibly, the final scene.

And sometime after that "it's on to building the outline for Act III" — wait for it — "followed by actually writing it all."

To the best of my knowledge, this will be the writer's third novel in three or four or five years. How many more quality novels might he have written had he trusted his knowledge of the three-act structure and simply written the books?

The answer is, he'll never know. And he'll never know how those books would have been received. And as long as he's outlining, he'll never know the sheer joy of discovering the story as it unfolds through his fingertips and appears on the screen.

And I feel bad for him. But I won't mention any of this to him. Not my place. He's doing "what works for him," at least as far as he knows.

So yes, by all means do what works for you. But have the courage to try different things. You might just discover something that works better for you. I know I did.

How I Came to Writing Into the Dark

Just so you know, when I first decided to try setting aside the myths and writing into the dark, I was a skeptic. A strong skeptic. I tried WITD with the thought in mind that it couldn't possibly work the way Dean Wesley Smith said it would.

But I decided to try it. The plan was, I would disprove it for myself, then go back to the "old" way: outlining, revising, rewriting, etc.

Only it DID work. I was amazed at how easy it was, and I decided it must be a fluke. So I tried it again (to disprove it), then again and again. Surely, I thought, eventually things would go awry and I would have proved, at least for myself, that it didn't work.

But again, it DID work. It worked through a few dozen short stories, and then it worked in my first-ever novel, which I wrote in 28 days. And it's been working ever since.

Again, I'm not saying writing into the dark is right for you. I don't really care how you write. And why should I?

But I urge you to at least try it, and no time's better than the present. It's a brand new year. So I suggest you commit to giving writing into the dark a real try. You have nothing to lose but a bunch of old myths that serve only to hold you back from your true potential.

Then if you choose to use it, your only battle in the future will be keeping that pesky critical mind at bay. And the world, as they say, will be your oyster.

And if it doesn't work for you (though I really can't imagine that), you've gained a few stories and lost nothing.

Here's to a happy 2020.

Yesterday I wound up writing just over 3000 words in what might be a new novel. We'll see. (grin) In keeping with my challenge, if it is a new novel, it has to be finished on or before January 30 to count.

Today I'll strive to get my 3000 words, and the rest of the day I'll watch college football bowl games. (grin)

Note: For those of you following my challenge, just a reminder that the short story challenge doesn't start until Sunday, January 5 (first full week of January). The first short story is due on Saturday, January 11.

I'm using the time between now and January 5 to get used to my daily word count goal, because that's what will ensure that I reach my short-story and novel goals each week/month.

Again today, a little over 3000 words. Now I'm gonna call it a day and spend the rest of it with my wife and football. (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Why Do Police Have Different Siren Tones?" at <https://www.leelofland.com/why-do-police-have-different-siren-tones/>.

See "My Must-Have Digital Media Tools: 2020 Edition" at <https://www.janefriedman.com/favorite-digital-tools/>.

See "A New Year's Thought..." at <http://journal.neilgaiman.com/2019/12/a-new-years-thought.html>.

See "Smashwords 2019 Year in Review and 2020 Preview" at <https://blog.smashwords.com/2019/12/2020.html>.

See "2020 Publishing Predictions: House of Indie on Fire" at <https://blog.smashwords.com/2019/12/publishingpredictions.html>.

Via Sam Turner (if you're a Visual Thesaurus subscriber, or if you want to subscribe), see "Four Ways to Build Mental Toughness for Writing" at <https://www.visualthesaurus.com/cm/contributors/3>.

The Numbers

Fiction words (see specific numbers below)
Nonfiction words today..... 1740 (Journal)

Writing of Nagiditch (tentative title)

Day 1..... 3044 words. Total words to date..... 3044
Day 2..... 3189 words. Total words to date..... 6233

Total fiction words for the month..... 3189
Total fiction words for the year..... 3189
Total nonfiction words for the month... 1740
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 1740
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 4929

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... X
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 45
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 197
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Jane Friedman](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [Neil Gaiman](#), [Professional Writer Series](#),
[Smashwords](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Fun with Numbers and a Blast from the Past

[January 2, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Topic: Fun With Numbers and a Blast from the Past
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Topic: Fun With Numbers and a Blast from the Past

Recently on a blog I follow now and then (the writer doesn't post often), a writer listed her fiction numbers for the past several years. I like that, so I stole the idea. (Thanks, L.)

Now, I'm not comparing myself with L or with anyone else. We all have different lives with different priorities and with different time requirements levied on us. So I'm just jooking back to see where I've been in light of where I am now and where I want to be a year from now.

I keep track of my numbers because I like to gauge what I've done and show other writers what's possible. I do it with specific numbers to provide a measurable gauge. "Novel" isn't a quantity. "Short story" isn't a quantity.

Over the course of my entire life before April 15, 2014, I wrote (approximately) 125,000 words of fiction in about 31 short stories. Zero novels.

On April 15, 2014, I started writing a short story every week. That ran for 70 weeks before I intentionally (and foolishly) broke the streak. And on about October 19, I started writing my first novel, originally titled "The Road to Adobe Walls." I finished "Leaving Amarillo" 16 writing days later on November 9 with 40,313 words.

Here are my annual total words written over the past six years. Nonfiction words include only blog posts and nonfiction books:

- *2014: fiction 245,170 — (no count for nonfiction)
- *2015: fiction 686,146 — all 791,084
- *2016: fiction 702,838 — all 976,298
- *2017: fiction 453,762 — all 637,485
- *2018: fiction 537,762 — all 729,238
- *2019: fiction 452,693 — all 777,523

Total fiction words since April 15 2014: 3,078,371

Total fiction and nonfiction since January 1 2015: 3,911,628

(I've added those two totals to the end of my December 31 2019 Journal post.) (grin)

While researching these stats, I found this on my December 31 2014 Journal entry:

"Thanks to Heinlein's Rules and writing into the dark (learning to trust my subconscious) in eight and one-half months, I almost doubled my entire life's fiction writing output before April 15, 2014. [From] April 15, 2014 up through December 31, 2014, I wrote 45 short stories and three novels. [I started the first novel in October 2014.] This is why WITD is so important to me personally and why I wish it for you."

On December 31 2019, the Quote of the Day was from Dean Wesley Smith: "If you're not productive in this new world, you're done. You're just done."

I recommend you check in with yourself. How's your own production? If it isn't where you'd like it to be, why?

Today

As is my habit, this morning I checked PWW. I noted there wasn't a post scheduled for Saturday, January 4. At the moment, that's my scheduled day, so I posted an excerpt from a topic I wrote for the Journal a couple of days ago.

If any of you know an accomplished writer who would like to blog on PWW two or three times per month, please email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

As the PWW site administrator, I'd prefer someone who isn't mired in the myths, or at least not all of them. If folks want to hear writers extolling the "benefits" of outlining, critique groups, etc., they can find them on any number of websites. However, that doesn't necessarily mean the new blogger has to practice writing into the dark either.

Today too the thought occurred to me that with what I have on my plate in 2020, I might have to adjust my goals. (Critical mind, anyone?)

That's true. I might have to adjust them. After all, in addition to my writing, I'm also helping my wife as we transition StoneThread Publishing over to a licensing business. So if I find later that I need to adjust my writing goals, I will.

But in the meantime, what real difference does it make? If I don't achieve my daily word count every now and then, that's all right. The goal resets the next day. Even if I miss writing a short story one week, or don't finish a novel by the end of a month, so what? The world won't end. Nothing bad will happen. (grin)

So when your critical voice starts hinting that your goals might not be attainable, that's how you fight it. With a healthy dose of So What? (grin) After all, writing should be fun.

All of that being said, today will more than likely be a nonwriting day for me. Though I've been practicing reaching my daily goal since the last week of December, they really start in earnest on Sunday, January 6.

And that transition I mentioned... it includes moving offices. The Hovel will become my main office, and my former office in the house will become the dedicated StoneThread Publishing office.

To effect that part of the transition, I have to move more non-office stuff out of the Hovel and into a storage bay (next door). Then I have to move my office from the house to the Hovel. Once those preliminaries are finished, my wife and I will finish setting up the new STP office in the house.

So I want to knock out those preliminaries before this coming Sunday. It's an exciting time at Casa de Stanbrough. (grin)

Now I'm gonna take a little stroll up to the house for a break and some breakfast. Then I'll come back and get started on the day.

If I write anything today, it'll be on Day 3 below when I talk with you again. Which I expect will be soon.

Of Interest

See “Business Musings: Book Birth Days” at <https://kriswrites.com/2020/01/01/business-musings-book-birth-days/>.

See “Plotzperation” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/plotzperation>.

See “Sales Techniques to Help You Sell More Books” at <https://www.thebookdesigner.com/2020/01/sales-techniques-to-help-you-sell-more-books/>.

See “I Love the 20s” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/i-love-the-20s/>.

Browse the podcast topics at “Self Publish Strong”: <http://selfpublishstrong.com/podcast/>.

Browse the podcast topics at “6 Figure Authors”: <https://6figureauthors.com/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words (see specific numbers below)

Nonfiction words today..... 960 (Journal)

Writing of Nagiditch (tentative title)

Day 1..... 3044 words. Total words to date..... 3044

Day 2..... 3189 words. Total words to date..... 6233

Total fiction words for the month..... 3189

Total fiction words for the year..... 3189

Total nonfiction words for the month... 2700

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 2700

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 5889

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... X

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 45

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 197

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [6 Figure Authors](#), [Heinlein's Rules](#), [Kristine Kathryn Rusch](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Self-Publish Strong](#), [The Book Designer](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#), [Writing Goals](#)

The Journal: A Diary of Days, and Feedback

[January 3, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * A Gap-Filling Diary of Days
- * Topic: Feedback
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

A Gap-Filling Diary of Days

I thought it might be useful to make notes on these few days when I'm not publishing the Journal

January 2 — Got a lot done in moving offices in preparation for transitioning StoneThread Publishing to a licensing company. And wow, am I ever excited! As always, tasks that are necessary but peripheral to the actual writing fill me with a strong desire to get back to the basics:

- * Learn more (learning the craft is ongoing)
- * Write more (telling more stories is both my job and my joy)
- * Publish on a regular schedule

If you do those three things, you will be successful.

I'm also thinking more about StoneThread Publishing and the future, both near-term and farther out. (This is in addition to my writing goals because everything else is based on production).

My wife's transition from working away from home to taking over as the publisher and business manager of StoneThread is drawing nearer. From there, the sky's virtually the limit.

January 3 — In addition to finishing moving the offices, I'm expecting a visit from one of my sons and his family. So probably no fiction writing again today. However, I'm planning for that too. I'd like to be more than 3000 words farther along on the WIP before Sunday morning dawns when my short story challenge begins.

A Very Brief Topic on Feedback

A couple days ago I had a question from a writer. I'm paraphrasing here:

On reading reviews: "You and Dean have mentioned that you got better over time. How do you know you got better? How I can get better if I don't know where my weaknesses are?"

My initial response was, "Let me ask you a question: What weaknesses? You're just writing a story, and you're the worst judge of your own work. We all are. Do the best you can at the moment, then publish it. I had one story ("Old Suits") that I thought was pure crap. I thought it had a lot of weaknesses. But I published it anyway. A few days later, I heard from a reader that it was one of the best short stories she'd ever read. She even compared it with Hemingway. As

you continue to learn between stories and then apply what you learn as you write, your storytelling will improve.”

I thought that was pretty good advice, but in another venue, Dean addressed the topic of writers needing feedback:

“You are a writer, a storyteller. You get your feedback from accomplishing and telling a story, doing the best job you can, [and] continuing to learn. Getting it out on the market IS your feedback.”

So plan. Publish something regularly (once a month, every two months, etc.) and let that sense of accomplishment, that you have succeeded at what’s within your control, be your feedback. Your mindset should be, “I’m learning and writing and publishing; therefore I’m improving.”

In other words, don’t base your self-worth as a writer on what other people do (buy or not buy your books) or think (reviews). All of that is out of your control. Keep everything within your control: learning, writing, improving, publishing, doing covers, etc.

Well, look at that. Today is still January 3, and I did get some writing done as it turned out, though I ran a little short on time. See Day 3 below.

I spent part of the day today browsing Dave Farland’s website. I applied and was invited to join his Apex group, which I later declined after browsing his site.

That being said, I suspect the Apex group ([I mentioned it here in “Of Interest” on December 31](#)) might be a really great value if you’re a young writer just starting out. I say that in all seriousness, especially if you still buy into some of the myths of writing or feel that outlining, revising, etc. is a better way for you. If that’s the case, I recommend you check it out.

If you are beyond the myths, and especially if you believe in the sanctity of Heinlein’s Rules (as written) and practice writing into the dark, I doubt Farland’s group will do much for you. But look for yourself (click the link above). Seriously.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “The Opening Promise” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/the-opening-promise/>.

See “Beset by Genre Identity?” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/beset-by-genre-identity/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words (see specific numbers below)

Nonfiction words today..... 730 (Journal)

Writing of The Cazadores Lounge and Lonely Place (novel, formerly Nagiditch)

Day 1..... 3044 words. Total words to date..... 3044

Day 2..... 3189 words. Total words to date..... 6233

Day 3..... 2145 words. Total words to date..... 8378

Total fiction words for the month..... 5334

Total fiction words for the year..... 5334

Total nonfiction words for the month... 3430

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 3430

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 8764

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... X

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 45

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 197

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dave Farland](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: My Head Is Full

[January 4, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Topic: My Head Is Full
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Writers write. Professional writers publish their works.” Kristine Kathryn Rusch

“There’s a lot of value to learning how to do a clean one-draft novel. It allows the writer to make the story the important thing, not the words. It also frees the writer up to write, not contemplate every tiny detail.” Kristine Kathryn Rusch

Topic: My Head Is Full

Ever get the feeling your head is full?

Mine is. That's one reason I write all this silliness day after day. It also makes me wonder why J.A. Konrath, Neil Gaiman, Stephen King and others don't post every day, or at least a lot more often than they do (or ever, in King's case).

I can only assume their heads are full too, but with fiction. And that they don't post more often because they're busy writing the next book. For their sake, I hope that's the case.

Still, how does anyone not want to share with others what they learn? I don't mean plagiarizing someone else's knowledge (sharing class notes, etc.). I mean learning something, practicing it until you've made it your own and then sharing it.

Do they see sharing what they know as a waste of their time? Or are they afraid of being told they're wrong? Is that why they don't share their knowledge?

I kind of understand both halves of that. My posts, no matter how provocative, seldom draw anything more than the sound of crickets. And I'm told often (and loudly) that I'm wrong, especially by Stage 1 and Stage 2 writers.

Mostly by those in Stage 2 who are convinced they've learned everything already, or by those in both stages who are still clinging to all the safety nets that are scattered throughout the myths of writing.

You know.

"You can't turn out quality stories if you don't outline."

"You can't turn out quality stories if you write fast."

"You can't turn out quality stories if you don't run them through a critique group."

"You can't turn out quality stories if you don't revise."

"You can't turn out quality stories if you don't rewrite at least ___ number of times."

All of that is for each story and novel. And all it is pure, unadulterated bull cookies. I got tired just writing that checklist. And I get scared just thinking about it.

That's right. Fear is why I don't do any of those things, much less all of them.

Because I learned early-on to turn the fear around.

Instead of being afraid of writing without an outline, I'm afraid of the time I'll lose when I could have been writing the story instead.

Instead of being afraid of writing fast, I'm scared to death of spending too long with a set of characters or a storyline and becoming bored before I can finish it.

Instead of being afraid of what might happen if I miss a typo, I'm afraid of lingering too long in revision and diluting my original voice. (That's why I "revise" while cycling in creative voice and finish with one clean draft.)

Instead of being afraid I might miss something that a critique group will "catch" (read "write their way"), I'm frightened of allowing other critical minds into my story. Nothing good in literature has ever come from the conscious, critical mind. Besides, I don't want to write by committee.

Instead of being afraid of my story NOT sounding as good as someone else's, I avoid rewriting because I don't WANT it to sound like anyone else's.

And more than anything, I'm afraid of how much time doing all of that will cost me when I could have been practicing (writing) and thereby learning to be a better storyteller.

What's common to the myths is the phrase "quality stories." And the common error of every writer who's steeped in the myths is that they know what quality is.

Writers really are the worst judges of their own work, but that cuts both ways. When they think a work is bad, they're wrong. A lot of readers will think it's great. Well, if they ever get to read it.

(What really amazes me is that most often, the writers who spend months or years writing a single novel are also those most likely to stick it into a virtual drawer and never publish it because they think it isn't good enough. So they literally waste those months or years. Some of them even brag about it.)

I usually finish a novel in less than 30 days, and I'm flat horrified at the thought of not publishing it afterward. Why do all that work and then not let it out into the light of day? Why not let readers decide what they like or don't like? I am not the General Manager of the Universe. I'm not even the head of the What Other People Like department.)

And when writers think a work is finally good, after they've outlined, revised, run it through critique groups and rewritten to "improve" it, they're wrong too. A lot of readers will see it as the same old bland non-unique stuff they've read before.

The bottom line is, You Don't Know what a reader will like or not like. Period. Your job is to write; judging what you've written is the readers' job.

I'll share a personal secret with you: My own authorial voice (my way of telling a story) sounds as boring to me as yours sounds to you. That's something else most writers have in common.

But I was fortunate in my early days to realize that my voice sounds boring to me because it's in my head 24/7/365. To others, my voice sounds unique.

And folks, unique is what sells.

Anyway, my head is full. I might have to nudge a few things aside to give the stories the room they need.

Today is Saturday. We'll probably continue the transition of offices today, along with other things. That's why I came out here a little early (2:30) to write.

And instead, I wrote all of this stuff. Silliness, all of it. Things that generally don't matter except to me, and I already know them. So I have to wonder, what's the point?

Anyway, now I'm going to post this, then turn to the WIP in a moment to get something done that's actually worthwhile. You know. Like Konrath and Gaiman and King, et al.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Six Decades" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/six-decades/>. Talk about feeling old. I'm three years younger than Dean almost to the day, yet when Jonah Peach comes out later this month I will have published professionally in only two decades. Sigh.

See "6 Predictions for the Future of Artificial Intelligence in 2020" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/6-predictions-for-the-future-of-artificial-intelligence-in-2020/>.

See "Start of 2020 Ushers Thousands of Once-Copyrighted Works Into the Public Domain" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/start-of-2020-ushers-thousands-of-once-copyrighted-works-into-the-public-domain-2/>.

See "Public Domain Day 2024" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/start-of-2020-ushers-thousands-of-once-copyrighted-works-into-the-public-domain/>. This is exciting. Think of all the shared worlds you can write in now that you couldn't write in before.

The Numbers

Fiction words (see specific numbers below)

Nonfiction words today..... 1180 (Journal)

Writing of The Cazadores Lounge and Lonely Place (novel)

Day 1..... 3044 words. Total words to date..... 3044

Day 2..... 3189 words. Total words to date..... 6233

Day 3..... 2145 words. Total words to date..... 8378

Day 4..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

| | |
|---|------|
| Total fiction words for the month..... | 5334 |
| Total fiction words for the year..... | 5334 |
| Total nonfiction words for the month... | 4610 |
| Total nonfiction words for the year..... | 4610 |
| Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... | 9944 |
| | |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... | X |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... | X |
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... | X |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 45 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 197 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Preaching to the Choir (I Hope)

[January 5, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Topic: Preaching to the Choir (I Hope)
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Many people hear voices when no one is there. Some of them are called “mad” and are shut up in rooms where they stare at the walls all day. Others are called “writers” and they do pretty much the same thing.” Ray Bradbury

“I have some goals, but I’m going to mostly keep those to myself. Some of them are very high reaching, and I’ve learned that voicing them just gets criticism... especially writing goals.” Tony DeCastro

“Most readers still read paper. It’s only 30% or so who read e-only. And e-only readers buy paper for “keepers”—the books they always want to have. Paper is easier than it’s ever been, and it’s always been essential. You’re leaving out most readers by being e-only.” Kristine Kathryn Rusch, in a response to one of my less-astute comments

Topic: Preaching to the Choir (I Hope)

How unfortunate is that second Quote of the Day above?

How unfortunate is it that some writers, for whom “can’t” is the driving force in their life, seemingly love to put down those who strive for greatness?

“Can’t” is about as negative as it gets, and fortunately, “won’t” is its identical twin. If you believe you can’t, you won’t. Period. (I say “fortunately” because can’t and won’t combined thin out the competition.)

But I flat don’t understand that way of thinking. “Can’t” is a fear-based, critical-mind response to a challenge. But you can turn that fear around:

**Instead of fearing what might happen if you strive to reach a goal,
fear what you will certainly miss if you don’t.**

I talk a lot here about “failing to success,” a term coined by Dean Wesley Smith. The idea is, if you strive for a lofty (to you) goal and fall short, you still will have accomplished something you wouldn’t have accomplished if you didn’t reach for the goal at all.

Professional writer [Diane Darcy](#) quoted Norman Vincent Peale in a comment: “Shoot for the moon; even if you miss you’ll land among the stars.” Now that’s a great attitude.

And I applaud writer Maggie King ([presumably not this Maggie King](#), though I don’t know for sure), who wrote in another comment, “I’m finally moving forward and actually even published on Amazon in this brand new year. I’m now writing book #2 and it’s scary as hell but I’m going for it.” Maggie didn’t state her goals, but again, what a great attitude!

I have to admit I’m a little spoiled. I’m fortunate in that I found Dean Wesley Smith, learned quickly to trust him, and attached myself to him as my mentor.

And I’m even more fortunate in that my beautiful mom drove that lesson about “can’t” into my brain as I was growing up. That lesson literally enabled the rest of my life.

I survived my childhood because of that lesson. I became a Marine and later a cop because of that lesson. And I became a successful professional fiction writer because of that lesson.

From the time I was about 4 years old, any time I uttered that horrible word “can’t,” anger flooded through Mom.

Don’t get me wrong. She never struck me, and she very seldom uttered even a quiet curse word (when she did, it was under her breath). Her facial expression was always calm, and even her sweet voice remained unchanged over the years.

But whenever I complained that I “can’t” do something, she would extend one index finger (sharply) toward my face and say, “‘Can’t’ never did a damn thing, Harvey. You should remember that.”

I did. And look at me now.

If you feel you can't do something, you're right. You're already defeated, and if that's how you want to live your life, that's fine. Completely up to you.

But if you spread the venom and express to someone else that *they* can't do something, shame on you, especially in an endeavor so insignificant as writing.

Face it: We aren't pulling victims out of a burning building; we aren't running toward gunfire, putting our life on the line. We're sitting alone in a room making stuff up. And frankly, if you think that's "hard" or even "work," you need to check in with yourself. Maybe operate the working end of a shovel for a few 8-hour days.

You're an entertainer, plain and simple. And you *can* become a professional entertainer, with millions of people paying good money to read what you wrote and thereby escape their lives for awhile.

But success in writing has nothing to do with luck. It has to do with getting "can't" out of your vocabulary, setting goals, and then striving to reach them.

And that, my friends, is something you CAN do.

Had a mediocre writing day yesterday (see Day 4 below). Today, despite a late start, I'll hit or exceed my daily word-count goal just to prove to myself I still can. (In my world, this is a "what have you done for me lately" kind of thing. grin) If you're checking up on me, today will be Day 5 in the numbers below the next time I post.

Oh, and re the third quote in Quotes of the Day above, StoneThread Publishing will be publishing to paper as well as ebooks during 2020. On the other side of that quote, be sure to read The Digital Reader's post in "Of Interest" below.

I also learned you can get great benefits (chief among which are waived setup fees with IngramSpark) by signing up with [ALLi](#) or with [IBPA](#). I urge you to check them out, then pick your poison. (I personally recommend IBPA.)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "2020" at <https://tonydwritespulp.com/2020/01/05/2020/>.

See "January Workshops Starting" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/january-workshops-starting/>. A great lineup this month.

See "Are You Ready For The Next eBook Boom?" at <https://the-digital-reader.com/2019/12/29/are-you-ready-for-the-next-ebook-boom/>.

See “What To Include On Your Book’s Copyright Page” at <https://blog.bookbaby.com/2019/12/your-books-copyright-page/>.

See “Self-Publishing Predictions for 2020 and the 2020s” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/self-publishing-predictions-for-2020-and-the-2020s/>.

See “A test post...” at <https://www.perpetualized.com/a-test-post-that-turned-into-a-post-about-writing-and-trusting-the-process/>. A great post that contains a lot of gems. Also, Lynn has decided to put up a new blog post every day. I recommend visiting it to see what she’s doing. I wish there was a way to subscribe, but I didn’t find one.

See “Perseverance” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/perseverance-2/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words (see specific numbers below)

Nonfiction words today..... 1010 (Journal)

Writing of The Cazadores Lounge and Lonely Place (novel)

Day 1..... 3044 words. Total words to date..... 3044

Day 2..... 3189 words. Total words to date..... 6233

Day 3..... 2145 words. Total words to date..... 8378

Day 4..... 1301 words. Total words to date..... 9679

Day 5..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 6635

Total fiction words for the year..... 6635

Total nonfiction words for the month... 5620

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 5620

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 12255

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... X

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 45

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 197

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Anthony DeCastro](#), [BookBaby.com](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Independent Book Publishers Association](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Book Designer](#), [The Digital Reader](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Yesterday and Today

[January 6, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Yesterday
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“You will never hear James Lee Burke speak at a conference about how to market a novel, how to brand one's work, or the importance of co-op money to the success of one's sales. My father talks about writing not as a commercial enterprise, nor even as a craft or as art, but as a destiny.”
Alafair Burke

Via The Passive Voice, “We protest against unjust criticism, but we accept unearned applause.”
Jose Narosky

Odd to me that it's exactly the reverse for some fiction writers. They protest if they believe their own work is good, but invite, accept and embrace unjust criticism. Some never learn it is the reader's opinion that matters.

Yesterday, I cross-posted [my topic from here](#) to my weekly blog at HarveyStanbrough.com. It will post on February 18.

But in my efforts to transition that site to a purely author website, I also made a decision:

The blog as it exists at HarveyStanbrough.com will end with the post of February 18. After that, I'll post there maybe once a month, and I'll post items of interest to my readers.

For those who want to continue to learn about writing (from me), they'll need to subscribe to the Daily Journal. Please spread the news. If you find value in the Journal, please tell any of your writer friends, writing organizations, critique groups, etc. And thanks!

Yesterday also I got my 3000 words plus (see Day 5 on the novel below). I probably could have done at least one more session, but there was a football game I wanted to watch. (grin)

Finally, my short story challenge started yesterday too.

Today I'll hit or exceed my word count goal again. I just realized (5+ years in) that my challenges feed the word count and my word count feeds the challenges. If I keep up with the story-a-week challenge and the novel challenge, I should have no trouble putting out the daily

word count. And if I keep up with the daily word count, I should have no problem meeting the weekly and monthly challenge. Is that cool or what?

I learned through Alafair Burke's "Tribute..." (below) that yet another long-term professional fiction writer writes off into the dark. By his own admission, James Lee Burke never outlines anything and never sees more than a scene or two ahead while he's writing.

Like many successful fiction writers, JLB started young, publishing his first short story at age 19 and his first novel at 23.

I've been writing most of my life, but it was more a hobby than anything else. I didn't give it free reign and go at it seriously until a little over 5 years ago. Stupid, stupid me. (grin)

I hope (and expect) 2020 to be a breakout year for me. I'm not talking about sales or about money. If you have a passion for writing, those things will take care of themselves. I'm talking about writing.

So today I will write on the novel, but I also plan to knock out the short story for this week.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "A Tribute to my Literary Hero by His Daughter" at <https://tonydwritespulp.com/2020/01/05/a-tribute-to-my-literary-hero-by-his-daughter/>.

Via Tony DeCastro, see "Tribute to James Lee Burke" at <http://alafairburke.com/2009/05/tribute-to-james-lee-burke/>. I flat loved this.

See "Lost Five Challenge Writers" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/lost-five-challenge-writers/>.

See "Copyright – Hands Up Who Here Understands It" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/copyright-hands-up-who-here-understands-it>.

The Numbers

Fiction words (see specific numbers below)

Nonfiction words today..... 580 (Journal)

Writing of The Cazadores Lounge and Lonely Place (novel)

Day 1..... 3044 words. Total words to date..... 3044

Day 2..... 3189 words. Total words to date..... 6233

Day 3..... 2145 words. Total words to date..... 8378

Day 4..... 1301 words. Total words to date..... 9679

Day 5..... 3248 words. Total words to date..... 12927
Day 6..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 9883
Total fiction words for the year..... 9883
Total nonfiction words for the month... 6200
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 6200
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 16083

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... X
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 45
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 197
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Alafair Burke](#), [Anthony DeCastro](#), [James Lee Burke](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#),
[Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Sigh... Old Stuff Revisited

[January 7, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Yesterday
- * Topic: Sigh... Old Stuff Revisited
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“If your dreams do not scare you, they are not big enough.” Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, via David Farland

Yesterday I had a good writing day (4253 words). I wrote a little over 3100 words on the novel plus a little over 1300 words on the short story. If I'm able to write on both again today, I should finish the short story.

I might go back to posting the Journal later in the day so I can post fiction totals day by day in case anyone's interested.

Topic: Sigh... Old Stuff Revisited

First, those who believe quality and quantity are mutually exclusive have a great deal to learn about writing fiction. And they're way behind the curve.

A long-time acquaintance who is also a writer (and deeply, strongly mired in the myths) sent me an email. He wrote in part

"I read your last note on creative writing (["Looking Back, Looking Forward"](#)) and the number of short stories and novels (was one a month correct?). Well, if so, I take a bit of an exception to that rule."

Note: I'm not sure what "rule" he's referring to, but judging from the rest of his email, I assume it's my proposition that writing "fast" can produce quality stories.

"I would say that quality and the uniqueness of what one writes is far superior than quantity. Didn't Margaret Mitchell pen *Gone With the Wind* as her only story in her lifetime? [And] Larry Mc Murtry ... told me that he worked in the morning and his goal was to write three pages a day and then rest. He would then turn over his work ... for editing right then and there."

And my reasoned response makes up the rest of this topic:

Nothing wrong with taking exception. I disagree with you, of course, but I'll try to explain why below. (I won't bother to cherry pick examples. There literally are dozens of NYT bestsellers whose books have been made into films who wrote one clean draft straight through without an outline and then published them. As an added bonus, those writers have dozens or hundreds of works out there instead of one or two or three. Some of those are Lee Child, James Lee Burke, Stephen King, Dean Wesley Smith, Kristine Kathryn Rusch, Ernest Hemingway, Jack Higgins, et al ad nauseam.)

I believe you can only reach quality through practice. Consider, how many more novels might Margaret Mitchell have written had she finished *Gone with the Wind* and let it go? And who's to say it would have been "bad"? Unfortunately, we can never know. Based on my own experience, I personally believe it might well have been better.

The one thing I ask of those who disagree with my own writing process (which I really shouldn't make public) is whether they've read my novels. If they haven't, I discount their opinion. It's difficult for me to give much credence to "a book that's written 'fast' can't possibly be any good" when the owner of the opinion hasn't bothered to read my books, all of which were "written fast."

(I'm talking here in particular about a writer I know who rewrites everything, runs it through critique groups, etc. Yet when I told her privately that I would never bother buying a book that I knew was written to an outline and rewritten by committee, she got upset. Go figure.)

The simple fact is, if I lied (as many famous writers do) and said it took me 11 years to write the 11-volume Wes Crowley Saga (for example), a lot of people would praise it sight unseen. And that's just silly.

But if I tell the truth (it actually took less than 30 days to write each book, so less than 11 months total) people automatically think the books are "bad," again without bothering to read them. And again, that's just silly. A story is either good story or it isn't, but shouldn't that be the call of a reader who's actually read it?

It takes me about 60 hours to write a 60,000 word novel. About 1000 words per hour, or 17 slothful words per minute. I turn out so many stories and novels because I actually spend the time in the chair.

Would my 60,000 word book be better quality if I spread those 60 hours over 6 months (10 hours per month) instead of over one month (2 hours per day)? Or if I wasted a lot more hours rewriting it? Or if I invited input from a critique group? I don't think so.

Again, quality boils down to practice. And "practice" means putting new words on the page—hence, quantity. It means moving forward in honing your craft by writing instead of backtracking (rewriting) or standing still (hovering over one work for months or years).

To be sure, a writer's storytelling ability will improve more quickly if he continues to read in his genre(s) and learn new techniques between or during bouts of writing, but practice remains the best teacher.

I also believe nothing good in literature ever came from the conscious mind. Rewriting, in particular, takes the work further from the writer's original voice with every iteration. Been there, done that, will never go back. And of course, "quality" is in the eye of the beholder. What one reader loves, another won't. Nature of the beast.

By the same token, we often say, "Writers are the worst judges of their own work." That's true, but it's true both ways.

If we believe our work is great, we're wrong. Some out there will like it and others won't. But it's equally true that if we think our work sucks, we're also wrong. Some out there won't like it, but others will. So instead of not publishing it and hiding it away, those of us with self-confidence publish it anyway. And find out that some readers love it.

I can't believe I've convinced you, and that's fine. At least you know my reasoning.

Today, I thought I would finish the short story, so I focused only on it.

As a result, I wrote nothing on the novel, I didn't finish the short story, and I missed my word-count goal by a few hundred words. But there's always tomorrow. At least until there isn't. (grin) More than likely I'll focus on the short story again tomorrow.

Anyway, today I was sidetracked a bit by the email that prompted the topic above, by laundry and a few other things, and I let the day slip away from me. Shrug. It is what it is. Tomorrow the goal resets, and the short story and the novel will be waiting for me.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See The Passive Guy's take on "2020 Publishing Predictions: House of Indie on Fire" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/2020-publishing-predictions-house-of-indie-on-fire/>.

See "3 First-Time Self-Publishing Mistakes to Avoid" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/3-first-time-self-publishing-mistakes-to-avoid/>.

See "Learning to Love the Loneliness of Writing After My MFA" (including TPG's take) at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/learning-to-love-the-loneliness-of-writing-after-my-mfa/>.

See "What Does It Mean to Be A Full-Time Author?" at <https://www.janefriedman.com/full-time-author/>. Submitted in case you find gems. I especially liked the responses of Jim McCarthy.

See "Settings Repeat" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/settings-repeat/>.

See "What Your Choice of Dialogue Tags Says About You" at <https://www.janefriedman.com/dialogue-tags/>. I include this mostly because it's wittily written. Multiple commercial writers have advised not to use verbs other than "said" (an intransitive verb that indicates a form of utterance) to carry dialogue. Most of the others the author mentions are transitive verbs, meaning they can be followed by a period and still make sense. For example, "He said." does not make sense by itself, whereas "She whispered" does. Also "asked" isn't really ever necessary since the question mark conveys that the preceding (or following) group of words was a question.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... 4253 (see specific numbers below)

Fiction words today..... 2479

Nonfiction words today..... 1310 (Journal)

Writing of The Cazadores Lounge and Lonely Place (novel)

Day 1..... 3044 words. Total words to date..... 3044

Day 2..... 3189 words. Total words to date..... 6233

Day 3..... 2145 words. Total words to date..... 8378

Day 4..... 1301 words. Total words to date..... 9679

Day 5..... 3248 words. Total words to date..... 12927

Day 6..... 3180 words. Total words to date..... 16107

Day 7..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Writing of “Where the Music Goes to Die” (short story)

Day 1..... 1343 words. Total words to date..... 1343
Day 2..... 2479 words. Total words to date..... 3822
Day 3..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 16885
Total fiction words for the year..... 16885
Total nonfiction words for the month... 7510
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 7510
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 24395

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... X
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 45
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 197
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Jane Friedman](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: If I Could Dictate

[January 9, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Topic: If I Could Dictate
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Note: I had this post all ready to go yesterday, but forgot to hit Publish, so here it is today. I’ll publish another one later today (as an experiment) to see whether both of them post at 5 p.m. this afternoon.

Quote of the Day

“I tend to fly and finish a lot of words... I don’t like to stop.” [Diane Darcy](#), USA Today bestselling romance novelist

Topic: If I Could Dictate

Diane Darcy brought up an interesting question in a quote on yesterday's Journal post. How can she dictate a novel but still finish it in one clean draft?

If you haven't read her comment, I suggest you [go read it now](#), then come back to this topic.

At least one other reader of this Journal uses dictation, and the question interested me, so I thought I'd respond to Diane in a topic.

I know a few other pro fiction writers who swear by dictation. They dictate into a separate voice recorder, then type-in the dictation (or flow it into their computer automatically). At least one has a typist type-in the words for him. I'm not sure of their process after that, whether they send it to someone else, go over it themselves, or what.

I've tried dictating into a voice recorder. Writing while I walk would be the best of two worlds to me, but I've never been able to pull it off. I think I "need" the sensation of typing as I write. That's probably why I'm still writing on the same little laptop I used for my first novel. (grin)

As a side note, I think it was Erle Stanley Gardner, an old pulp writer (Perry Mason and much more), who wrote up to 10,000 words per day via dictation. I think his secretary typed it in for him.

Now to Diane's comment—

First, maybe don't mess with what's working for you. I wouldn't want anything to interrupt that flow. I too love to just keep writing, and sometimes I'll write two or three sessions (scenes) without getting out of the chair. (Not good for health.) I try to remember to get up and move around about once an hour.

If you're sending that draft to your publisher and letting a copyeditor fix problems, you're effectively writing a 60,000 word novel in 40 hours. (grin) If not, maybe you could hire an English major from the local college to proof your draft for you.

I don't know your schedule or whether you dictate to a voice recorder or directly to your computer. But if I could do what you do and wanted to finish in one clean draft, I think I'd try this:

1. When I was walking a lot, my short walk was 6 miles (so 2 hours), my medium was 9 miles (3 hours) and my long was 12 miles (4 hours). I alternated days, short, medium and long, and took one day off a week.

So say I carried a voice recorder and wrote via dictation during my walks. And say at the end of each walk, I'd transfer what I'd recorded into my computer so I wouldn't have to type it in. (There are programs that will do that.)

2. I'd want to shift my walks to later in the day by an hour or two. (Adjust this as necessary. It doesn't take nearly as long to read something as it does to write it in the first place. So if I was

walking/dictating only 2 hours per day, I'd make my cycling session 1 hour. I'd leave just enough time to read for pleasure what I'd written.)

Then I'd develop a new habit. I'd use that hour or two to read (for pleasure, in creative subconscious mind) what I'd written the day before.

But as I read, I'd let my fingers rest on the keyboard, and I'd allow my characters to touch the manuscript as I read through, fixing typos, replacing words with better words, etc. That's cycling.

3. Being "unstuck in time"—As I read, if I encounter something that doesn't quite make sense (Aunt Mary pulls a revolver out of the pocket of her housecoat, but I don't remember her putting it in her pocket in the first place), I would cycle back to earlier in the story and "plant" the revolver. Maybe write a sentence or two showing her taking the revolver from the drawer of her nightstand and putting it into her pocket.

4. The self-imposed time limit on reading would help keep the critical mind at bay. It would drive me to "just read" the manuscript and fix what pops out at me as a reader, not "edit" it. Then I'd send it to my publisher (if I were you) or to my first readers (since I'm me) and be done with it.

If you decide to try your own version of this, please let us know how it turns out.

And if anyone else has any input about dictation, please feel free to chime in.

Today at noon I finished the short story with a little over 2300 words. The ending came out much different than I thought it would, and the story morphed as it went.

I read this one over again, cycling, with the thought in mind that there was excess, things that didn't fit. So I allowed myself to touch it.

And there was excess. After I finished it, I went back through and cut 500 words. (grin) If this ends up being a novel later, some of that will probably make it back in.

Today I also adjusted my goals a bit. Well, the rules for my goals. I made two mental adjustments:

First, my overall goal with short stories is to write one per week for at least the next 78 weeks (a year and a half). I'm sticking to that.

But if a short story idea occurs to me and I start more than one in a given week, that counts toward the overall goal. In other words I'm not holding myself strictly to the Sunday to Saturday timeframe. I just have to have a new short story finished by Saturday every week.

Second, when a short story wraps, of course it counts as a short story for that week. But if it also wants to be a novel (it happens sometimes), I'll allow myself to bring it back in another month to count for the novel for that month.

My reasoning? It would be insane to set aside a short story that wants to be a novel until after my novel challenge is completely over. After all, the reason for the goals in the first place is to drive me to write, not to thwart me in that endeavor. (grin)

So same challenges, but with slightly adjusted rules.

I brought this up (and made these adjustments) because this morning as I started Chapter 3 of the current short story I realized it wants to be a novel. (That's exciting to me because as far as I know it's a brand new concept in SF.)

I might bring it back next month (or two or three months down the line) and I might not, but I want to leave myself the option.

Oh, I also renamed this story "Fifth Mind." It was originally "Where the Music Goes to Die." Now I'm going to get it out to my patrons and to my business partner for submission to pro markets.

I decided not to go back to the novel today. I'll get back to it tomorrow. Taking off about an hour early today. (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Yes I Can" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/yes-i-can>.

See "2021... Oh, My...." at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/2021-oh-my/>.

See "First Page Critique (sort of): The Writer I Was" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/01/first-page-critique-sort-of-the-writer-i-was.html>. Hmm. The excerpt really interested me. How many readers might have been entertained by her story had indie publishing been available and had she published it? Food for thought....

See "Dating apps need women..." at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/dating-apps-need-women-advertisers-need-diversity-ai-companies-offer-a-solution-fake-people/>.

See "2020: Zero year thoughts about the changes in book publishing" at <https://www.idealogue.com/blog/2020-zero-year-thoughts-about-the-changes-in-book-publishing/>.

See "Your Hero's Journey and Mine" at <https://stevenpressfield.com/2020/01/your-heros-journey-and-mine/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 2370
Nonfiction words today..... 1320 (Journal)

Writing of **The Cazadores Lounge and Lonely Place** (novel)

Day 1..... 3044 words. Total words to date..... 3044
Day 2..... 3189 words. Total words to date..... 6233
Day 3..... 2145 words. Total words to date..... 8378
Day 4..... 1301 words. Total words to date..... 9679
Day 5..... 3248 words. Total words to date..... 12927
Day 6..... 3180 words. Total words to date..... 16107
Day 7..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Writing of **"Fifth Mind"** (short story)

Day 1..... 1343 words. Total words to date..... 1343
Day 2..... 2479 words. Total words to date..... 3822
Day 3..... 2370 words. Total words to date..... 6192 (done)

Total fiction words for the month..... 19255
Total fiction words for the year..... 19255
Total nonfiction words for the month... 8830
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 8830
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 28085

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 1

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 45
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 198
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Idealog.com](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Steven Pressfield](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: On My Goals and Ugh

[January 9, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * On My Goals
- * Ugh. It's going to be a full day
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

On My Goals

Another update. I never want my goals to limit me. That would just be stupid. Goals are there to make us reach, not to hold us back. Duh.

So for the duration (now through June 2020) I don't necessarily have to START a short story on or after a Sunday, but I have to have a new one finished every Saturday by midnight.

Likewise, I don't have to START a novel on or after the first of the month, but I have to have a new one finished by midnight on the last day of every month.

Does that make my goals a little easier and a little more achievable? Yes, definitely.

But it also keeps me from being tempted to "wait" until an appropriate start date if I have an idea in mind. So win-win.

Any questions that might help with your goals, please ask.

Ugh. It's going to be a full day today. Maybe a long day too.

I rolled out at a decent time, but soon found an inbox full of emails, many of which I wanted to answer quickly, so I did that.

Two of those emails brought up questions I combined into another topic. So I wrote that Patron-only email and sent it off. (To become a patron, see [Patronage](#).)

Then there were a few items to investigate for inclusion in the "Of Interest" section below, all from my inbox, all without me having even started browsing my usual sites on the internet. As I write this, I still have that to do too.

I also need to set up a new spreadsheet to track submissions etc. on my individual short stories. For the foreseeable future (it's a business experiment) we're going to submit my short stories to traditional magazine markets. Then, only after a story has garnered several rejections or a paycheck and has been published and the rights reverted, we'll put it up indie.

So I need to design a spreadsheet to track all of that. I'm just glad I won't have to do all the tracking myself. I'll just add the title, date finished, word count and genre to the spreadsheet, then ship the story off to my business manager (my wife). She'll do all the submitting and tracking. She'll also add the data to the spreadsheet (thank God for Dropbox) like market name, date submitted, date published, etc.

I also received feedback from my first readers on my last novel (Jonah Peach), so I'll make the recommended changes that I agree with, then design a cover and get that up on D2D, Amazon and Smashwords, then out to my Patrons.

So it's going to be a full, busy day. (grin)

But I have a daily writing goal and a novel in progress, so now that my head's clear and my coffee mug is full again, I'm off to write. (grin)

And after I wrote all of the above, I realized although I had yesterday's Journal post all ready to go, I hadn't clicked Publish. I think that's the first time I ever did that. (grin)

I thought briefly about doing what Dean does and publishing the Journal one day late, but I don't want to do that. Instead I reset the MailChimp send time and clicked Publish on yesterday's post. After that one goes out at noon, I'll reset the MailChimp send time again and click Publish on this one. So you should receive two posts from the Journal today.

I wrote a thousand words, then up to the house for breakfast.

Well, life happens. At around 8:30, an ambulance pulled up across the way for our beautiful friend, who's suffered for months with breast cancer. So that interrupted things for awhile. Kind'a took the wind out of our sails.

Still, you know. My wife had to go off to work, and I have a novel to write and other things to do here. Everything just seems less significant than it did a half-hour ago.

I'll do some more writing later today maybe, but probably not. For now, I'll do some of the writing-related stuff that's just stuff.

Then I only have to remember to post this sometime after 12 and change MailChimp's posting time back to 5 p.m. so this one will go out right.

Got the Submissions spreadsheet done. I'll work on getting Jonah Peach (novel) finalized and published this afternoon after I post this. Then I'm taking the rest of the day off.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Business Musings: Fear And Publishing" at <https://kriswrites.com/2020/01/08/business-musings-fear-and-publishing/>. A great read. When I saw this on Patreon a week ago, I commented that I wasn't sure why Dean and Kris equate "publishing" with "paper publishing." She told me if I'm not going to paper, I'm cutting out about 70% of my potential readers. For what it's worth.

For a somewhat related post, see “Keeping Books Special” at <https://mailchi.mp/xmission/david-farlands-writing-tips-keeping-books-special>.

See “Making Time To Write” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/01/making-time-to-write.html>.

For fun, see “Your Writing Is Your Resume” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/your-writing-is-your-resume/>.

See “72 Free Image Sources for Authors” at <https://www.thebookdesigner.com/2019/05/72-free-image-sources-for-authors/>.

See “The Basics of Book Design” at <https://www.thebookdesigner.com/2019/07/the-basics-of-book-design/>.

See “10 Top Posts from The Book Designer for 2019” at <https://www.thebookdesigner.com/2020/01/10-top-posts-from-the-book-designer-for-2019/>.

For those of you who like podcasts, are you remembering to check these daily?

“6 Figure Authors” at <https://6figureauthors.com/>

“Self-Publish Strong” at <http://selfpublishstrong.com/podcast/>

“The Creative Pen” at <https://www.thecreativepenn.com/podcasts/> (Joanna also has a blog in which she provides transcripts of podcast sessions)

Finally, from Dawn Turner, beginning with her January 15 newsletter, she’ll begin sharing short stories and vignettes. And it’s FREE. To sign up, click <http://newsletter.everythingingodstime.com/ChristianFiction>. Dawn is an excellent, long-term professional fiction writer. You could do worse than read her stuff.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 1363
Nonfiction words today..... 960 (Journal)

Writing of The Cazadores Lounge and Lonely Place (novel)

Day 1..... 3044 words. Total words to date..... 3044
Day 2..... 3189 words. Total words to date..... 6233
Day 3..... 2145 words. Total words to date..... 8378
Day 4..... 1301 words. Total words to date..... 9679
Day 5..... 3248 words. Total words to date..... 12927
Day 6..... 3180 words. Total words to date..... 16107
Day 7..... 1363 words. Total words to date..... 17470

Writing of "" (short story)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 20618
Total fiction words for the year..... 20618
Total nonfiction words for the month... 9790
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 9790
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 30408

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 1
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 45
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 198
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [6 Figure Authors](#), [Dave Farland](#), [Dawn Turner](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Kristine Kathryn Rusch](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Self-Publish Strong](#), [The Book Designer](#), [The Creative Pen](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: My Interview and Other Things

[January 10, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * My interview on The Prolific Writer podcast
- * Well, for some reason
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

My interview on The Prolific Writer podcast is up. If you're interested, or if you just want to hear my weird, western-twangy voice, check it out at <http://theprolificwriter.libsyn.com/tpw-113-harvey-stanbrough-on-50-novels-in-5-years>. **Note:** For some reason the interview cut short right at 54:11 as I was talking about writing influences. Makes me wish I'd kept a transcript of what I said. (grin)

Well, for some reason, although I reset the MailChimp mailing time to 5 p.m. yesterday (after the other blog posted), the post for yesterday didn't go out.

If you don't receive yesterday's post along with this one today, I encourage you to go to <https://hestanbrough.com/the-journal-on-my-goals-and-ugh/> and read it anyway. It's a good one, with roughly half a ton of "Of Interest" links, an adjustment on my goals, and other things.

Today I'll keep this post short so you aren't too overwhelmed. (grin) Good day today with just under 3800 words.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Too Many" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/too-many/>. SF great Mike Resnick is gone.

See PG's take on "Buy Used Books. Here's Why." at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/buy-used-books-heres-why/>.

See PG's take on "Don't Start Copyright Battles You Don't Understand" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/dont-start-copyright-battles-you-dont-understand/>.

See "5 Common Story Openings to Avoid—If You Can Help It" at <https://www.janefriedman.com/5-story-openings-to-avoid/>. Jane also mentions a one-hour online class she's hosting (only \$30) on crafting compelling beginnings/openings. If that's a weak area for you, I suggest you consider it. You can find the skinny for that class at <https://www.janefriedman.com/crafting-irresistible-first-pages-with-mary-kole/>. Note: They talk about submitting to agents and publishers, but everyday readers need a compelling first page too. Just sayin'.

See "Avoid Nagging False Suspense Questions in Your Story Opening" at <https://www.janefriedman.com/avoid-nagging-false-suspense/>.

See "Transcendental Meditation" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/transcendental-meditation/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 3799
Nonfiction words today..... 300 (Journal)

Writing of **The Cazadores Lounge and Lonely Place** (novel)

Day 1..... 3044 words. Total words to date..... 3044
Day 2..... 3189 words. Total words to date..... 6233
Day 3..... 2145 words. Total words to date..... 8378
Day 4..... 1301 words. Total words to date..... 9679
Day 5..... 3248 words. Total words to date..... 12927
Day 6..... 3180 words. Total words to date..... 16107

Day 7..... 1363 words. Total words to date..... 17470
Day 8..... 3799 words. Total words to date..... 21269

Writing of "" (short story)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 24417
Total fiction words for the year..... 24417
Total nonfiction words for the month... 10090
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 10090
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 34507

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 1
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 45
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 198
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#),
[Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: We All Have Days "Like That"

[January 11, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Topic: We All Have Days "Like That"
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

"I just go again, keep writing, and it all smooths out." Dean Wesley Smith

"My philosophy is it's none of my business what people say of me and think of me. I am what I am, and I do what I do. I expect nothing and accept everything. And it makes life so much easier." Anthony Hopkins, via The Passive Voice



Topic: We All Have Days “Like That”

You know, those days when Monday hits on another day of the week.

Maybe it’s something fairly major, like someone you love is involved in an emergency or passes away. Or maybe something happens in your business and you have to spend a whole day addressing or correcting it.

Or maybe it’s just one of those days when you stub your toe immediately upon getting out of bed, which causes you to curse and sit down hard on the bed. Which causes your spouse to jerk awake and slap the switch on the lamp above the bed, and suddenly a b’jillion watts of pure, white light slams your pupils shut.

Then you finally make it into the kitchen where you realize you forgot to prep the coffee maker the evening before. Sigh. So now you have to do that in your half-awake state.

Yeah well, life happens, that’s all. And it happens to all of us.

As I like to think I show by example, the best thing you can do if you’re a writer is deal with the situation for the time it requires, then return to your WIP, put your fingers on the keyboard, and write.

A couple of days ago, at about 8:30 a.m. an ambulance came for a dear friend who lives across our little road. She’s been struggling for a year or so with advanced breast cancer, and she had suffered either a stroke or a seizure.

When my wife came to the Hovel to let me know there was an ambulance over there, I’d written only a little over 1300 words. I muttered “Oh damn,” then got up and walked with her to the rail fence around the neighbor’s front yard. We didn’t want to be in the way, but we wanted our neighbor’s husband to know we were available.

We stayed until shortly after the ambulance pulled away with our friend inside. Then my wife got into her car and went to work, and I went back to the Hovel to write the Journal for that day.

Afterward, I didn't return to the novel-in-progress. It seemed so trivial by comparison. So instead, I allowed myself the time, went to the house and did some things around there.

The next morning (yesterday), our friend was still on my mind (obviously), but I went to the Hovel and started my day as usual. Before I stopped, I had dealt with a number of other silly issues and written 3800 words.

Why? Isn't the story still trivial compared to what had happened?

Of course. But I'm a professional fiction writer. Telling trivial stories is what I do.

And they really are trivial. Everything I (or you) write is nothing more than a few minutes' or hours' entertainment for some reader somewhere.

My (or your) story will be a stroke of genius to some readers, a "good read" to many, and "ugh, this sucks" to an unfortunate few who obviously wouldn't know good literature if it crawled up their leg and bit them on the bum. (grin)

What the reader thinks of it (or will think of it or might think of it) is none of our business. Our only business is to write it in the first place, then publish it so readers can get that few minutes' or hours' of entertainment. Or dismay that they've wasted five bucks. Whatever.

The point is, if you're a writer, you write. Not because what you're writing is important (it's not), but because writing is what you do.

So when a situation arises, give it the attention it requires, and then get back to doing what you do.

This is the mark of a professional. If a plumber or carpenter encountered a life roll, he would take the time necessary to deal with it, then go back to responding to plumbing emergencies or building things. Because that's what he does.

And here's a news flash — it's perfectly all right to call what you do "work" or a "job" if calling it that helps you keep coming back.

Every now and then I have to remind myself that my job is to write fiction. Every now and then, like yesterday morning, that reminder is what gets me back to the chair.

The other side of this is to know other situations will arise in the future. And that's fine. Plan right now to give them their due, then get back to your job, to doing what you do. While you're in the throes of dealing with a situation, remember that your job — arranging words and sentences in a particular order to entertain yourself and others — is waiting calmly on the other side.

As I've said often enough, it's all a matter of priorities. If you're a writer of any kind, writing should be somewhere on your priority list.

And if you are or aspire to be a professional writer, it should be your first priority anytime you aren't dealing with one of those temporary situations.

The illness or death of a loved one, a business gone sideways, stubbed toes — all of that will pass. But what you do will still be what you do until you don't do it anymore.

When I occasionally talk about some of the fears that stop some of us from writing, I talk also about turning those fears around. For example, instead of being afraid of what people will think of your work (so you never finish it or publish it), be afraid of how you'll feel if you don't finish.

That works for life situations that arise too.

Instead of being consumed by sadness and grief over a loss, be happy you had that person in your life for a while.

Instead of being angry that your day went sideways with business concerns, be glad you have a business that might go sideways now and then.

Instead of allowing a stubbed toe to cost you writing time, be glad you're able to hobble to your computer, put your unstubbed fingers on the keyboard, and do what you do.

We all have Mondays occasionally. Days we dread. Days when we have to trudge through whatever crops up. I have those too, every now and then.

But I have personally decided that until a Monday unexpectedly happens, all of my days are late Friday afternoon, say around 4:59 p.m. You know. Any problems are in the past, and I'm filled with happy anticipation for what tomorrow will bring.

And of course I know what it will bring. I'll write.

Note: No toes were stubbed or other digits harmed during the lead-up or writing of this topic.

Today is Saturday, so I rolled out early to get my day's writing done before the world wakes up. Then I stumbled into this topic, another albeit very minor Monday. So I'll adjust and write off and on through the day.

Well, I'd no sooner started writing than the water pump froze up. So I went to fix that. Turned out the contacts were stuck open. Easy fix.

Back to the Hovel where I realized I hadn't started a reverse outline for the current novel. At 14 chapters and running, that isn't good. (grin) So I started building a reverse outline while reading over the story from the beginning and allowing myself to touch it (cycling). Glad I did. I'm catching a few things, which will keep my first readers from having to catch them.

The way the day is going, I might not get a lot of new writing done today, but we'll see.

In fact, I'll estimate today's fiction numbers so I can go ahead and post this.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Publishers, Citing Diversity Concerns, Drop Romance Conference" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/publishers-citing-diversity-concerns-drop-romance-conference/>.

See "Where Does RWA Go From Here?" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/where-does-rwa-go-from-here/>. What a bunch of silliness. I added a comment, which will probably become a topic for another day.

See "Everything Old..." at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/01/everything-old.html>.

See "A Few Thoughts on Dialogue" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/a-few-thoughts-on-dialogue/>.

See "And There Are Just Days..." at <https://www.deanwesleymith.com/and-there-are-just-days/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 2000
Nonfiction words today..... 1430 (Journal)

Writing of The Cazadores Lounge and Lonely Place (novel)

Day 1..... 3044 words. Total words to date..... 3044
Day 2..... 3189 words. Total words to date..... 6233
Day 3..... 2145 words. Total words to date..... 8378
Day 4..... 1301 words. Total words to date..... 9679
Day 5..... 3248 words. Total words to date..... 12927
Day 6..... 3180 words. Total words to date..... 16107
Day 7..... 1363 words. Total words to date..... 17470
Day 8..... 3799 words. Total words to date..... 21269
Day 9..... 2000 words. Total words to date..... 23269

Writing of "" (short story)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

| | |
|---|-------|
| Total fiction words for the month..... | 26417 |
| Total fiction words for the year..... | 26417 |
| Total nonfiction words for the month... | 11520 |
| Total nonfiction words for the year..... | 11520 |
| Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... | 37937 |
| | |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... | X |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... | X |
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... | 1 |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 45 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 198 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: I'm All About Productivity

[January 12, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Well, I've been remiss
- * Topic: I'm All About Productivity
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

"If, after that time, you feel stifled by your quota, don't give it up. Just reduce the number to something easy. Like 250 words. Your ficus tree can write 250 words in a day. Don't be shown up by your ficus tree." James Scott Bell

Well, I've been remiss recently, failing to welcome the few new folks who have joined us in the past couple of months: Ralph R, Rob G, Theron M and Martha E.

I hope you all will find your decision to subscribe fruitful, and I invite you to check out the archives. You can use the search box in the sidebar to find specific topics. So, welcome! (If I missed anyone, I do apologize, and I welcome to you too.)

I hadn't planned to write a topic today, but with our new friends on board, maybe this is a good time to post a refresher about who I am and what I do.

Topic: I'm All About Productivity

In this revived golden age of writing and publishing, you're either prolific or you're a hobby writer. (And I don't mean that derogatorily. Nothing wrong with being a hobby writer if that's what you want to do.)

But before I talk about the benefits of being prolific, let's assume you know to avoid traditional publishing (except magazine markets for short stories) for these reasons:

- * tradpubs take all rights for the life of the copyright (in the US, that's your life plus 70 years). That alone should be reason enough to avoid them, but also

- * tradpubs never allow a reversion clause in a contract, or they include that it kicks in only when a book "goes out of print." Only these days, with epublishing, books never go out of print. So your rights never revert to you.

- * tradpubs don't care either way whether your book ever gets published. Your copyright (your IP), which they now own, goes on their spreadsheet and enhances their bottom line, valued at what the IP MIGHT earn over your life plus 70 years. The valuation can easily run into the millions. For one IP. Do the math.

- * most tradpubs require submission via a literary agent. Literary agents are not required to be licensed and are not regulated. (I personally would never use an agent, but then, I don't sign over 15% of the deed to my house to the guy who mows my lawn either.)

- * tradpubs won't allow you to be prolific. At most they'll publish two books per year under your name. Much more often, only one.

- * while tradpubs plead constantly for "original, unique works," they simultaneously run your work through a battery of rewrites and editors, each of which moves your work farther from your original vision. And finally,

- * if I were locked in with a traditional publisher, I would have written and published 5 novels in the past 5+ years. (Been there, done that, won't go back, although my traditional small publisher DID revert all rights to me when I asked them to.) As it is, because I'm prolific and an indie publisher, I've written and published over 50 novels and novellas and almost 200 short stories (and the attendant collections).

I could go on, but I'll leave it at that for now.

How Am I Prolific?

First, the definition of "prolific" lies in the eye of the beholder. Though many have called me prolific, my production pales in comparison to the likes of the old pulp writers of the '30s through the '60s, and even to contemporaries like Dean Wesley Smith, Kristine Kathryn Rusch, Stephen King and several others.

So the key to being prolific is to know what you can realistically do, and then doing it.

My goals this year (for the next 18 months, actually) include finishing a new short before Saturday midnight each week and finishing a new novel before midnight on the last day of each month.

These are actually easily obtainable goals for me because I follow [Heinlein's Rules](#) pretty avidly. When I fall off, I climb back on.

I achieve my goals by

1. showing up most days to my writing 'puter, putting my fingers on the keyboard and letting the characters who are actually living the story move them, and
2. I keep coming back. When I'm called away for a chore or other time-consuming effort, I consciously remind myself tht if I want to keep being a writer, I have to keep coming back. Writers write. It really is that simple, and that difficult.

So What Is Being Productive?

I write 1000 to 1200 words per hour (a blistering pace of 17 words per minute), which leaves me plenty of time for staring off into space or cycling back to correct typos, plot holes and other glitches. (grin) So I write one clean draft, send it to my first readers, make the corrections that I agree with, and then publish. And readers buy my work.

Because of my writing pace, a short story (up to 8,000 words) takes 2 to 7 hours to write, and a novel (40,000 to 80,000 words) takes 40 to 80 hours to write. At 17 words per minute. Ask yourself, how fast did you type in your typing class at school? (grin)

I have no problem coming up with ideas because I practice exercising my idea muscle. Practically anytime I see, hear, smell, taste or touch anything, I think "What if...?"

If the "What if" sticks until the next time I sit down in the chair at my writing 'puter (many don't, and that's fine), I write an opening for a short story (which often turns into my next novel) and go from there.

(The difference between a short story and a novel? The short story is short because it's about One Event. Seriously, that's it.)

The Benefits of Being Prolific: Practice and Discoverability

It's harsh but true: Writing is the only art form in which practitioners are actively taught (by non-writers) to hover over one work rather than finishing and moving on to the next work.

The more you learn and the more you practice your craft, the better storyteller you'll become.

The longer you hover over one work (revising, rewriting, “polishing,” etc.) the less time you have for practice. Writing is putting new words on the page.

(By the way, hovering is a fairly new phenomenon. It mostly came to rise in the 1970s about the time university professors were first told to “publish or perish.” Traditional publishing is a fairly new phenomenon too, having begun with the advent of mass-market paperbacks in the post-World War II years. But that’s a topic for another time.)

If you want to become a better storyteller, follow Heinlein’s Rules. Write. Publish. Write the next story. Don’t allow yourself to remain mired in the myths of hovering.

Which leads us to discoverability. Admittedly there is a glut of new stories being published every day. But the cream really does rise to the top. If you are actively practicing your craft, your storytelling ability will improve and your readership will grow.

And the more titles you have out there with your name on the cover, the easier you are to find. Again, do the math.

Which leads us back to being productive. It takes a lot less time to read a novel than it does to write one. Your readership will continually want your next book or your next short story or your next short-story collection. Don’t let them down.

Show up. Do the work. Reap the benefits.

And most of all, have fun!

Today again I rolled out early, planning to get straight to the novel in progress. Then I sidetracked myself with the topic above, and here I am.

It’s 6:30 and I haven’t written a word of fiction. I’ll go there now to finish up my cycling and reverse outline. Then I’ll take a break for breakfast, and through the day I’ll Keep Coming Back. (grin)

Yesterday, I overestimated my fiction writing. I wrote only 1132 words yesterday. I made the correction on Day 9 in the numbers below.

Missed my daily goal by a little today, but it’s Sunday. Gonna spend the rest of the day doing mostly nothing. (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “How to Conduct a ‘Competent’ Hanging Execution” at <http://dyingwords.net/how-to-conduct-a-competent-hanging/>. This post includes a warning: “Warning: The Following

Graphically Details How Hanging Executions Are Done. Some Readers May Find This Information Offensive.”

See “Getting Serious About Your Writing Career” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/01/getting-serious-about-your-writing-career.html>.

See “Saturday Night” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/saturday-night/>. For the record, I do not “mess with writers” even for the sake of imparting a lesson. I tell them (sometimes) harsh truths and then let them accept or not as they will. We all have to learn in our own way.

See “Ears Are Important, Too” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/ears-are-important-too/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 2704
Nonfiction words today..... 1430 (Journal)

Writing of *The Cazadores Lounge and Lonely Place* (novel)

Day 1..... 3044 words. Total words to date..... 3044
Day 2..... 3189 words. Total words to date..... 6233
Day 3..... 2145 words. Total words to date..... 8378
Day 4..... 1301 words. Total words to date..... 9679
Day 5..... 3248 words. Total words to date..... 12927
Day 6..... 3180 words. Total words to date..... 16107
Day 7..... 1363 words. Total words to date..... 17470
Day 8..... 3799 words. Total words to date..... 21269
Day 9..... 1132 words. Total words to date..... 22401
Day 10... 2704 words. Total words to date..... 25105

Writing of “” (short story)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 28283
Total fiction words for the year..... 28283
Total nonfiction words for the month... 13000
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 13000
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 41253

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 1
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 45
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 198
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [DyingWords.net](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Quote of the Day (and Little Else)

[January 13, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“I got tired of wading through discussions that had nothing to do with helping authors make a living with their words and everything to do with Proper Group Think and Virtue Signaling the appropriate amount of Woke.” C.D. Watson on why s/he left RWA

No topic today, and very little else, but a good “Of Interest” section. And I had a pretty good fiction writing day.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “But It’s Important!” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/but-its-important/>.

This is a must-read if you self-publish. A ton of information here: See PG’s take on “Amazon Demands Authors Do the Impossible – Control the Prices of Print Books Sold by Third-Party Sellers” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/amazon-demands-authors-do-the-impossible-control-the-prices-of-print-books-sold-by-third-party-sellers/>.

Re “Where Does RWA Go From Here?” see C.D. Watson’s comment at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/where-does-rwa-go-from-here/#comment-450965>. (You can read the article above the comment if you want.)

See “The Book Designer: Thoughts on Turning 10” at <https://www.thebookdesigner.com/2020/01/thoughts-on-turning-10/>.

See “BookBub...It’s Not Just for Pricey Ads Anymore” at <https://annerallen.com/2020/01/bookbub-reviews-alternative-to-goodreads/>.

See ” Self-Publishing Trends For 2020 And The Next Decade...” (podcast) at <https://selfpublishingadvice.org/self-publishing-trends/>.

See the comments on “Getting Serious About Your Writing Career” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/01/getting-serious-about-your-writing-career.html#comments> for a variety of styles of how writers do things.

See “Redefining For a New Year” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/redefining-for-a-new-year/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 3663
Nonfiction words today..... 220 (Journal)

Writing of The Cazadores Lounge and Lonely Place (novel)

Day 11... 3663 words. Total words to date..... 28768

Writing of “” (short story)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 31916
Total fiction words for the year..... 31916
Total nonfiction words for the month... 13220
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 13220
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 45138

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 1
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 45
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 198
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Anne R. Allen](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [SelfPublishingAdvice.org](#), [The Book Designer](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: What Are You Writing?

[January 14, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Welcome
- * Topic: What Are You Writing?
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Welcome to Patrick D. It's good to have you aboard! I hope you find the Journal useful and informative.

I hope my recent new subscribers will also browse my author site at HarveyStanbrough.com. . There you will find a ton of writer resources, including

[Free Downloads](#) (check this first)

[Other Resources for Writers](#) (links)

[My Audio Lecture Series on Writing](#)

[My Books on Writing](#) (links to StoneThreadPublishing.com)

and soon a free short story of the week.

In coming months, either my author site or my publisher site will also include a shared world I'm putting together: a world I created but one in which I will invite other authors to write. (grin) The basis for the shared world is in my novels [In the Siberian Fields](#) and its sequel, [The Claim](#).

Don't subscribe to the blog on my author site, though. In February it will transition to a blog for readers. (grin)

Of course, my author site also contains a link to StoneThread Publishing, where you can find all of my novels, novellas, short story collections and poetry collections.

Again, welcome to all. If you find the Journal of value, please share our electronic address with your writer friends and acquaintances. Thanks!

Topic: What Are You Writing?

In addition to my day-to-day rambling, the topics I write here a few to several times each week on writing and publishing, and the links I post in the "Of Interest" section, I share my goals and numbers (below in "The Numbers" — duh). And I also share my failures.

As I've said before, sharing my goals and numbers serves a dual purpose. In full disclosure, first I do so selfishly to keep myself accountable to all of you. In other words, sharing my goals and numbers helps me achieve them. See how that works? (grin)

But I also share to give back, to help others cut the learning curve on writing and publishing. And I share so you can see what's possible when you follow the most basic and difficult of all writing processes: [Heinlein's Rules](#).

Today, I'm encouraging you to do the same. Share with us all by leaving a comment on the site at <https://hestanbrough.com>, or share with me privately by emailing me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

Why? Because when you share, you WILL help someone else in their journey. If you share with me privately and I think it would be of interest to others, I might use it for a topic but I'll maintain your anonymity.

Of course, you can share as much or as little as you want. We (or I) will celebrate your striving and your successes, and we (or I) will commiserate with you when you temporarily fall short.

A couple of thoughts on goals and goal-setting:

- * If you don't occasionally fall short, your goal isn't set high enough.
- * When you DO fall short of a goal you set, you've failed to succeed. Look at what you achieved even though you fell short. How many words would you have written, how many short stories or novels would you have published if you hadn't set a goal at all?

So let us (or me) hear from you. Here are some possible categories:

- * Daily, weekly, or monthly writing and/or publishing goals
- * What are you writing right now? (Be as vague or as specific as you like.)
- * How's it going? What problems are you encountering (if any)? How can we (or I) help?
- * What did you achieve in 2019?
- * Anything else you want to comment or email me about

Hope to hear from a lot of you soon.

Today got away from me, so I ended up with only two writing sessions and a little over 2000 words. So I missed my daily word-count goal. That's all right. It resets to 0 tomorrow. Still, that's 2000 words I wouldn't have had if I didn't have the goal to drive me to the computer. (grin)

The novel isn't in the end game yet, but I can feel it getting close. Probably another 2 to 4 good writing days and this one should be finished.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Las Vegas Workshops" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/las-vegas-workshops/>.

See “12 Tips for New Public Speakers” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/01/12-tips-for-new-public-speakers.html>.

See the “Graphic Tools for Indie Authors” series at <http://forsengfiction.com/>.

See “Writing Sales Copy (Book Descriptions)” at <https://harveystanbrough.com/pro-writers/writing-sales-copy-book-descriptions/> (for a refresher or for any who might have missed it here in the Journal earlier).

For a GREAT and informative discussion, see the comments on “The 2010s were supposed to bring the ebook revolution. It never quite came.” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-2010s-were-supposed-to-bring-the-ebook-revolution-it-never-quite-came/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 2186
Nonfiction words today..... 770 (Journal)

Writing of *The Cazadores Lounge and Lonely Place* (novel)

Day 11... 3663 words. Total words to date..... 28768
Day 12... 2186 words. Total words to date..... 30954

Writing of “” (short story)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 34102
Total fiction words for the year..... 34102
Total nonfiction words for the month... 13990
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 13990
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 48092

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 1
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 45
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 198
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Forseng Fiction](#), [Harvey Stanbrough](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Another Way to Think of Your Daily Word-Count Goal

[January 15, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Topic: Another Way to Think of Your Daily Word-Count Goal
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“[M]y editor and agent at the time felt strongly that a degree of ambiguity in the end made the story better. I never agreed, but it was my first book, and I was dizzy from the whole experience, so I said okay. I’ve regretted it for 25 years.” John Gilstrap

Topic: Another Way to Think of Your Daily Word-Count Goal

I happened on this while replying to [Diane Darcy's very informative comment](#) on yesterday's post.

You know your daily word-count goal is set right when you reach it or get close occasionally... and fall short occasionally. If you never fall short of your goal, it's time to raise it a little. (grin)

When your goal is set correctly, you should feel a little pressure to get to the writing computer. Because THAT you write is important.

But you should feel no pressure at all about the actual work in progress. Just write the next sentence and move through the scene. Have fun and keep it moving.

So just get done what you can get done and don't worry about it. This is the joy of writing into the dark.

If your goal is set at the right level for YOU, you should be pleasantly surprised when you shoot past it but not terribly disappointed when you fall short. It resets to 0 tomorrow anyway. (grin)

In my case, my daily word-count goal is much more than just a number to reach for. It's what drives me to the writing computer in the first place, and it's what causes me to Keep Coming Back (my personal mantra) through the day until I've reached my goal or until my brain is too tired and muddled to keep going.

At present, no matter what else I've done through the day, no matter how many non-writing tasks or 'writing-related' tasks I've done, my brain starts to go cold right around 3000 words.

I count as writing days only those days when I write at all on the current work in progress. My daily, weekly, monthly and annual goals drive me to show up at the writing ‘puter on most days.

So in the current example (Cazadores below) today is writing day 13. That’s out of 16 calendar days, since I started it on December 31.

I didn’t count the three days I registered a zero on the novel; hence, today is Day 13.

One of those calendar days (Jan 2) I didn’t write fiction at all, so I missed my daily goal completely.

Two of those days (Jan 7 & 8) were writing days on a short story. And on Jan 6, I wrote on both Cazadores and the short story and registered a total of 4523 words.

Today is Wednesday, so I’ll meet with a mentoring student for a couple of hours. It would be easy to use that as an excuse not to write fiction at all today.

But my daily goal and a desire to see what happens next in the novel will compel me back to the writing ‘puter. (grin) So I’ll write on the novel. I might hit my word count, and I might not. I’m not worried about it. The daily goal sets a mini-challenge for me, that’s all. Just getting to the computer is the thing.

Tomorrow, Thursday, with Saturday’s short story deadline looming, I plan to write on both the novel (I want to keep the flow going) and on a separate short story. Why both? Because my weekly goal drives me to start a new short story, but I also want to see what happens next in the novel. So tomorrow will be recorded in “The Numbers” below as Day 14 on the novel and Day 1 on the short story.

So as I asked yesterday, how is your writing going? [Go to the site](#) and leave a comment. You don’t have to compare yourself to me or anyone else. We all have different lives with different commitments.

If your production is leaving me in the dust, *please* come brag about it. (grin) I’ll be your number one cheerleader. And if your life leaves you with available time to hit only 1000 words per day as your daily goal, tell us that too. I’ll still be your number one cheerleader.

Again, if you’re a writer, THAT you write is what’s important. So set a goal that really Works for you—one that’s obtainable but makes you stretch—and get after it.

Today, I rolled out way late (for me) at almost 5 a.m. I slept pretty much soundly for 10 hours. (I usually sleep for 6.)

In the first hour, I fed our two fur babies, made a pot of coffee, shuffled out to the Hovel and wrote all of this. Now I’ll check for items for the “Of Interest” section, then take a short break up at the house.

When I get back (probably around 7) I'll feed the horses. Then I'll have an hour-plus to write on the novel before I have to get ready for the meeting. And from about noon, I'll have the the rest of the day to write more on the novel. We'll see how that goes. (grin)

But no matter how it comes out re my daily goal, at least it drove me to the writing 'puter. And that brings me full circle.

Well, I didn't take my break until after 7. Then up to the house for a shower and breakfast, fed the horses at 7:50, and finally to the novel at 8. (grin)

I got 1180 words in the first writing session. Now up to the house to get ready for my meeting.

Had a great meeting, and afterward Mona and I took care of a few chores we had to do. Then lunch and back to the novel at 12:45.

Welp, I got two more good sessions and finished the day with just under 2900 words. But a good stopping place.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Lifetime Workshops" (and more) at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/lifetime-workshops/>.

See "Nathan Is Running Again!" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/01/nathan-is-running-again-2.html>. A few gems from a traditionally published writer for whom lightning struck at least twice.

See "Stories From Beyond the Grave" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/stories-from-beyond-the-grave/>.

See "Does AI judge your personality?" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/does-ai-judge-your-personality/>.

See the PG's take on "2020: Zero year thoughts about the changes in book publishing" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/2020-zero-year-thoughts-about-the-changes-in-book-publishing/>.

See "Being the Best" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/being-the-best/>.

See "Heroes and Anti-Heroes" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/heroes-and-anti-heroes-2/>.

For those who haven't seen it yet, see "Six Things Writers Need To Stop Worrying About" at <https://jakonrath.blogspot.com/2019/07/five-things-writers-need-to-stop.html>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 2899
Nonfiction words today..... 1100 (Journal)

Writing of **The Cazadores Lounge and Lonely Place** (novel)

Day 11... 3663 words. Total words to date..... 28768
Day 12... 2186 words. Total words to date..... 30954
Day 13... 2899 words. Total words to date..... 33853

Writing of "" (short story)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 37001
Total fiction words for the year..... 37001
Total nonfiction words for the month... 15090
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 15090
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 52091

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 1
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 45
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 198
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [J. A. Konrath](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Humans Are Weird

[January 16, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * In the Great News Department
- * Got Writing Chops?
- * Topic: Humans Are Weird
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Habits can get me to the keyboard, but they can also keep me away from it. When the habit becomes an ‘I can’t,’ then it’s time to re-evaluate the habit.” Kristine Kathryn Rusch

“It is only when the latecomers [would-be writers] make the decision to be punctual [write] that they change. It must be a conscious decision; if they merely make a woolly attempt to ‘try’ to be on time [write], they won’t.” Psychotherapist Philippa Perry (Additions in brackets mine. For the original post, see <https://getpocket.com/explore/item/beat-the-clock-the-surprising-psychology-behind-being-perpetually-late>.)

In the Great News department from Dean Wesley Smith,

“I have decided, on the request of a couple of writers who want to jump in soon, to leave the Shared World Class and the Licensing Transition class open for more sign-ups for the rest of the month. So final last call on those. Right now the Licensing Transition (which goes for another six months) already has 63 videos in it. The Shared World (which will also go for another six months) has 26 videos so far.”

Got Writing Chops?

If you write short stories, and if you like no-entry-fee contests, and if you can write “fast” (you can, even if you don’t know it yet), B&N has joined with Reedsy to offer a short story contest. But the deadline is January 17 at 11:59 p.m. Tomorrow night. (grin)

See “#24: Genre-Blending” at <https://blog.reedsy.com/creative-writing-prompts/contests/24/>.

Stories should be 1000 to 3000 words. The winner gets \$50 plus a \$50 B&N gift card. The Terms of Use looked okay to me, but you can see them [HERE](#).

Topic: Humans Are Weird

In my admittedly faulty memory, I remember a film from long ago (maybe *Easy Rider*). A guy was on a motorcycle at a red light when another guy pulled up alongside him in a car.

The guy in the car looked longingly at the bike and said something like, “I wish I could do what you do.”

And the guy on the bike said, “So why don’t you?”

Then the light changed and they both drove off to their very different lives.

And my only thought was *Exactly*.

Barring an emergency, a necessary chore, or a commitment, humans ALWAYS do what we really want to do, even while telling ourselves we want to do something else. All most of us have to do to change our lives is realize we can.

Maybe the guy in the car doesn't really want to leave his wife and kids and take to a life of adventure on a bike. And that's fine. But the point is, if he really wants to, he can.

Emergencies can't be helped. They're out of our control. They almost always come from external sources and they're always a surprise.

I say "almost" because a month or two ago I was doing something stupid with a very sharp knife. It slipped and I slashed a gash across the first knuckle of the index finger of my left hand. I cut a nerve.

The finger is still curled, but I type as well as I ever did, so no real harm done. Anyway, that day I really would have liked to go back to my WIP, but I had to tend to the emergency first. Computers don't work well when saturated with blood. Not to mention the keys get really sticky.

Necessary chores can be ignored, but not from a practical standpoint. For example, when my wife's working all day and I need an occasional break from the keyboard anyway, there's no good reason for me to ignore the growing pile of laundry. It isn't like I have to spend hours beating it on a rock down at the local stream.

Likewise I've done most of the cooking (supper), but that's after my writing day is over anyway. On days when I need a break from it, I slap a pizza in the oven or open a can of soup or throw a couple of chicken breasts into a crockpot and call it done.

But I don't remember the time (barring an emergency) when I uttered, "I'd rather be writing but _____." Because that's just silly.

As I've written here more than once, all things in life come down to priorities. If you want to write fiction, write fiction. Secondary priorities are things you sometimes have to do.

If you find you "don't have time" to do what you say you really want to do, check in with yourself. Chances are, you have a lot more time than you realize.

One would-be writer actually said to me, "I'd love to do what you do but I volunteer at the library five days a week." To my discredit, I only smiled and nodded.

That's generally my reaction anytime I encounter anyone who's riding a Yabbit. A yabbit is a half-rabbit, half-horse with an abdomen that's distended because it's filled with excuses.

Me: "So you really wish you could write?"

Yabbit rider: "Yabbit I volunteer five days a week down at the library."

Um, can you change how much you volunteer?

Or “Yabbit I have too many commitments.”

So, just a thought, stop making so many commitments.

Or “Yabbit I don’t have a place to write.”

Shrug. So find a place to write.

Or “Yabbit [fill in the blank].”

So fix it.

The point is, it really is all up to you. And frankly, nobody cares. Shrug. In fact, it isn’t even that nobody cares; it’s that nobody but you really even notices.

I’ve observed that most often when people don’t do what they say they want to do, they either really don’t want to do it, or they’re scared to death of what might happen if they do it, or they’re wrapped around a wheel they created in their own mind.

If I cared, I would have told Library Girl, “Hey, nothing wrong with that. If you want to volunteer at the library, volunteer at the library. If you want to write, write. It’s your choice.”

That’s me being “blunt.” Or me being “Harvey,” depending on whom you ask.

But most often, I don’t do that. It’s a waste of my time, and I’m selfish with my time. Because frankly, I’d rather be writing. (See what I did there?)

So usually I just smile and nod.

Today is a little different. Mona has to go into work today. She’s winding down, training her replacement, even as she’s winding up here in her new position as publisher and business manager.

I wrote a good first session, then skipped over to StoneThread Publishing to add my latest novel (*Jonah Peach*). Then a long break up to the house to eat breakfast and spend some time with Mona before she has to head off for the day.

Had to feed the horses (I almost forgot) at 7 so I got back to the Hovel early. With this found free time, I listened to new videos in the Licensing Transition and Shared Worlds classes.

Finally back to the novel at 10:00. Well, that was my intention. Sigh.

Ugh. This is one of those “days like that” I talked about recently. My computer froze up, so I had to restart. While it was doing that, I went up to the house for snacks that will pass for lunch.

Then I made a couple of abortive attempts at writing openings for the short story I need to write for this week. Neither one took off. So I'll do that tomorrow. (Remember, *what* I write doesn't matter; *THAT* I write matters.)

Finally back to the novel at 11:20.

Talk with you again soon.

A pretty good day at something over 2800 words again.

Of Interest

See "Business Musings: The Year Ahead" at <https://kriswrites.com/2020/01/15/business-musings-the-year-ahead/>.

See "Lots of New Videos" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/lots-of-new-videos/>.

See "Gut Check" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/gut-check/>.

See "Iris Johansen and Roy Johansen On Writing Together" at <https://crimereads.com/iris-johansen-roy-johansen/>. There's always talk about whether or not to kill off major characters. Among other things, here's another take. (For me, if the character is killed off, the character is killed off. I don't "decide" the story. I just write the story.)

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 2883
Nonfiction words today..... 1370 (Journal)

Writing of The Cazadores Lounge and Lonely Place (novel)

Day 11... 3663 words. Total words to date..... 28768
Day 12... 2186 words. Total words to date..... 30954
Day 13... 2899 words. Total words to date..... 33853
Day 14... 2883 words. Total words to date..... 36736

Writing of "" (short story)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 39884
Total fiction words for the year..... 39884
Total nonfiction words for the month... 16460
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 16460
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 56344

| | |
|---|-----|
| Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... | X |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... | X |
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 1 | |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 45 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 198 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [CrimeReads](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Kristine Kathryn Rusch](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Almost Crickets and Copyright

[January 17, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Almost Crickets
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“First reason is that fiction writers just don’t need it much at all. Fiction writers can’t seem to find the time or energy to learn copyright, what they do need to learn.” Dean Wesley Smith on why he stopped writing the trademark book

Buy and start getting through the NOLO Press Copyright Handbook by Stephen Fishman. Trust me. If you’re a writer, you need it.

Almost crickets out there today in the cyber-world with regard to items for “Of Interest.” Of course, I almost always promote Pro Writers Writing (and have done again today).

As admin of that site, I’m also looking actively for another blogger or two for that site.

When I started the site, I envisioned mimicking The KillZone blog, but in a site by and dedicated to indie publishing. It wasn’t meant to tout any particular writing strategy, but to give indie writers and publishers a place to share their knowledge, what works for them and what doesn’t work for them.

If you’re an indie writer and/or publisher, regardless of the technique you use personally to put new words on the page, and if you’d like to share your knowledge with other writers, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

I have three openings, all on Saturdays, and would love to plug in some new voices. (You'll be able to write the posts early and pre-post them to appear on your Saturday. I'll teach you how.)

So email me if you're interested.

Today started weird. I rolled out at 3, but my little girl wasn't in bed. As I was making coffee, she rubbed my legs, wanting me to pick her up.

I did and went to sit at the desk in my home office, and she settled in. She needed some daddy time. I can only assume, like most children, she had a nightmare. (grin) And she asks so little, I gave it to her.

So I didn't get to the Hovel until 3:30. Then I responded at some length to an email about licensing from someone who was truly interested in IP and all the things that can be done with it. Very cool. Plus it was someone who wants to keep my IP (my legacy) alive after I'm gone. So doubly cool.

To the house for a break at 5, then to the novel, which is closing in on the end game.

Ugh. I hate this part of writing a novel. Even as quickly as I write them, I become extremely invested in the characters and the story. So much so that when I feel the end approaching, I tend to balk.

I'm right up against the end now, and my brain wants to shut off, yet I've written only a little over 2400 words. That's my creative subconscious dragging its feet so the novel won't be over quite so soon. (grin) I swear, it's like dealing with a 2 year old.

Anyway, I'm gonna leave off the novel now and move over to the short story for this week. We'll see what happens.

Great writing day today with over 5200 words on the novel and the short story. Woohoo!

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "What you CAN do" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/what-you-can-do>.

See "You're an Editor" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/youre-an-editor/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 5215

Nonfiction words today..... 560 (Journal)

Writing of The Cazadores Lounge and Lonely Place (novel)

Day 11... 3663 words. Total words to date..... 28768
Day 12... 2186 words. Total words to date..... 30954
Day 13... 2899 words. Total words to date..... 33853
Day 14... 2883 words. Total words to date..... 36736
Day 15... 2413 words. Total words to date..... 39149

Writing of “Louisiana Secrets” (short story)

Day 1..... 2802 words. Total words to date..... 2802 (done)

Total fiction words for the month..... 45099
Total fiction words for the year..... 45099
Total nonfiction words for the month... 17020
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 17020
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 62119

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 1
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 45
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 198
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Quotes, Finished, and I Don't Share

[January 18, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * I don't share
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“I specialize in murders of quiet, domestic interest.” Agatha Christie

“[I like] a story without ritual murder etc. or pulp. Straightforward murders and mob executions are OK.” Reader, in an email to me a few years ago

I don't share personal opinions that are not about writing very often. I almost did today, but decided (probably wisely) against it. I was going to comment on a truly stupid post I found on The Passive Guy's website and then post the link so you could see the original.

But I changed my mind. I see no reason to spread the hatred and bias in the OP, so I won't. Which of course negates the need for a comment.

Maybe it's a personal flaw, but the one way to be absolutely certain I won't read something is for any segment of the Thought Police to give me a free book and then "challenge" me to read it to "improve" how I form opinions of other people. I generally have a two-word response for people like that, and the only one I'll share here with you is "you."

My process has never wavered, and it isn't dependent on skin color, nationality, gender or any other superficial difference. I have only two criteria: what a person says and what a person does. If the two don't match up, I mark that person off my list and go on about my life.

The fact is, some folks don't care about actually making a difference in society or otherwise. To those folks, all that matters is the appearance of making a difference.

In my humble opinion, those folks would be better served to get on with their own life and stop trying to elevate themselves to the position of General Manager of the Universe.

Today, I started out the morning with a few back and forth emails, checked for items of interest, then prepped the short story I wrote yesterday so I could send both .mobi and .pdf files to my patrons. So that's done.

Finally I got to the WIP, where the story is close to the end. Barring any curve balls from the characters, I suspect it will wrap today or tomorrow.

Annnnd it wrapped today at about 10:40 at a little over 42000 words. (grin) I ran a spell check, cut off the excess, and sent it to my valiant first readers.

Now I'm gonna take a day or two off and do ZIP. (grin)

One of my sons and his family are coming down this weekend too, so I might not be back with the Journal tomorrow.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

Read the comments on "The Trademark Book" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/the-trademark-book/#comments>. Some good stuff there (after my comment).

In case you missed it in the Journal awhile back, see "Writing Sales Copy (Book Descriptions)" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/writing-sales-copy-book-descriptions/>.

See “Getting Started with Copyright Protection” at <https://creativelawcenter.com/>. A new resource.

See “The Complete Guide to Query Letters” at <https://www.janefriedman.com/query-letters/>. If you need it (I hope you don’t), here it is.

Get your free copy of The Paid Publishing Guidebook for 2020 at <https://lp.freedomwithwriting.com/free-book-the-paid-publishing-guidebook-for-2020-1531-publishers-that-pay-writers/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 3293
Nonfiction words today..... 550 (Journal)

Writing of The Cazadores Lounge and Lonely Place (novel)

Day 11... 3663 words. Total words to date..... 28768
Day 12... 2186 words. Total words to date..... 30954
Day 13... 2899 words. Total words to date..... 33853
Day 14... 2883 words. Total words to date..... 36736
Day 15... 2413 words. Total words to date..... 39149
Day 16... 3293 words. Total words to date..... 42442 (done)

Total fiction words for the month..... 48392
Total fiction words for the year..... 48392
Total nonfiction words for the month... 17570
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 17570
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 65962

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... **1**
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... **2**
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... **46**
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... **199**
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Creative Law Center](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Busting Some Myths for a New Writer

[January 19, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * The topic for today and why I'm here
- * Topic: Writing Into the Dark Early On
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

The topic for today (and a few more) were recommended to me in an email from a writer (RG) who joined our Journal family fairly recently. Some parts of the topic will be old hat to some of you, but I encourage you to read it anyway. You never know what particular phrase will strike a chord.

I hadn't planned to write a Journal entry at all today, but I appreciate RG taking the leap to trust me enough to email me. I also appreciate him recommending topics (per my recent request), and his permission for me to share his concerns with you.

When we share, everybody learns. So if you have a topic or topics of interest, please email me.

In full disclosure, I haven't seen any samples of RG's fiction yet, or any of his writing other than his email. But if you (RG and everybody else) haven't taken Dean Wesley Smith's "Depth in Writing" online course, I strongly recommend you do so.

In all honesty, I have to say I'm not a fan of the swimming analogy Dean uses throughout the course. I found it overly simple and too abstract and shallow to be of much use.

But barring that analogy (a minor concern), I found the course itself absolutely invaluable. I learned techniques that gave my own writing skills a huge leap forward.

Another online course I strongly recommend is "Writing Science Fiction" (even if you don't write science fiction). That one too advanced my writing skills by leaps and bounds.

In the body of his email, RG actually sent me several topics. I'll attempt to address a few of those today in a statement/response format. I'll address other topics in later posts.

So to the topic.

Topic: Busting Some Myths for a New Writer

Below, "RG" denotes the writer's statement or question. "HS" denotes my response. When I refer to "DWS," that's [Dean Wesley Smith](#), and of course "WITD" is Writing Into the Dark. (RG, I hope this helps more than my email response did.)

RG: I acknowledge that writing into the dark is the only way to go. I also understand cycling and the lunacy of revision and the critical mind and the need to publish and release.

HS: Thanks! I agree. WITD works for me, and has worked ever since I gave it an honest try not quite 6 years ago.

That being said, owing to at least 12 and often many more years of being taught that we “must” outline, revise, rewrite, etc., most writers understandably do not trust themselves enough to really try WITD. And THAT being said, I’ve never known any writer to really try WITD (i.e., come to really trust their creative subconscious) and then go back to outlining, revising, rewriting, etc. Not one.

Consider, most writers aren’t even aware that outlining, revising and rewriting are fear-based delaying tactics (again, instilled by years of instruction) to keep them from writing, finishing what they write, and publishing what they write.

Budding writers are taught (pointedly) that what they write can’t possibly be any good. They are taught to second-guess (revise, rewrite) with their critical mind what is written from their creative subconscious.

To the credit of all those teachers and instructors and professors, writers ARE told early-on that they are the worst judges of their own work. But then those same teachers undermine that wisdom with a lie: That when the writer believes the work is “bad,” he’s suddenly right somehow.

Think about that. Writers are the worst judges of their own work. That is absolutely true. It can’t be wrong, because the writer’s opinion is Only One Opinion. No writer can possibly speak for all the potential readers out there.

Yet writers are taught that when they believe their work is “good,” they’re automatically wrong. It CAN’T be good because they are the worst judges of their own work. So they should revise, rewrite, etc. because they’re wrong about their work being “good.”

But when they believe their work is “bad,” they’re automatically right. Which again means they should revise, rewrite, etc. See what’s happening here?

When I realized that “Writers are the worst judges of their own work PERIOD,” I finally understood that what RG asserted in his first paragraph was correct: that WITD — trusting your own subconscious creative mind — really is valid.

To personalize this, I seriously doubt whether RG has read any of my novels, and that’s fine. But if he had, and if he enjoyed them, it would give WITD more credibility. Or (maybe more likely) it would cause him to question whether I really WITD.

To date, I’ve written westerns, thrillers, action-adventures, mysteries, and science fiction/science fantasy (the former obeys the laws of physics as we know them and the latter does not). Maybe some of those are in RG’s (or your) reading wheelhouse and maybe they aren’t.

But neither does that matter. Readers read what they want, and they return to read more works by writers whose work they enjoy. And that's the extent of how much I worry about it. Shrug.

The only way to enhance discoverability — the likelihood that readers will find your work in the first place — is to put a lot of work out there. The more times your name appears on various book covers, the better the chance a reader will buy it.

So again, I do my best to control what I can control, and then I don't worry about the rest.

Once I've created the most enticing cover I can create and written the best sales copy I can write (and slapped all of that on the most entertaining story I can write at my current skill level), I've done all I can do. At that point, I really, honestly don't care.

Readers will find my work and read it or they won't. My focus is on writing the next story. Because I'm a writer, not an arm-twister of readers. (grin) If you want to check out what I've written, take a look at [StoneThread Publishing](#).

RG: But my question relates to the early period in a writer's career where what they produce really isn't that good.

HS: Again, "what I produce really isn't that good" according to whom? Remember, you are the worst judge of your own work. Period.

But honestly, I had exactly the same concern when I started. Exactly. My first thought was, "Well of course this works for DWS. He's been writing successfully for 40+ years." Still, what if WITD *DID* work?

So for me, there was only one thing to do: I would give WITD a real try. I would ignore all the advice I'd heard from non-writers over the years (and from writers who had bought into that stuff) and trust a 40+ year professional writer. To me, that just made sense.

I would really try WITD. Which means I wouldn't "try" (conscious, critical mind) anything. I would let go of all those fears of not being good enough and just trust my creative subconscious. I would write whatever it gave me to start, and then I would write the next sentence. And that would turn into a short story or novel or it wouldn't.

So I wrote a short story. And WITD worked. And as a bonus, it really was a ton of fun.

But I was still skeptical. I figured it must be a fluke. So I continued the experiment. I wrote another short story, and another one, and another one. Over 7 months, I wrote around 30 short stories, strictly WITD.

Then, still skeptical, I thought, "Okay fine. WITD works for short stories. But that doesn't mean it will work for a novel. After all, short stories are, well, short."

So on October 19, 2014, I started my first novel. I started with a line of narrative that popped into my head. Then I wrote the next sentence, then the next, etc. I finished my first novel twenty-some days later (28 if I remember correctly). And it was GOOD (my opinion). But what really matter was that it had entertained me. So it stood to reason that it would entertain at least some other readers.

It did. And I haven't looked back.

Now for a few minor finishing points for this topic:

RG: There's no way anyone will ever convince me

HS: Sure they will. READERS will convince you. But only if they have the opportunity to read your work.

RG: ... that what I've written is comparable to what you can write. (You've written a gazillion more words more than me. Our writing shouldn't be the same.)

HS: Really, this is a category error. To level the presumptive playing field, let's compare like items. But first, not to be flip, so what?

Your very first novel will be BETTER than my very first novel was to some readers. And my very first novel will be better than yours will to some readers. The point is, SOME readers of your genre (my go-to stat is 80%) will like yours and the same number of readers of my genre will like mine.

RG: And what I can write is not comparable to the fiction I like to read.

HS: Again, so what? There really isn't any magic involved. It's only letters and words arranged in a particular order.

And listen to this: NOBODY ELSE arranges those letters and words in the same way your creative subconscious arranges them.

After you've read FOR PLEASURE, go back and study any sections that blew you away. Ask yourself how the writer did that. Reread that section a few times. What he or she did will sink into your subconscious, adding to your skill set.

RG: Yet, if I release [my book], readers will compare me to more experienced storytellers. And I won't fare well in that comparison.

HS: As an avid reader myself, for me, at least, this just isn't true. That readers will compare your story to the story of some other writer is a myth.

When I'm reading a novel by Lee Child, I don't compare it to a novel by Jack Higgins. And when I'm reading a first thriller by a brand new writer, I don't compare it to either of those.

As a copyeditor, because I've learned some techniques as a writer that most new novelists hasn't yet learned, I do recognize when those techniques are lacking (if they're important). And because I'm an instructor and enjoy cutting learning curves and spreading the wealth, I might tell the writer in a comment how to ground the reader or how to add more depth or whatever.

Personal to RG — I do encourage you to send me a story or novel for a free sample edit (a full edit of up to a few pages). I'll almost certainly find a few things that will help, and you can then apply those yourself to the rest of your novel.

Although as I told you in my email, I suspect I will more than likely also tell you that you don't need a copyeditor. In your case, I really suspect a good first reader will suffice.

That's all for this time. I hope this helps. As always, comments or emails are welcome.

Today I'll enjoy a combination business and personal visit with my son, daughter-in-law and grandbabies.

For those of you following my personal challenge, just a reminder: only target dates matter now. I have to have finished a novel by the end of each month of the year, and I have to have finished a short story by Saturday midnight of each week.

There are no restrictions for when I start a short story or novel. This is a way of putting days in the bank instead of wasting them. Doing it this way will more than likely enable me to write far more than 12 novels on the year. (grin) What could possibly be bad about that?

But no fiction writing today unless some character or line of dialogue or narrative pops into my head and drives me to write an opening. (grin) I never discount that possibility.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "WWYWTR – Fortune-Telling" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/wwywtr-fortune-telling/>.

See "Why Book Reviewing Isn't Going Anywhere" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/why-book-reviewing-isnt-going-anywhere/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 2060 (Journal)

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

| | |
|---|-------|
| Total fiction words for the month..... | 48392 |
| Total fiction words for the year..... | 48392 |
| Total nonfiction words for the month... | 19630 |
| Total nonfiction words for the year..... | 19630 |
| Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... | 68022 |
| | |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... | 1 |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... | X |
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... | 2 |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 46 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 199 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: I Don't Mean to Sound Harsh But

[January 20, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Over on Pro Writers Writing
- * Wanting to share, Subscriber Finn wrote
- * Had a very enjoyable visit
- * Topic: I Don't Mean to Sound Harsh But
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“I think it actually helps with the creativity to know that I don't have time to think. Whatever comes out, that's it. And that tends to be some of the best stuff and some of the most authentic stuff.” Sean Petrie of the Typewriter Rodeo

“[Rewriting is] a belief in process rather than performance. The writing process is essential — writers write — but we get into trouble when the process rather than the finished work becomes the goal.” Dan Baldwin

Over on Pro Writers Writing, there's been a change. Our former regular contributor, Michaele, has encountered some medical problems and had to back away from posting every Saturday to posting only on the last Saturday of the month.

I looked around for awhile, trying to find someone who would fill in one or two or three Saturdays per month, but frankly it was like pulling teeth.

Then I realized bringing in guest contributors would only create more work for me. I would have to receive the posts, read them to be sure they suited PWW, put them into the proper format, then schedule them. Uh, no.

It's much less work for me to just take over the Saturday postings myself (except the last Saturday of each month), so that's what I'm doing.

In my next post there (February 1) I mentioned my interview on Ryan J. Pelton's podcast, The Prolific Writer. I was even able to reconstruct the part that was cut off from the end of the interview. I'll mention that post here again just before it goes live over at PWW in case you're interested.

Wanting to share, Subscriber Finn wrote

I stumbled upon a nice writing tool. Its name is "Cold Turkey Writer" and it lets you do literally nothing on the computer until you complete your writing goal. The goal can either be set as a word count or as a timeframe. Maybe it's worth a mention in your journal. Ah, and it's free. Here is the link: <https://getcoldturkey.com/writer/>.

If you have impulse control issues when it comes to the internet, games, etc. this might be your answer. (grin)

Had a very enjoyable visit with my son, daughter-in-law and two beautiful granddaughters yesterday. It's a special thing for an old man to see his children, grandchildren (and great-grandchildren occasionally as a kind of quiet reassurance that the line will continue. I am truly blessed.

Topic: I Don't Mean to Sound Harsh But

It's easy for me to tell when writers are mired in denial that their critical mind is stopping them from writing. How?

Usually by how vehemently those writers excuse themselves from writing. And how strongly they cast about for ways to justify NOT writing. Seriously, it really is that transparent.

You are in charge of your own life, and frankly, nobody else notices, much less cares.

If there are other things you need to do, do them. But if you're a writer, then writing is also a thing you need to do.

So if you really want to write fiction, maybe have a look at your priorities. And if you don't, well, don't. Chances are, even your nearest and dearest friends won't notice.

Just sayin'.

Today I had planned to write a short story. My reasoning was, it's early in the week, so well in advance of my Saturday midnight deadline. And if I put the next one off until next Friday or Saturday, that will increase the "straight time" I have to work on my next novel.

But I decided to take the day off instead. (grin)

I've also readjusted my short fiction goal re publishing. Not all of my short stories fit traditional magazine markets that pay pro rates (\$0.05 per word or higher), so I'll be selective. I won't submit a story that isn't SF to Asimov's, for example, or a story that isn't a mystery to Ellery Queen.

That probably sounds like a "well, duh" moment to many of you, but when I started my goals a short time ago, I had decided to send ALL of my short stories to my business manager, then have her submit them to whatever market. And that would be in keeping with my mindset: I'm a writer. I write. When I finish something, I just want it off my desk so I can move on to the next thing.

But that isn't realistic. Hence, the adjustment. Now I'll send to her anything I think will fit any of the markets she's currently researching for me. And those that don't fit, I'll indie publish directly and move on. Writing is the thing.

No business can survive without a production department. That would be me. Starting tomorrow.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Let Your Characters Engage with Fans Online" at <https://www.thebookdesigner.com/2020/01/let-your-characters-engage-with-fans-online/>.

For something different, see "Typewriter Rodeo" at <https://typewriterodeo.com/category/about/>. I recommend watching the video on this page. (Thanks, Gary V. Rober S. and Nan D., I'm lookin' at you.) (grin)

See "The Religion of the Holy Rewrite" at <https://danbaldwin.com/f/the-religion-of-the-holy-rewrite>.

See "Farewell to Ideas" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/farewell-to-ideas/>.

See "55 Children's Book Publishers Seeking Submissions (No Agent Required)" at <https://www.authorspublish.com/55-childrens-book-publishers-seeking-submissions/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 890 (Journal)

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 48392
Total fiction words for the year..... 48392
Total nonfiction words for the month... 20530
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 20530
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 68912

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 2
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 46
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 199
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Book Designer](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: How to Push Back the Critical Voice

[January 21, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Topic: How to Push Back the Critical Voice
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“I would rather dance barefoot on a bed of nails than outline a novel. I know some writers find outlining essential. To me, outlining feels artificial, as if I’m moving characters around like chess pieces. I’m a terrible chess player. Not so good at checkers, either.” Dean Koontz on Twitter (courtesy Phillip McCollum)

“[W]riters must look at writing like they look at reading other writer’s works. They must go to story for the joy of reading, the fun of creation, the excitement of discovery.” Dean Wesley Smith

Topic: How to Push Back the Critical Voice

A writer recently asked me how to quiet his critical mind and engage his creative mind while in the midst of a novel.

Actually, he didn’t ask me that specifically, but his comment to me on Facebook was literally riddled with phrases that proved he was mired in the myths and listening to his critical mind.

I responded to him briefly on Facebook, then wrote him a lengthy email. When I was through, I also shared that email (though I kept the writer’s name out of it) with my Patrons in a patron-only topic.

Then I got another email from another writer (Phillip McCollum) to point me to the first Quote of the Day above. Notice it’s from Dean Koontz, another long-term professional writer who is NOT mired in the myths and is extremely successful.

Later I poked around the internet for items of interest, and found Dean’s post, which ties in with the writer’s comment on my Facebook page and ties in with Koontz’ tweet above.

So I decided to share part of what I sent to the mired writer and to my patrons.

Here’s how to push back the critical voice:

1. Sit down at the computer and take a deep breath.
2. Tell yourself that the story and where it’s going and where it ends up doesn’t matter. Because it really doesn’t. All that matters is the act of writing, of recording your characters’ story, and that matters only because you’re a writer, a storyteller. Then,
3. Read back over the past few sentences or paragraphs to get yourself back into the flow of the story.
4. Then write the next sentence that occurs to you, whatever it is. Don’t “think” about it. Just write it. Then write the next sentence, and the next, and the next. It really is that simple. It really is.

As I told the others, I’m not invested at all in your writing process. If you want to outline, outline. If you want to revise and rewrite endlessly, do that. While you’re outlining and revising and rewriting, I’ll be putting new words on the page.

In a month or two or three or twelve when you’re still revising and putting your work through critique groups and rewriting, I’ll still be putting new words on the page. And at the end of the year, no matter what other writers are doing, I will have written and published at least 12 new novels and at least 52 short stories.

In other words, your process won’t affect my own At All.

I do wish Writing Into the Dark for you because it's so very freeing and because it makes writing a joy.

If I hadn't stumbled on Writing Into the Dark and enable the technique with Heinlein's Rules a few years ago, I wouldn't be writing today. I share it only to pay it forward.

Today I set out to write a short story. By the time I'd finished the opening, it seemed like it might want to be a novel. Then I ate lunch and when I came back, it seemed like maybe it didn't want to go anywhere at all.

I'll come at it again in the morning. If it still doesn't take off, I'll trash it and move on to the next thing. With my January novel done and out to my first readers, my pressing need at the moment is to write a short story for this week.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Invested In Not Writing" at <https://www.deanwesleymith.com/invested-in-not-writing/>. Absolutely excellent.

See The Passive Guy's take on "Who Should Get the Artwork of Purvis Young?" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/who-should-get-the-artwork-of-purvis-young/>. You can scan the original post, but read PG's take. Great advice.

See "Design Tools for Authors" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/design-tools-for-authors/>.

See "Lee Child letting go of his creation ..." at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/lee-child-letting-go-of-his-creation-is-a-tale-told-by-other-best-sellers/>.

See "One Project At A Time?" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/one-project-at-a-time>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 2421
Nonfiction words today..... 760 (Journal)

Writing of Algae Prime (SF novel?)

Day 1..... 2421 words. Total words to date..... 2421

Total fiction words for the month..... 50813
Total fiction words for the year..... 50813
Total nonfiction words for the month... 21280
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 21280
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 72093

| | |
|---|-----|
| Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... | 1 |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... | X |
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... | 2 |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 46 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 199 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: A Ton More on Critical Voice

[January 22, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Thanks and a request
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“[T]he fun is that you can do anything you want because no one cares and it’s just fun and entertainment. The writers who really, really embrace that are often the most successful because not only do they not know where they are going (or care), their readers don’t know and love the ride.” Dean Wesley Smith in a comment to another writer

“[F]ear does kill fun. No doubt about that, except on roller coasters, when the fear is part of the thrill. I sort of like that thrill when I have written myself into a corner, no hope of finding a way out, yet I just keep typing, hold on tight, and my creative voice knows the way just fine. Fear is a thrill then and fun.” Dean Wesley Smith

“When I write, I remind myself...just tell the story. It doesn’t have to be perfect. It doesn’t have to be a best seller. It just has to be a story I would enjoy hearing or reading. When I get overwhelmed with life stuff, I go write a short fairytale. Anything can happen in a fairytale, and I know I’ll have fun!” prolific writer Lorri Moulton <https://lavenderlassbooks.com/>

Thanks to Theron Mathis for recommending [Nicholas Kotar](#) as a prolific author of interest. If you’re interested in all things Slavic, you might want to visit the site.

If you know of any long-term professional writers who have cleared out at least most of the myths and who post blogs with some regularity on anything other than his or her own work (releases, etc.), please email me with the URL.

Basically I'm looking for other writers who have cleared out the myths and do what DWS and I do. Even if they don't post all that often. For example, I still check JA Konrath's blog almost every day though his last post way way back in July ("[Six Things Writers Need To Stop Worrying About](#)").

So if you know anyone who fits that bill, please email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com. Remember, I'm still learning too. (grin)

And if you know of any short-term writers who are serious about learning the craft, please share with them my URLs. (grin) If reading my posts has done your writing some good, please share.

Today I added a little over 3000 words to the WIP. It still wants to be a novel. I'm going to let it run and see where it goes. (I'm not going to interrupt it to write a short story for this week until Saturday morning at the latest.) With any luck, a short story will present itself as part of the novel.

If that happens, both will appear below and the short story will count toward my weekly goal. If the short story is also part of the novel, though, the short story words won't count against my annual totals. In other words, I won't count words twice (duh).

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See the invaluable comments on "Invested In Not Writing" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/invested-in-not-writing/#comments>.

See "Controlling Critical Voice" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/controlling-critical-voice/>. If critical voice is stopping you from writing, I strongly recommend you read this two or three times. Seriously, a ton of gems here.

See "Do you love to travel?" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/do-you-love-to-travel/>.

See "The 9 Best Apps to Create Fast Graphic Designs" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-9-best-apps-to-create-fast-graphic-designs/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 3312
Nonfiction words today..... 5700 (Journal)

Writing of Algae Prime (SF novel?)

Day 1..... 2421 words. Total words to date..... 2421
Day 2..... 3312 words. Total words to date..... 5733

Total fiction words for the month..... 54125
Total fiction words for the year..... 54125
Total nonfiction words for the month... 21850
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 21850
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 75975

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 2
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 46
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 199
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: On Routines

[January 23, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Topic: On Routines
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“I do the best I can with every thing I write. ... I just don't care what others think about the final product and I have fun, and those two things keep critical voice at bay for me.” Dean Wesley Smith

“If you set a goal of 500 or 1,000 words and you keep it every day, you feel as if you have accomplished something.” Amanda Patterson in a post for Writers Write

Topic: On Routines

Note: If you are happy with your writing routine, you can skip this topic. But if your writing is haphazard, catch-as-catch-can — or worse, if your critical mind has taken over and keeps you

busy figuring out whether to use a timer or not, or whether to use a word-count goal or write for a specified time, or any other silly mind games that keep you from sitting down and actually writing — read on.

We all have routines. Most of them revolve around recurring tasks that we have to accomplish on a regular basis, like doing laundry or cooking supper or loading the dishwasher or setting up the coffeemaker for the next day. You don't really have to set those up. They establish themselves out of necessity.

But I'm talking here about desirable routines. Tasks you would like to accomplish on a regular recurring basis. Like writing fiction.

This is the kind of routine that, initially, you have to consciously establish. There's no way around it. You have to ignore the critical voice and its silly mind games, sit down and write.

You have to think (as one famous writer whose name escapes me at the moment did), "All right. I'm going to write at least 1000 words of fiction, every day, before I do anything else."

In other words, he made writing a priority. Everything else he had to do that day took a back seat to his writing. Everything and everyone.

So if you want to establish a new writing routine, first make writing your priority. Period.

Second, when the time you've chosen to write rolls around, write.

That will be the hard part initially: you have to be disciplined, or if you wish, stubborn. You have to show up. No excuses, short of your house being on fire at the moment.

But how to set a time to write?

That's a little difficult at the beginning too. If it means getting up an hour earlier, do it. If it means going to bed an hour later, do it. If it means leaving home for an hour or two every day, do it. Only you know your own life, so figure it out.

Maybe you can cut an hour or two from your evening and transfer it to your morning.

When I started writing in earnest, that's what I did. I transferred time. I started going to bed at 7 or 8, cutting out the time I'd been wasting on brain-dead TV shows that didn't interest me anyway, and rising at 2 or 3 to attend my new writing habit.

Whatever you choose to do, initially when your time to write rolls around, your critical mind will play all sorts of trick on you. It will tell you, loudly, that "writing a silly story isn't all that important anyway." Or "You aren't really cut out to be a writer. Forget it." Or "Seriously, you made it this far today. You can start actually writing tomorrow."

Even if you're already somewhat accomplished as a writer, the critical mind doesn't stop. It simply switches tactics. "You've written 20 novels. That's more than many people write in a lifetime. Ease up." Or "Is the story really going where you want it to go? Maybe you should reread it, maybe even rewrite it." Or "It wouldn't hurt anything to take off just one day."

Ignore it. At your assigned time, push that critical voice aside, go sit at your laptop or pick up your yellow legal pad and pen, and write.

When my own critical mind starts trash-talking, I generally laugh and say (aloud), "Shut up and go sit in your corner." Then I sit down and write. Simple as it sounds, it works.

You can do it. But you have to want it.

Today, about the time I was waking up, our friend and neighbor Diane passed quietly. Her husband was with her, and we walked over and visited briefly with him at their home across the road when we learned the news.

Maybe someday our so-called leaders will give as much taxpayer money to eradicating breast (and other) cancer as it currently gives to other, far less necessary endeavors.

Today will be a nonwriting day, except for this Journal, which I'm posting early.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See the comments on "Controlling Critical Voice" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/controlling-critical-voice/#comments>.

See "Business Musings: Power (Contracts/Negotiation)" at <https://kriswrites.com/2020/01/22/business-musings-power-contracts-negotiation/>.

See "Occupations Throughout History and Their (Interesting) Names" at <https://dustyoldthing.com/english-names-old-occupations>. Possibly a good reference site.

For something really cool, see "Max Brand" at <http://www.maxbrandonline.com/biography.htm>. (Thanks, Alex.)

See "'No Time to Die': A Rare In-Depth Interview With the Keepers of James Bond" at <https://variety.com/2020/film/features/james-bond-no-time-to-die-barbara-broccoli-michael-wilson-1203466601/>. An equally rare insight into licensing and estate management, and some gems for writers.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 890 (Journal)

Writing of *Algae Prime* (SF novel?)

Day 1..... 2421 words. Total words to date..... 2421
Day 2..... 3312 words. Total words to date..... 5733
Day 3..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 54125
Total fiction words for the year..... 54125
Total nonfiction words for the month... 22740
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 22740
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 76865

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 2
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 46
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 199
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Kristine Kathryn Rusch](#), [Max Brand](#),
[Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#), [Variety](#)

The Journal: The New World of Publishing

[January 24, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Topic: The New World of Publishing
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Doing has always been a binary choice; to do or not do. ... Revel when you can in the celestial creative mind.” [Robert J. Sadler](#)

Topic: The New World of Publishing

Yeah, I know. Digital publishing and ebooks have been around awhile now. But every now and then I'm reminded why I still love this new world of publishing.

An attentive reader who is also a successful professional writer pointed out that my second novel back, *Jonah Peach*, had a missing word.

The error was at about the 70% point in the Kindle version. The missing word was major to the meaning. The offending passage, on behalf of a character who was a real jerk, read "And why he? That was her job."

The missing word was "should," to be inserted between "why" and "he."

When I added it, "should" became the 33,641st word of 47,253 words total. So good call, DS. That word was at precisely the 71% position. (grin)

Now, that late in the book, had the error been a matter of "a" instead of "an" or "teh" vs "the" or something like that, I might have let it go.

But the error was large enough to bug me.

So over a period of about five minutes this morning, I added the word to both versions of the manuscript (the one I uploaded to Smashwords and the one I uploaded to D2D and Amazon), pressed the button that reads Publish, and downloaded the new .mobi and .epub files.

Five minutes. See why I love this new world of publishing? (grin)

And as a bonus, DS also wrote a brief review:

"By the way, I read *Jonah Peach* in one sitting. Really good, but scary! Like a forensic files show. You can't look away! Lol. It is fascinating to read knowing you wrote it into the dark. ... [T]he characters just came to life."

Difficult to get higher praise than that. (grin)

For those who still wonder whether writing into the dark can really work, I wrote the 47,000 word novel *Jonah Peach* in 20 days in December.

Then I wrote 42,000 word novel *The Cazadores Lounge and Lonely Place* in 16 days in January. One of my first readers has already finished that one and wrote, "Mixing first person and third person worked well. At first, I didn't realize it. I was trying to read for enjoyment and not craft on the first pass. Second time [was] for me to learn." (Thanks, AH.)

Again, I consider that very high praise. Craft and style should be all but invisible. That the reader didn't notice the switches from first to third person and back speaks to the ability to wield the craft.

And that's perfect. I don't want readers standing around the water cooler on Monday morning wondering why I switched from first to third person and back. I want them talking about the story.

And as I write this Journal entry, I'm already a little over 5000 words into my next novel, the "we went there" SF, *Algae Prime*.

The point is, you really can write both well and fast. It's all a matter of trusting what you know, using the time between books to learn something you didn't know before, and then practicing (putting new words on the page).

Come on in. The water's fine.

This morning I came out a little earlier than usual to write this and to spend some time on my WIP. If I had a "regular" job, I would go back to it today as well, and probably would have gone in even yesterday. But for now and for the ensuing days, our main priority will be to make ourselves available to our friends as necessary.

We're also still immersed in the grieving process over the loss of our beautiful friend, though not nearly as immersed as our friends across the road, who lost a wife and mother far too soon in her mid-50s.

If you pray, please pray for that family to heal as quickly and well as possible, to move as quickly as they can from the bitter taste of grief to the gentle knowledge that she will live on in their memories of her.

A bit of a slow day today. The novel's moving well enough, but the horses were having to stand in mud to get to their water trough, so we rigged them a new one on dry land. (One of them got a hoof ailment a month or so from the same situation.) So part of the day slipped away.

Back at it tomorrow. Oh, and if I don't feel a short story coming in the novel, I'll have to write a separate one tomorrow. (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

Speaking of learning, see "Study Along Workshop" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/study-along-workshop/>.

See "Conspiracy Theories" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/conspiracy-theories-3/>. Story ideas.

See especially the 5th paragraph of "The Silurian Hypothesis" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-silurian-hypothesis/>. More story ideas.

See “Don’t Sweat It!” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/dont-sweat-it/>.

See “Accountability” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/accountability/>. I don’t care for amateur writing groups, but if you’re gonna be in a writing group, what David Farland says.

See “May Wedderburn Cannan” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/may-wedderburn-cannan/>. Yet more story ideas, and some great poetry.

See “12 Sure Signs You Should Give This Writing Thing a Try” at <https://www.authorspublish.com/12-sure-signs-you-should-give-this-writing-thing-a-try/>. (Any other “naturals” out there?)

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 2205
Nonfiction words today..... 900 (Journal)

Writing of *Algae Prime* (SF novel?)

Day 1..... 2421 words. Total words to date..... 2421
Day 2..... 3312 words. Total words to date..... 5733
Day 3..... 2205 words. Total words to date..... 7938

Total fiction words for the month..... 56330
Total fiction words for the year..... 56330
Total nonfiction words for the month... 23640
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 23640
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 79970

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 2
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 46
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 199
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: How to Learn Fiction-Writing Techniques

[January 25, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Topic: How to Learn Fiction-Writing Techniques
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“[W]hat the character notices and how s/he notices something are reflections of who s/he is.”
Michaele Lockhart

Topic: How to Learn Fiction-Writing Techniques

This topic arose from an email I received a few days ago. What appears below is my expanded response.

If you want to learn new fiction-writing techniques and improve your craft,

1. *Take in-person or online video or audio courses* from knowledgeable sources.

By knowledgeable sources, I mean folks with a proven track record. Writers who have been (and are) writing fiction successfully. Like Dean Wesley Smith and Kris Rusch and me. (grin)

2. *Read nonfiction books on writing*, but again, only after vetting the author. Lawrence Block springs to mind, as does Stephen King, DWS, Kris Rusch, and me. You can find all of my nonfiction books at [StoneThread Publishing](#).

3. *Read widely for pleasure.*

Read in your genre, but also read stories that interest you outside your genre. Good storytellers use the same techniques to tell good stories despite the genre.

As you read for pleasure, if a particular section blows you away, mark it with a sticky note or a gum wrapper or a dog-eared page or something. Then, after you've finished reading the book for pleasure, go back to the places you marked and study them (even type them in if you want, to absorb the rhythm and flow of the passage) to learn what that writer did that blew you away and how s/he did it.

And just a thought — if you're considering learning from a particular writer — if you're considering taking an in-person or online course or reading a nonfiction book on writing or even asking a writer to mentor you — as a final way of vetting that writer, read some of his or her fiction.

Nothing speaks to knowledge of the storytelling game like being absorbed in a book you don't want to put down.

There are precious few professional writers out there who teach writing, and even fewer who are willing to mentor other writers directly. In that second case, I can think of only two: DWS and me*.

*There are a few “famous writers” who teach writing, but not really. They put their name on a courses (for a cut of the proceeds), but the courses are actually taught by other people.

I can't speak for DWS, but I offer free copies of my fiction short stories and novels (of the mentoring student's choice) to those whom I mentor. Because I WANT them to see my storytelling ability for themselves. Something to think about.

I'd be remiss if I didn't say I have a mentoring spot open. I and my students go month by month. So the students have skin involved, there's a montly fee, but they can learn as much or as little as they like and stop at any time.

I offer mentoring on everything from clearing out the myths, to setting and attaining goals, to specific writing techniques, and much more. Whatever the particular student needs to become a successful professional fiction writer. (If you're a regular patron, I'll discount your monthly fee up to \$20 per month.)

If you're interested at all in becoming a mentoring student, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

This morning, I misread my bedside clock. I thought it read 1:25 but found out right after I started the coffee maker it was actually only 11:25 p.m. So when the coffee was made, I poured it into two Thermos bottles, then went back to bed.

So I rolled out at 2:25, a much more reasonable hour (given that I went to bed at 7 last night), grabbed my Thermos bottles and my mug, and padded out to the Hovel. (grin)

Started writing at 6, but too many distractions. Chief among those are email, notifications for which pop up in the bottom right corner of my screen. Usually I can ignore all but the more important ones, but not today for some reason. So I'm turning off notifications. (Just want you to know it happens to me too.) In my first session, I wrote a total of 200 words.

I decided to leave the novel for the day to write this week's short story, which is due by midnight tonight.

And actually, I thought about adjusting my goals again, but this time in a major way. I was going to drop the weekly goal of a short story.

Why? Because I enjoy writing novels more, plus novels sell better, and novels in series sell better than that.

I've already written almost 200 short stories, so it isn't like I have to prove to myself I can do it. And I've already written a short story every week for 70 consecutive weeks a few years ago, so reaching for a streak has no particular value for me either.

The main reason I set the weekly short story goal in the first place was to provide me with more novel ideas (my short stories often want to be novels), but I'm not having any problem coming up with ideas for novels so no worries there.

Either way, I would continue to write short stories through the year as they occur to me, either as part of a longer work or separately. It will be interesting to me to see how many short stories I've written when the year is gone.

So for now, I was thinking, I want to keep my primary focus on writing novels.

Only when I told my wife I was dropping my weekly goal, she said nothing, but smiled at me. And to me, her smile said, "Well, of course you are." That probably isn't what she meant, but it's what I heard in my mind.

Hey, you take encouragement of any kind where you find it. (grin) And as you all know, I love having my feet held to the fire.

So I went back to the Hovel and wrote "Cowboy Country," which could as easily have been titled "Let's Play Cowboys and Mafia." (grin) So for now, the weekly goal lives.

Tomorrow, I'll get back to my novel.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "How Much is Enough?" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/how-much-is-enough/>.

See "The Terrible Truth About Adolf Hitler's Remains" at <http://dyingwords.net/the-terrible-truth-about-adolf-hitlers-remains/>.

See "The Story of a Weird World I Was Warned Never to Tell" at <https://getpocket.com/explore/item/the-story-of-a-weird-world-i-was-warned-never-to-tell>. Story ideas abound.

See "Forget 'Earth-Like'—We'll First Find Aliens on Eyeball Planets" at <https://getpocket.com/explore/item/forget-earth-like-we-ll-first-find-aliens-on-eyeball-planets>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 3699
Nonfiction words today..... 1090 (Journal)

Writing of “Cowboy Country” (short story)

Day 1..... 3121 words. Total words to date..... 3121 (done)

Writing of *Algae Prime* (SF novel?)

Day 1..... 2421 words. Total words to date..... 2421

Day 2..... 3312 words. Total words to date..... 5733

Day 3..... 2205 words. Total words to date..... 7938

Day 4..... 0578 words. Total words to date..... 8508

Total fiction words for the month..... 60029

Total fiction words for the year..... 60029

Total nonfiction words for the month... 24730

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 24730

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 84759

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 2

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 46

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 199

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [DyingWords.net](#), [GetPocket](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Fear, and What to Do About It

[January 26, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Topic: Fear, and What to Do About It
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“And of course, there’s the fear that I’ll never be able to write decently, much less prolifically, again.” New York Times and USA Today bestselling author Russell Blake in “Taking a Break” on 9 July 2019<https://russellblake.com/taking-a-break/>

Topic: Fear, and What to Do About It

Notice the Quote of the Day above. If you go read the blog post, you'll see that the conscious, critical mind has pretty much stilled Russell Blake, a once-prolific author. I only hope he isn't on his way from "bestselling prolific author" to "Whatever happened to ...?"

Because Blake and I are contemporaries (he's written 60-some novels in 8 years) I'm pulling for him. I hit a wall similar to the one he's talking about in the post late last year. Remember?

From July through November (5 months) I wrote only 46,277 words of fiction. My "big" month during that time was only 15,916 words and my smallest month was 4,862.

By contrast, I wrote 55,128 words of fiction in December, and so far this month I've written 60,029.

Please have no doubt: The fear that caused Russell Blake to stop cold is common to all professional fiction writers to one degree or another.

Blake is both a New York Times and USA Today bestselling author. He was even invited to co-write two novels with Clive Cussler. The guy meets my personal definition of "wildly successful." Yet now he seems to be throwing in the towel.

Why? Extrapolating from his blog post and specifically from the quote above, I suspect Russell got some rave reviews (duh). And even his blog post is riddled with comments from readers asking when they can expect his next book.

All of that adds pressure IF YOU LET IT:

1. You begin to worry about whether you can live up to what you've done before.
2. Then you begin to look more closely (consciously, critically) at your current manuscript because you want to make sure it rises to the level of your previous works.
3. That conscious, critical focus causes you to bog down in words and sentences. You begin playing mind games with yourself, and suddenly what was originally a lot of fun becomes tedious, labor-intensive, time-consuming work.
4. The notion that the book is "important" seeps in, unnoticed. And your fingers are frozen on the keyboard. You think some version of, "Can I really write another book as good as the one before? Maybe it was just a fluke." And you're screwed.

So how to get beyond it?

There's only one way that I've found. You have to climb back up on Heinlein's Rules. If you're a writer, you have to write.

So how do you do that? In my case, I wrote off into the dark. I didn't worry about what anyone thought of my work. I was just telling a story, nothing more important than that.

THAT I wrote was important. WHAT specifically I wrote, the specific story, was not important in the slightest. After all, any specific story is only a few minutes' or hours' entertainment. That's all.

And once I'm back in that mindset — the mindset of THAT I write is important (because I'm a writer, duh), but WHAT I write is only a few minutes' or hours' entertainment — I put my fingers on the keyboard, drop a character with a problem into a setting, and write the next sentence.

A Personal Case in Point

Just yesterday, I was pressured by my critical mind. In addition to my goal to write a novel every month, I have a goal to write a short story every week.

But with my weekly deadline looming, my conscious, critical mind latched onto the opportunity to mess with me.

I didn't even see it as I was writing yesterday's Journal entry, but once I overcame the fear and my conscious, critical mind by actually writing a short story yesterday (3121 words in just over 2 hours), it was readily apparent.

It became obvious that my conscious-mind was bombarding me with rationalizations yesterday in an all-out onslaught. The rationalizations were as follows, in quotation marks below. How I got rid of those rationalizations are in parentheses:

“Novels and novels in series sell far better than short stories do, so why bother writing a short story every week?” (The answer: Because it drives me to the keyboard and it's FUN.)

“Plus I enjoy writing novels more.” (No, I don't. I enjoy writing, storytelling, period. Again, because it's FUN.)

“I've already written almost 200 short stories, so it isn't like I have to prove anything.” (That isn't the point. I'm not writing anything to prove anything. I write because it's FUN to tell new stories.)

“The main reason I set the weekly short story goal in the first place was to provide me with more novel ideas ..., but I'm not having any problem coming up with ideas for novels so no worries there.” (Again, that isn't the point. I need to refocus on WHAT I write is not important. Only THAT I write is important. And again, the drive to write a short story every week gets me to the keyboard.)

“Either way, I would continue to write short stories through the year as they occur to me....” (Yes, I probably would, but again, that isn't the point. I use my goals to drive me to write.)

“It will be interesting to me to see how many short stories I’ve written when the year is gone.” (The conscious mind lulling me into thinking it’s all right to set aside my weekly goal. Only it isn’t all right. It’s an easy goal to attain.)

“So for now, I was THINKING [conscious mind], I want to keep my primary focus on writing novels.” (Why? Because novels sell better and are therefore “important.” Ugh. Gotta get rid of that, always.)

“So FOR NOW [conscious mind hedging its bet], the weekly goal lives.” (No, the weekly goal is back, period, thanks to that look from my wife and my catching the critical voice at its mind game just in time.)

See what I mean about being bombarded? And all with one goal: to stop me from writing. And it almost worked.

This is me checking in with myself.

So maybe you should check in with yourself too.

If you’re a fiction writer, are you writing? If not, why not? Make room for the rationalizations so you can clear them out.

And if you ARE writing, but not very much, why not?

You don’t have to share your conscious-mind rationalizations in public like I did above, but please do what you can to scrub them out of your life and make the writing fun again.

Because if you don’t, you might find yourself surrendering to the critical mind and “taking a break,” either from writing at all like Russell Blake did, or from a particular goal, like I almost did yesterday.

And is that what you really want?

If it isn’t, get back up on Heinlein’s Rules and write. It really is that simple. If you’re a writer, write.

No writing today to speak of. I’ll start a read-through of my WIP (cycling) and finish it tomorrow morning so I can write when I get back to the blank page.

Every novel writes differently. This one is becoming a technical novel, so diagrams are necessary so I don’t get lost. Maybe even for the lunar base and the lunar orbiter, but definitely for the spacecraft in which my four main characters are currently confined for a trip to another planet in another solar system.

So I'll spend the balance of today off and on drawing those diagrams. Then if time allows, I'll finish cycling and write a little more. No pressure though. This is the novel that has to be finished by February 28, so I have several writing days in the bank.

I'm gonna go ahead and post this now, and I'll update you the next time I post re my progress.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Create and Edit Universal Book Links" at <https://authorhelp.uk/create-edit-universal-book-links/>.

See "Inspiration – It's Everywhere" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/inspiration-its-everywhere>.

Note: The next two posts might be great for structure (which you learn with your conscious mind), but remember to write from the subconscious:

See "Further Reflections on the Mirror Moment" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/01/further-reflections-on-the-mirror-moment.html>.

See "Revisiting the Mirror Moment" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2014/09/revisiting-mirror-moment.html>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 1410 (Journal)

Writing of *Algae Prime* (SF novel?)

Day 1..... 2421 words. Total words to date..... 2421
Day 2..... 3312 words. Total words to date..... 5733
Day 3..... 2205 words. Total words to date..... 7938
Day 4..... 0578 words. Total words to date..... 8508
Day 5..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 60029
Total fiction words for the year..... 60029
Total nonfiction words for the month... 26140
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 26140
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 86169

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 2

| | |
|---|-----|
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 46 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 199 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorHelp.uk](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Finished My Drawings and...

[January 27, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

I finished up my drawings yesterday, basically one overall map of the ship and three close-up views of individual rooms, in about two hours. Now as I'm writing, I can glance up at the overall view and not have my characters going the wrong way to get someplace. (grin)

I remembered I'd already mapped out the subsurface moon colony back when I wrote another novel, either *The Thirteen-Month Turn* or *In the Siberian Fields*, so I didn't have to do that again. The colony was built to last, I guess. (grin)

Then I went back to the Hovel, but I decided to wait and start fresh on the novel today. I've already gotten input from two of my first readers on *Cazadores*, so I applied their recommendations.

Since my first readers found very little to complain about in the novel, this morning I decided to read through it again myself (most chapters). I found a few more things, and also decided to change one last name and one first name.

Then I ran another spell check and spent some time looking for art for the cover.

I'm happy with the book, so I'm going to publish it today as soon as I put everything together.

Why am I telling you this? Because I've decided to give everyone a copy of this short novel (40,000 words). Here's the description:

The *Cazadores Lounge and Lonely Place* is an out of the way bar with a good Cajun band, a great dance floor, a continual crowd and a brand new bouncer.

Marie Fonteneaux is the biggest draw and the owner's girl. She attracts the attention of men young and old, and almost all of them have only the best intentions.

But the ones who don't? Well, from broken-down barns to thickly overgrown woods to the swamps along the Bayou Teche, Acadia guards her secrets well.

Search tags will be psychological suspense, thriller, crime, Bayou Teche, swamps, alligators, and Louisiana.

If you'd like a copy of the book, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com and let me know which format you want: Kindle, Nook/Apple or PDF. (Patrons needn't email. You will automatically receive a free copy.)

I got absolutely NO writing done today. The program I use to design covers (an early version of Serif PagePlus) is getting old. It took me only a few minutes to design the cover for Cazadores, then over 2 hours to get it to save right so I could transfer it to a .jpg file. Sigh.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Short Story Workshop" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/short-story-workshop/>.

See "Lessons Learned from Writing True Crime" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/01/lessons-learned-from-writing-true-crime.html>.

See "Why Your Books Should Be In Print Too" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/why-your-books-should-be-in-print-too/>.

Via Nate Hoffelder, for a "free all-in-one solution to setting up a new author website," visit Author Website in a Box at <https://www.authorwebsiteinbox.com/>.

See "He Said. She Said. 15 Keys to Writing Great Dialogue" at <https://annerallen.com/2020/01/15-keys-writing-dialogue/>.

See "Welcome back to The Digital Writer" at <https://preview.mailerlite.com/16b5s8/1342186282561836180/x2c1/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 500 (Journal)

Writing of Algae Prime (SF novel?)

Day 1..... 2421 words. Total words to date..... 2421
Day 2..... 3312 words. Total words to date..... 5733
Day 3..... 2205 words. Total words to date..... 7938
Day 4..... 0578 words. Total words to date..... 8508
Day 5..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 60029
Total fiction words for the year..... 60029
Total nonfiction words for the month... 26640
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 26640
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 86669

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 2
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 46
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 199
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#),
[Professional Writer Series](#), [The Digital Reader](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: If You Want to See a Good Topic, and Kind of a Topic

[January 28, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * If You Want to See a Good Topic
- * Topic: Kind of a Topic
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“If an indie author is publishing a book across a variety of different national borders via Amazon, even if the use of an image might pass muster under US law, the laws of other nations might give rise to claims for damages.” The Passive Guy

If You Want to See a Good Topic

I'm being lazy today. If you want to see a good topic, read "Why Your Books Should Be In Print Too" and the comments at <https://prowriterswriting.com/why-your-books-should-be-in-print-too/>.

That's better than me copy/pasting my own comments from there to here. (grin)

Topic: Kind of a Topic

I was amazed at the requests I got for my novel, *The Cazadores Lounge and Lonely Place*. Thanks to all who showed interest in reading it.

Of course, it's still available, free. All you have to do is email me to let me know your preferred format: Kindle (.mobi), Nook/Apple (.epub) or PDF. And please don't be shy about sharing something about your own work.

Some who emailed me expressed an interest in reading more of my work for pleasure and/or as a learning experience. I'm both flattered and grateful.

If you feel that way too, consider [becoming a patron](#) for as little as \$3 per month. You get all kinds of freebies.

In the alternative, you can also consider becoming one of my first readers. You get to see the work warts and all. (grin) I ask first readers only to read my longer works for pleasure as I finish them, then let me know if any wrong-words, typos, inconsistencies or other story-stoppers pop out at them as they read.

I also mention my first readers in the credits in my novels (when they participate), and all of my first readers get my latest releases even if they don't participate. So same as the \$3-level patrons.

Finally, if you want to browse and select which of my works to read, I recommend visiting <https://stonethreadpublishing.com>. There, you can read full descriptions AND you get a discount on anything you order direct from us.

Maybe interesting to note, as I told a couple of those who emailed and mentioned "style," that style often changes with genre. For example, I absolutely love DWS' science fiction/fantasy and his Cold Poker Gang books, but I'm not a fan of his Poker Boy series. Same writer, different styles.

However (and this is important), the basics of good writing (grounding the reader, setting and tone, realistic dialogue, etc.) carry over to all genres. What changes in "style" is how the writer uses those techniques from genre to genre. Just something to consider.

Today, I rolled out way late at 3:30, and owing to a needy kitten, I didn't make it out to the Hovel until 4. So today should be an interesting day. (grin)

Then I was semi-inundated by emails from other writers. I am not complaining. At all. If my writing time is going to be interrupted or delayed, I can't think of a better or more enjoyable reason.

Not because of the "writing is a lonely, solitary affair" blah blah blah. I just love hearing from other writers. If we all lived within a reasonable radius, I would even recommend we get together for lunch every couple of weeks or so. (grin)

Every conversation is a potential learning opportunity. At least I hope it is for them. It is for me, for sure. (Yes, I'm selfish in that way.) I think that's why I keep writing this Journal. I know it's why I offer mentorships, etc.

I was all set finally to write at about 8, but someone's stray pigs were annoying the neighbor's horses. So I borrowed the neighbor's buggy whip and drove the blasted things home, a mile-long round-trip through sand.

According to the owner, the pigs are destined for a barbeque pit. I suspect they've overheard conversations about that, and that's probably why they keep escaping. I wish them luck, frankly, but I would rather they'd go somewhere else.

Then I took care of a few other chores and finally sat down to write at 10:30, extremely late for me. And since I've been away from the novel for two days, more cycling will ensue.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "First Page Critique 'The False Curtain': Alone Again...Unnaturally" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/01/first-page-critique-the-false-curtain-alone-again-unnaturally.html>.

See PG's take on "Are You Ready For The Next eBook Boom?" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/are-you-ready-for-the-next-ebook-boom/>.

Then I recommend reading the original post on "The Digital Reader" at <https://the-digital-reader.com/2019/12/29/are-you-ready-for-the-next-ebook-boom/>. Seriously.

See also PG's learned take on "What's in one's own image (right)?" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/whats-in-ones-own-image-right/>.

Per new patron Patrick Dorn, "I've been listening to a gold mine of FREE DWS playlists featuring "retired" workshops and videos on YouTube. Check them out at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBbq7XUUmCCU-IKTBeN793g/feed>. A truly remarkable source of learning.

See “26 Publishers Seeking Young Adult Submissions (No Agent Required)” at <https://www.authorspublish.com/26-publishers-seeking-young-adult-submissions-no-agent-required/>.

See “Final Chapter?” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/final-chapter/>.

To check out a Patrick Dorn’s work, see “Father Declan O’Shea Supernatural Mysteries” at https://www.patrickdorn.com/?page_id=2513.

Then see Patrick’s “Weird Western Stories” at https://www.patrickdorn.com/?page_id=2579.

See “The Key to Marketing” at <https://harveystanbrough.com/pro-writers/the-key-to-marketing/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 1440
Nonfiction words today..... 870 (Journal)

Writing of *Algae Prime* (SF novel?)

Day 1..... 2421 words. Total words to date..... 2421
Day 2..... 3312 words. Total words to date..... 5733
Day 3..... 2205 words. Total words to date..... 7938
Day 4..... 0578 words. Total words to date..... 8508
Day 5..... 1440 words. Total words to date..... 9948

Total fiction words for the month..... 61469
Total fiction words for the year..... 61469
Total nonfiction words for the month... 27510
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 27510
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 88979

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 2
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 46
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 199
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [KillZone Blog](#), [Patrick Dorn](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Digital Reader](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: No Seriously, Nobody Cares

[January 29, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Topic:
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Nobody cares.” Dean Wesley Smith

Topic: No, Seriously, Nobody Cares

This morning, Kris Rusch wrote a kind of rambling Business Musings post titled, “Nobody Cares.” When it goes public in a few days, I’ll link to it in “Of Interest” so you can see it for yourself. I suspect it was rambling because she was tired from just having finished teaching a live workshop in Vegas.

(I wanted badly to tell her she could have waited a few more days, literally that “nobody cares,” but I thought she might see that as facetious so I didn’t.)

In her post, she mentioned that she thought Dean had used the phrase, but she didn’t look back far enough and wound up equating her “nobody cares” with Dean saying “I don’t care what others think of my work.”

By which he means he doesn’t allow others’ comments, reviews, etc. to influence how he writes or what he writes. “I don’t care” is a healthy and incredibly freeing attitude, and one all writers would be better off to develop.

But so is “nobody cares.”

When Dean wrote “nobody cares” awhile back, he was talking about submitting manuscripts to traditional magazine markets and/or failing to succeed when you miss your daily or other goals.

In the first case, he was alluding to the fact that editors at tradpub magazine markets don’t remember writers whose work they reject. Being rejected there doesn’t blackball you. If you just keep writing per Heinlein’s Rules, as Heinlein himself wrote, “Somebody somewhere will like your work enough to buy it” (paraphrased).

The second case is even more important though. Re missing your goals, “nobody cares” means if/when you do miss a goal,

1. the goal resets to 0 anyway, and 2
2. the world won’t end.

In other words, nobody's going to come to your house and beat you up or shoot you just because you missed your daily word-count goal. Nothing bad will happen just because you wrote "only" 46 short stories or "only" 9 novels in a year when you were aiming for a story a week or a novel every month.

And that's REALLY freeing.

Yesterday a man and writer whom I consider a friend emailed me. The gist of his email was that he writes into the dark BUT he finds it all but impossible to publish something he feels he can improve.

Another writer, in a very similar vein, in a comment on another blog, wrote "WITD only goes so far. At some point, you have to know what's right and follow that path." Can you hear the fear?

But she was right, and I said so in my response: "Yes, [WITD] goes 'only so far' for you, apparently, and for others. For me, 'what's right' is always up to the characters." After all (again), it's the story that they, not I, are living.

Another commenter on that same post wrote that if you trust your characters to tell their own story, "That assumes your characters know how to structure a story. Many of them don't and require some guidance."

I responded with this: "Nope. It assumes only that I [the writer] have studied and learned story structure and am able to trust that what I need has seeped into my subconscious creative mind. My characters aren't writing a story. They're living it, and borrowing my fingers to convey it."

But I do understand the concern of folks who can't bring themselves to write off into the dark at all or can do so only up to a point. After all, EVERYBODY wants to put out the best possible story every time they write. (No, plotters and outliners and rewriters, you really don't hold the moral high ground on wanting to put out quality stories. (grin))

I am a case in point. I don't write sloppy. I'm just determined to write the best story I can the first time through and have fun instead of laboring over it for months.

So I write about a thousand words, then take a break. (grin)

When I come back to the computer, I read over what I wrote (FOR PLEASURE, IN THE CREATIVE SUBCONSCIOUS) and allow myself to touch it.

I'm what Stephen King calls a putter-inner, so as I read, I add sensory details that I missed when I was WITD, but always through the POV characters' physical senses and with the POV characters' opinions added. I might add a line of dialogue, or insert a missing word, or correct a typo. But again, never from the critical mind. If something pops out at me while I'm reading, I fix it. If it doesn't, I don't.

Again, I do all of that in the creative subconscious. That's why it's important to read for pleasure instead of critically. And reading for pleasure while allowing myself to touch the manuscript is called "cycling."

That process takes no more than a few minutes (how long does it take you to read 1000 words?) and when I reach the blank page again I'm back in the flow of the story. Then I just write the next sentence.

And according to my readers, it works.

1. My readers get my original, unique voice instead of the slashed, gashed, watered-down "sameness" that would result from rewriting.
2. When I write "the end," take a break, then cycle through the last 1000 words or so, the book is done, and it's done in one clean draft.

I've said it before, but I'll say it again: If I knew going-in that I would have to write a story and then go back through the whole story again to read it critically and nitpick and rewrite the whole thing, I wouldn't be a writer. At all. Life's too short to steep myself in that much misery.

Why? Because Perfection.

Not to argue with Dean and Kris et al, but perfection really DOES exist. But each person has their own idea of what's perfect. I attain what I think is perfect by WITD (letting the characters tell the story that they, not I, are living) and by cycling to make the story the best I can at my current skill level. When I'm through, the story is perfect (enjoyable, entertaining) to me.

BUT — and this is a huge "but" — what I think is perfect, another writer or reader will think is just so-so and another will think needs improvement and another will think is horrible. And that's all up to them. It's really none of my business what they think.

Which is exactly why I write "one clean and done" and then publish. I don't hover over one work because I trust.

I trust that what I've learned about writing and storytelling over the past 67 years has seeped into my creative subconscious and that I will learn even more between stories.

I trust that my neighbors, friends, offspring, siblings, and characters can live their own lives better than I can.

And I trust that readers really do want to read my unique, original authorial voice instead of something smoothed-out and "perfected" into a bland sameness by rewriting.

Now, all of that being said, please take it or leave it as you want. What I choose to share or teach is up to me, but what you choose to believe or try is strictly up to you.

Besides, seriously, nobody cares. (grin)

Oops. I thought I was finished, but here's one big caveat to what I wrote above: I DO occasionally have false starts.

If I write an opening, or even if I've gotten some distance into a story and suddenly find myself yawning because the opening or the story bores me, I cut my losses and toss it out. Most often at that point, I write something completely new.

If the original story idea still intrigues me, I might recast it, meaning I start with a blank screen and write an opening again based on the same idea. If it takes off, I run with it. If it bores me again, I toss it again.

So "internal boredom" is the one line I won't cross.

I imagine, in light of what I wrote earlier, some of you are thinking, "But what about all the readers out there who *might* like what you tossed out?"

My response is this: "Screw 'em. I'm writing to entertain myself first. So if what I'm writing bores me, it will never see the light of day." (grin) That's different than failing to publish something because I don't think it's "good." That's a judgement call, and remember, writers are the worst judges of their own work. Thinking something is good or bad isn't the same as being flat bored with it.

Today—one pig was back today, but when I tried to drive him home, I learned something new. I ran about 20 yards trying to cut off the pig, and both my legs went to rubber. I guess my ticker doesn't like me running anymore. Sigh. How far I've fallen.

So I decided to let ol' Mr. Pig stay right where he was. If the owners want him they can come get him. I suspect he ran off anyway because he knew he was destined for a pit in the ground, so I don't really blame him.

And if the owners don't care enough to come round him up, well, that's their decision and their loss.

Making fairly good progress on the novel today. This thing is VERY psychological, very deep in the protagonist's head. It isn't your typical shoot-'em-up high-action SF yet. So I started wondering how many readers will like it. (Critical voice trying to sneak in.)

But I'm having an absolute blast writing it, and that's what matters first and foremost. (grin) So I guess we'll find out who else likes it when I publish it. And I'm ahead of the curve on this one with days in the bank. This is officially my February novel.

I got enough done today to feel good, though I didn't make my daily goal. And I'm mindful I have another short story due in a few days. The double goal is kind of neat, in that it keeps me on edge about my writing. Not worried about it, but mindful of it.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “New Videos Up” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/new-videos-up/>.

See “Our Michael Moment” at <https://stevenpressfield.com/2020/01/our-michael-moment/>.

See “Writing Wretched Dialogue” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/writing-wretched-dialogue/>.

See “What Authors Can Learn from the Greatest Long Takes in Movie History” at <https://crimereads.com/what-authors-can-learn-from-the-greatest-long-takes-in-movie-history/>.

See “Women Writers Are Bringing New Mystery to the Old West” at <https://crimereads.com/women-writers-westerns/>. Maybe westerns are coming back?

See “New Arc Books is Open for Submissions!” at <https://www.leelofland.com/new-arc-books-is-open-for-submissions/>.

See “Jane’s Guide to Getting the Most Out of a Writers Conference” at <https://www.janefriedman.com/guide-to-writers-conferences/>.

See “The World War II Bomb Down the Street” at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/ww2-bombs-berlin>. Possibly a story idea for you.

For more possible story ideas, see “Opulent Mansion” at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/vaile-mansion> and “Secret Morse Code” at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/capitol-records-building-morse-code>.

See “Book Piracy sponsored by Linked In” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/book-piracy/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 2243
Nonfiction words today..... 1850 (Journal)

Writing of *Algae Prime* (SF novel?)

Day 1..... 2421 words. Total words to date..... 2421
Day 2..... 3312 words. Total words to date..... 5733
Day 3..... 2205 words. Total words to date..... 7938
Day 4..... 0578 words. Total words to date..... 8508
Day 5..... 1440 words. Total words to date..... 9948
Day 6..... 2243 words. Total words to date..... 12191

| | |
|---|-------|
| Total fiction words for the month..... | 63712 |
| Total fiction words for the year..... | 63712 |
| Total nonfiction words for the month... | 29360 |
| Total nonfiction words for the year..... | 29360 |
| Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... | 93072 |
| | |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... | 2 |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... | X |
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... | 2 |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 47 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 199 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Atlas Obscura](#), [CrimeReads](#), [Dave Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [Kristine Kathryn Rusch](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Steven Pressfield](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Free Stuff

[January 30, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Topic: Free Stuff
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Topic: Free Stuff

Because I expect my production to really soar this year, from time to time I'll be giving away a free novel or novella. I know not everyone reads this drivel every day, so I'll try to remember to keep the giveaway in place for a week.

When I give away anything, I'll also try to remember to offer an advance glimpse at it with a description so you can gauge your interest.

You can still get my latest, *The Cazadores Lounge and Lonely Place*, for the next four or five days. You can read the description at <https://stonethreadpublishing.com/cazadores/>.

All you'll need to do to claim a novel is email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com and let me know which eformat you would like: Kindle (.mobi), Nook/Apple (.epub) or PDF (computer and some devices).

Reviews are never required, but are welcomed and appreciated. Please leave those at whatever venue you usually use to buy ebooks.

Of course, if you enjoy my work, the easiest and best way to be sure you'll get every novel as it's finished is to sign up as a patron. To see the various levels, visit <https://harveystanbrough.com/be-a-patron/>.

You can also apply to be a first reader. Again, with my production soaring, I'll be needing more first readers so I can lighten the load a bit on my current first readers. (grin)

My first readers always get credit in novels in which they participate. And they all receive the latest release even if they didn't participate in that particular novel.

In case you're wondering, all I ask of my first readers is that they

1. read for pleasure (not critically),
2. point out any places in the manuscript where wrong words, typos or inconsistencies pop out at them as they read,
3. point out any places where they are jerked out of the story by any of the above or for any other reason, and
4. whether they enjoyed the story overall.

If you'd rather buy my work outright (bless you), I suggest you peruse StoneThread Publishing. If you order any of my work through there, you can see larger covers, read full descriptions and get a discount. There's even a larger discount for gift orders. We offer the discounts because they save our readers money and we get a larger slice of the royalty pie. A win-win. (grin)

Today I'm feeling a little under the weather, so I'm going to go ahead and post this early. I gave the novel some time, but didn't write enough to talk about. I might do a little more later today, and I might take off most of tomorrow too. We'll see.

Write when you can, folks. You never know when the day will come that you can't for one reason or another.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Writing Multiple Viewpoints" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/writing-multiple-viewpoints/>.

See "Fun New Kickstarter!" at <https://www.deanwesleymith.com/fun-new-kickstarter/>.

See "Over the River ..." at <https://www.leelofland.com/the-base-over-the-river-and-through-the-woods-to-a-terrorists-house-we-go/>. Possible story ideas.

See “The Myth of the Lonely Writer” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/the-myth-of-the-lonely-writer>.

See “2020 Publishing Vision Forward” at <https://www.thebookdesigner.com/2020/01/2020-publishing-vision-forward/>. Read this with a HUGE grain of salt. Put a little effort into it and publishing will cost only your time, very little money.

See “Business Musings: Nobody Cares” at <https://kriswrites.com/2020/01/29/business-musings-nobody-cares/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 550 (Journal)

Writing of Algae Prime (SF novel?)

Day 1..... 2421 words. Total words to date..... 2421
Day 2..... 3312 words. Total words to date..... 5733
Day 3..... 2205 words. Total words to date..... 7938
Day 4..... 0578 words. Total words to date..... 8508
Day 5..... 1440 words. Total words to date..... 9948
Day 6..... 2243 words. Total words to date..... 12191

Total fiction words for the month..... 63712
Total fiction words for the year..... 63712
Total nonfiction words for the month... 29910
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 29910
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 93622

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 2
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 47
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 199
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dave Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Kristine Kathryn Rusch](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Book Designer](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: All About Challenges

[January 31, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * All About Challenges
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

In the first "Of Interest" link today, DWS talks about and clarifies his Great Challenges (Publishing, Novel Writing, and Short Story Writing).

If you want to jump-start your writing, I can't recommend them strongly enough. In fact, if I had the funds, I'd jump into all three, and at least two (Publishing and either of the others). But with my current level of production, I'd also feel like I was cheating.

After all, to satisfy the requirements of the Publishing challenge, you have to publish only 12 major works (novels, novellas or collections or any combination of those) in a year, one each month. For the Novel challenge, you have to write only one 30,000-word novel every two months. And for the Short Story challenge, you have to write a short story every week.

So instead of jumping in, I'm following along on the sidelines. Aside from the initial investment (not really a "cost" because it's a win-win), I'm on the sidelines for three reasons:

1. I've taken most of the lectures and workshops that I want to take, so with my age and health, the lifetime subscription carrot holds no real value for me.
2. I want to achieve my goals (at least 12 novels and at least 52 short stories this year) without chasing a dangling carrot, simply for the joy and satisfaction of having achieved my goals.
3. I'm confident enough in my work (thanks to Dean) that I don't need "a place to report." In other words, I want to do it all on my own, sans external encouragement even from my mentor.

The only reason I occasionally DO consider jumping in (anyone can do so at any time) is this: Dean reads your stories and novels, and if he likes your writing (if it's to his taste) it might open up other markets (being invited to write for his anthologies). *Note that this is my supposition based on long observation, not something that Dean has ever announced to my knowledge.*

We all need more markets, so that's the only reason that holds any temptation for me at all.

If you're younger than I and/or in better health, jumping into any of these challenges, or into any two or all three, would be a great way to get going. I think I'm safe in saying you absolutely won't regret it.

Today I wrote this Journal entry, a lengthy email to Nate Hoffelder (The Digital Reader) requesting assistance, and a patron-only topic via email for my patrons titled "Think Like a Writer." I'll cross-post that one to PWW one of these Saturdays.

I wrote a little on the novel this morning, but how much I get done in that regard will depend on my mood over the next couple of hours. I'll report numbers below.

Unfortunately, my wife and I have a funeral to attend later this morning for a dear friend struck down in her early 50s by breast cancer.

And I read this morning that racecar driver John Andretti also died, also in his early 50s, after a battle with colon cancer. I wish our scientists would find a way to cure all cancers at least until people had led long, full lives. Now there's a really worthwhile challenge.

Anyway, talk with you again soon.

PS: I'll write my short story for this week either later today or tomorrow (whereupon it will count on next month's word totals.) Either way, I'll report on that tomorrow.

Of Interest

See "Challenge Question" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/challenge-question/>.

See "Want More People to Support Your Book? Don't Make These 2 Mistakes." at <https://www.janefriedman.com/want-more-people-to-support-your-book-dont-make-these-2-mistakes/>.

See "Rod McKuen – GBNF" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/rod-mckuen-gbnf/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 1832
Nonfiction words today..... 1350 (770, Patron-only topic) (580, Journal)

Writing of *Algae Prime* (SF novel?)

Day 1..... 2421 words. Total words to date..... 2421
Day 2..... 3312 words. Total words to date..... 5733
Day 3..... 2205 words. Total words to date..... 7938
Day 4..... 0578 words. Total words to date..... 8516
Day 5..... 1440 words. Total words to date..... 9956
Day 6..... 2243 words. Total words to date..... 12199
Day 7..... 1832 words. Total words to date..... 14031

Total fiction words for the month..... 65544
Total fiction words for the year..... 65544
Total nonfiction words for the month... 31260
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 3160
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 96803

| | |
|---|-----|
| Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... | 2 |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... | X |
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... | 2 |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 47 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 199 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Digital Reader](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: An Exciting Time and Short Story Done

[February 1, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * An exciting time
- * Topic:
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

The next few weeks will be an exciting time for me.

To start it off, I have to write a short story today to meet this week's goal. (grin) Yep, I put it off again. I think I did that (subconsciously) because it makes meeting my goal more of a challenge. No idea at the moment what I'll write about.

And as I mentioned here recently, I suspect toward the end of February or early March, the current weekly blog post at my author site ([HarveyStanbrough.com](#)) will transition to a less-frequently posted blog (newsletter) for readers.

To that end, I'll look for a "banner" plugin to put up over there. The banner will request new subscribers in exchange for a free ebook or ebooks.

I'm also planning to compile an omnibus collection that will include the first novel in each of my series, or at least one book in each genre in which I write. That's probably what I will offer new subscribers.

And of course I'll need to write a few new blog posts for over there and decide the frequency for posting. I'm thinking twice each month: once to address my characters or storylines (without giving away too much) and once to announce new releases.

Through all of this, the Journal will remain a site for writers. But I'll add a banner here too to attract new subscribers, and I'll offer a free nonfiction book (or books) on writing. When that happens, any current subscribers who also want the book can email me for a free copy.

So as you can see, I have my fun cut out for me for the next few weeks. Stay tuned!

I wrote a short story, and the epigraph for it comes from one of my novels, [Confessions of a Professional Psychopath](#), which I wrote way back in early 2015. Kind'a tickled me to write a short story about the younger brother of old Charles Claymore "Charlie" Task. (grin)

I'll spend the rest of the day with my wife as we absorb the loss of our friend and yesterday's funeral. That and possibly working on the stuff outlined in the first few paragraphs above.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Fun Kickstarter Workshops" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/fun-kickstarter-workshops/>.

See "The Inspiration of Boredom" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/01/the-inspiration-of-boredom.html>.

See PG's take on "This Startup Wants to Help Indie Booksellers Take on Amazon" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/this-startup-wants-to-help-indie-booksellers-take-on-amazon/>.

See "Interview on The Prolific Writer Podcast" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/interview-on-the-prolific-writer-podcast/>.

See "Guest Post: Ten and a Half Commandments of Writing" at <https://the-digital-reader.com/2020/01/27/guest-post-ten-and-a-half-commandments-of-writing/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 2706
Nonfiction words today..... 430 (Journal)

Writing of "Shriveled Fruit" (short story)

Day 1..... 2706 words. Total words to date..... 2706 (done)

Writing of Algae Prime (SF novel?)

Day 1..... 2421 words. Total words to date..... 2421
Day 2..... 3312 words. Total words to date..... 5733
Day 3..... 2205 words. Total words to date..... 7938

Day 4..... 0578 words. Total words to date..... 8516
Day 5..... 1440 words. Total words to date..... 9956
Day 6..... 2243 words. Total words to date..... 12199
Day 7..... 1832 words. Total words to date..... 14031

Total fiction words for the month..... 2706
Total fiction words for the year..... 68250
Total nonfiction words for the month... 430
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 31690
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 99940

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 47
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 199
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Digital Reader](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: It's Easier to Fool People...

[February 2, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the day
- * What's Coming
- * I was completely underwhelmed
- * I got a review
- * I'm on the verge
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“It's easier to fool people than to convince them that they have been fooled.” Mark Twain

Yesterday I wrote a blog post for HarveyStanbrough.com for 18 February, then moved another one to 25 February. And my current thinking is, that will be that.

Beginning in March, the blog over there will effectively become my author newsletter. I plan to alternate posts every few weeks. One post will have to do with my characters and/or series and/or settings or worlds, and the next (at my current rate of production), will announce a new release or releases.

And occasionally I'll give away a novel or novella or short story collection. (grin)

So if you enjoy my work or think you might, and if you aren't already a subscriber over at HarveyStanbrough.com, you might want to head over there and sign up. It's free. After all, what better way to verify that I practice what I preach than to read some of my fiction? (grin)

In the meantime, if you've learned anything from me in this Journal, please tell your writer friends about it. Frankly, I'm expecting a flurry of unsubscribes from my new author blog, and I'm hoping for some new subscribers (writers) at this one.

So if you've been subscribing to both my blogs for awhile, bless you. You're about to get a whole lot more information as both a writer and a reader. It's gonna be GOOD, folks. (grin)

Wow. I was completely underwhelmed at the trickle of comments on my PWW post yesterday. One friend reported via email that he tried to post a comment but it didn't "take." Then I posted a comment as a test (that one worked fine) and deleted it. Then Duke posted a comment and I responded. (Thanks for not leaving me hanging, Duke.)

I got a review on [The Cazadores Lounge and Lonely Place](#) via email, and it was all good: "Wonderful story, well written, great character development." Gracias, though I'm sure the reviewer doesn't read this blog.

In case you missed it, I'm giving away that novel right now in Kindle, Nook/Apple and PDF format. So one last chance—if you'd like to read *he* Cazadores Lounge and Lonely Place, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com and let me know which eformat you'd like to read. I'll send it right out.

I'm on the verge of setting aside my current WIP and starting a new novel. I think somewhere along the line I started *thinking* about it (critical voice), so we'll see. When I get back to it tomorrow, that will tell the tale. Right now it's heavy on the psychological aspects, and for some reason that's bugging me.

Today is Super Bowl Sunday (duh). I haven't watched a super bowl or even a professional football game for several years, ever since many of those grown men (and multi-millionaires) playing a child's game took it upon themselves to bite the hand that feeds them.

But this year I'm making an exception and watching the game. However, I don't have a particular dog in the hunt, so if it's important to you, I hope your team wins.

Like on a typical Thanksgiving Day, there will be good food (well, good for the soul anyway), entertainment, and a lot of sitting around doing nothing. I'm looking forward to it.

Tomorrow I'll be back to work and play. I hope you have an enjoyable day too.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Playing with Branding" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/playing-with-branding/>.

Via The Book Designer, see "Is Gumroad a Good Option for Indie Authors?" at <https://howtoblogabook.com/gumroad-good-option-indie-authors/>.

See "The Curse of Expository Dialogue" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/02/the-curse-of-expository-dialogue.html>.

See "Don't wait" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/dont-wait>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 620 (Journal)

Writing of Algae Prime (SF novel?)

Day 1..... 2421 words. Total words to date..... 2421
Day 2..... 3312 words. Total words to date..... 5733
Day 3..... 2205 words. Total words to date..... 7938
Day 4..... 0578 words. Total words to date..... 8516
Day 5..... 1440 words. Total words to date..... 9956
Day 6..... 2243 words. Total words to date..... 12199
Day 7..... 1832 words. Total words to date..... 14031

Total fiction words for the month..... 2706
Total fiction words for the year..... 68250
Total nonfiction words for the month... 1050
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 32310
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 100560

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 47
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 199
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Gumroad](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Book Designer](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: The Good and Bad of Critique

[February 3, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the day
- * Today's "Of Interest"
- * Today and tomorrow
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Most of the items in today's "Of Interest" are all about selling ebooks. Don't miss those. There's a ton of good information at those links.

The last item in "Of Interest" illustrates why inviting critique on your work can be a bad idea. In fact, it can be detrimental to your work. The simple fact is, some critiquers go too far, and how screwed-up your work can become depends on how much you trust your critiquer.

I recommend you read the linked post and my comment that follows it. Then make up your own mind.

I almost wrote a topic on critiques and critique groups today, but I'm not in a good mood so I'll only say this:

***If you DO use critique groups or critique partners, Question Everything.
If you don't like confrontation, then question it silently, but question it.***

Don't take any advice on your writing at face value. And maybe most importantly, Don't Allow Others to change the intent of your words/sentences/paragraphs/story. Only you can convey the picture that's in your head. Only you.

Today I'm dealing with a physically distant family issue and that's taking up most of my brain power.

My WIP is stalled. Tomorrow I'll open it and back up a bit to see whether the character will tell me why it's stalled, maybe where the story veered off in a wrong direction.

Or I might just read back a bit, then write the next sentence and see where that leads. If neither of those work, I'll tank the story and either recast it or start something new. Either way, I won't devote a lot of time to messing with something that isn't working.

We'll see how it all turns out. Right now I want to get this out to you for the "Of Interest" stuff below.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Deliver Your Ebook Sales" at <https://authors.bookfunnel.com/help/delivery-actions/>.

See "BookFunnel Adds Buy Buttons to Landing Pages" at <https://the-digital-reader.com/2019/03/24/bookfunnel-adds-buy-buttons-to-landing-pages/>.

See "How to Sell a Book from Your Author Website" at <https://www.authorwebsiteinabox.com/2019/08/10/how-to-sell-a-book-from-your-author-website/>.

See "Email Marketing Integrations for Authors" at <https://www.mailerlite.com/integrations/authors>.

See "What to Consider When Selling eBooks on Your Website: Pros, Cons and Tools" at <https://www.authorimprints.com/selling-ebooks-website-pros-cons-tools/>.

See "Is That Me in Your Novel? When Life Imitates Fiction, and Vice-Versa" at <https://annerallen.com/2020/02/life-imitates-fiction/>.

See "Writing tip 13b: Trust Blind Luck" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/writing-tip-13b-trust-blind-luck/>.

See "First Page Critique – The Wildfire Pathogen" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/02/first-page-critique-the-wildfire-pathogen.html>. Jordan Dane writes some helpful stuff, but then messes up (in my opinion). I even left a comment for the benefit of Anonymous Writer to maybe help alleviate what Jordan wrote.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 450 (Journal)

Writing of Algae Prime (SF novel?)

Day 1..... 2421 words. Total words to date..... 2421
Day 2..... 3312 words. Total words to date..... 5733
Day 3..... 2205 words. Total words to date..... 7938
Day 4..... 0578 words. Total words to date..... 8516
Day 5..... 1440 words. Total words to date..... 9956

Day 6..... 2243 words. Total words to date..... 12199
Day 7..... 1832 words. Total words to date..... 14031

Total fiction words for the month..... 2706
Total fiction words for the year..... 68250
Total nonfiction words for the month... 1500
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 32760
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 101010

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 47
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 199
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Anne R. Allen](#), [Book Funnel](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Mailer Lite](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Digital Reader](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: On Process

[February 4, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the day
- * On Process
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

Via the Passive Voice, "A classic is a book that has never finished saying what it has to say."
Italo Calvino

"Wayne Gretzky said, 'You miss 100% of the shots you don't take.' The core of any unusual profession ... is embodied in that quote: You can't succeed if you don't try." Kristine Kathryn Rusch

On Process

Yesterday I mentioned I thought the WIP was stalled. I opened it this morning, looked it over, and realized it no longer matters to me. For me, that's a definitive sign: it's stalled. Not a big deal. Just blah.

I thought about reading the whole thing over from the start, hoping that might jar something loose and the story might take off in a new direction. But I cycled through the whole thing only a few days ago. If it was going to unstick itself, it probably would have done so then.

As I wrote yesterday, I won't devote a lot of time to messing with something that isn't working. That's the good pressure (vs. overwhelming bad pressure) of having goals. I might finish this one someday, but not in my current set of goals. For now, it's just in the way.

So this morning I set Algae Prime aside. If it appeals to me in the future, I'll finish it then. If it doesn't, I won't.

The only saving grace at this point is that the title (or something close to it, something it's hinting at that I haven't quite gotten) still intrigues me.

So I'll think of what I've accomplished up to this point, I'll count my blessings that this sort of thing happens to me only very rarely, and I'll start something new.

Today I started and all but finished a new short story, tentatively titled "Chattering Pig." But if I left that title in place, only military infantry guys would understand it. Tomorrow I'll finish it (and come up with a real title), then begin another story.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Open content: 150,000 works from the museum collections of the city of paris, freely available" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/open-content-150000-works-from-the-museum-collections-of-the-city-of-paris-freely-available/>. Need cover art? But be sure to read the entire post carefully.

See "Don't Listen to the Naysayers (and Don't Be One)" at <https://harveystanbrough.com/pro-writers/dont-listen-to-the-naysayers-and-dont-be-one/>. Yes, this posted in the Journal earlier, but it bears repeating.

See "The Dreaded Epilogue" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/the-dreaded-epilogue/>.

See "Mary Higgins Clark: Bestselling author dies aged 92" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/mary-higgins-clark-bestselling-author-dies-aged-92/>.

See "Kickstarter Made It!" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/kickstarter-made-it/>. Especially the few paragraphs that begin with "I actually think the videos about each story...."

See “The Year of The Cat” at <https://kriswrites.com/2020/02/03/the-year-of-the-cat/>.

See “Kat Martin and Larry Martin – Marriage Between Authors” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/02/kat-martin-and-larry-martin-marriage-between-authors.html>.

This is what a partnership in writing can be.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 3404
Nonfiction words today..... 470 (Journal)

Writing of “Chattering Pig” (short story)

Day 1..... 3404 words. Total words to date..... 3404

Total fiction words for the month..... 6110
Total fiction words for the year..... 71654
Total nonfiction words for the month... 1970
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 33230
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 104884

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 47
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 199
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Harvey Stanbrough](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Kristine Kathryn Rusch](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Using the Senses

[February 5, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the day
- * DWS Announcement
- * The Prolific Writer podcast
- * In the first link below, Dave Farland
- * Today

- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Writing is not magic. It’s a combination of art and craft.” Laura Benedict

“For most of Earth’s history, Venus may have been the nearest habitable planet and possibly even home to a thriving biosphere. ... They may even have very occasionally exchanged life....”
David Grinspoon in an article for Nautilus

In the February 5 post on his website, Dean Wesley Smith announced, “[I]f you are thinking about the mentor program with me, when this Kickstarter is over, that’s the end of them. I won’t offer them again. ... Questions, feel free to write me.” Just wanted to let you know. If you’re on the fence about taking a mentorship with him, I suggest emailing him.

I visited The Prolific Writer website this morning and was dismayed to see that the main page hasn’t been updated.

That’s all well and good. I understand the owner, Ryan J. Pelton, has decided to move on once his current stock of interviews is depleted. But I thought he would add the new interviews to his main page as a nod to those he interviews. Apparently I was wrong.

My interview was Episode 113. The last episode showcased on the main site was Episode 111 from October 11. So my interview is available only to those I told about it, most of whom don’t need it because they hear from me enough already. (grin)

Still, I only consented to do the interview in the first place because I thought it might serve to help me find a broader audience. Which it won’t and can’t because it’s buried in the site. That being said, I have friends in the same boat, so I want to help get the word out at least a little.

When I went to the original link to my episode to see whether it was still there (it was), I also clicked “Episodes > All Episodes” in the upper right hand corner and came across Episode 115, in which my friend Phillip McCollum was interviewed. I encourage you to give it a listen. It’s the third link in “Of Interest” below.

In the first link below, Dave Farland talks about several “senses.” He talks about the same five physical senses good writers use in every major scene: how a setting looks, feels, tastes, smells and sounds filtered through the POV character’s five physical senses. I enjoyed Dave’s take on the other “senses” too, which I’ve always recommended injecting via the POV character’s OPINION of the setting.

Filter the setting through the POV character’s physical senses AND provide his or her opinion and you’ll pull your reader deep into the story.

I rolled out late this morning but finished the short story by 7:30, then headed to the house for a break. I was pretty sure this short story wouldn't turn into a novel, and it didn't. It wrapped in just over 4000 words. Oh well. On to the next story.

The break turned into a trip to the grocery for necessities. I might or might not write anymore today.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Appealing to the Senses" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/appealing-to-the-senses-2/>.

See "That's All, she wrote" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/02/thats-all-she-wrote.html>.

See "Phillip McCollum on 52 Stories in 52 Weeks" (podcast) at <http://theprolificwriter.libsyn.com/tpw-115-phillip-mccollum-on-52-stories-in-52-weeks>. The interview begins at about 6:02. (Thanks for the nod, Phillip.)

See "What is an Epilogue — and How To Write One Readers Won't Forget" at <https://blog.reedsy.com/what-is-an-epilogue/>.

See "What He Said" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/what-he-said/>.

See "The Romantic Venus We Never Knew" at <https://getpocket.com/explore/item/the-romantic-venus-we-never-knew>. (Maybe a story or stories idea for a long-past solar system?)

See "21 Phrases You Use Without Realizing You're Quoting Shakespeare" at <https://getpocket.com/explore/item/21-phrases-you-use-without-realizing-you-re-quoting-shakespeare>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 803
Nonfiction words today..... 620 (Journal)

Writing of "No Attention At All" (short story)

Day 1..... 3404 words. Total words to date..... 3404
Day 2..... 0803 words. Total words to date..... 4207 (done)

Total fiction words for the month..... 6913
Total fiction words for the year..... 72457
Total nonfiction words for the month... 2590
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 33850
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 106307

| | |
|---|-----|
| Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... | 2 |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... | X |
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... | 4 |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 47 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 200 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Reedsy](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Just a Reminder

[February 6, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Just a reminder to my patrons
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Just a reminder to my patrons, please don't forget to let me know what you'd like from your reward tier. You can see the tiers by clicking <https://harveystanbrough.com/be-a-patron/>.

To read descriptions of novels, novellas, nonfiction books and short story collections (and make your selections), visit StoneThread Publishing at <https://stonethreadpublishing.com/>.

Today is a day of book shifting, business planning, reading, studying and a trip to Sierra Vista. No fiction writing. (But I have a sneaking suspicion Algae Prime might be coming back.)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Business Musings: Optimism And The Writer" at <https://kriswrites.com/2020/02/05/business-musings-optimism-and-the-writer/>.

See "Canva Versus Book Brush" at <https://www.thebookdesigner.com/2020/02/canva-versus-book-brush/>.

See "Once Upon a Time in My Office" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/once-upon-a-time-in-my-office>.

See “Even in Death, Charles Dickens ...” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/even-in-death-charles-dickens-left-behind-a-riveting-tale-of-deceit/>.

See “My Brother Moochie and Me” at <https://crimereads.com/my-brother-moochie-and-me/>.

See “Code Girls: The Women Cryptographers of WWII” at <https://getpocket.com/explore/item/code-girls-the-untold-story-of-the-women-cryptographers-who-fought-wwii-at-the-intersection-of>. Possible story ideas.

See “Can You Hear Me Now? Let’s Take a Look at Audio Books” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/02/can-you-hear-me-now-lets-take-a-look-at-audio-books.html>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 160 (Journal)

Writing of (who knows?)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 6913
Total fiction words for the year..... 72457
Total nonfiction words for the month... 2750
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 34010
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 106467

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 47
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 200
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [CrimeReads](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Kristine Kathryn Rusch](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Book Designer](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: The Value of Challenges (and the Attendant Deadlines)

[February 7, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day: A Masters Course
- * Topic: The Value of Challenges (and the Attendant Deadlines)
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day: A Masters Course

These quotes are gleaned from Dean Wesley Smith's interview (in "Of Interest" below) with 6 Figure Authors.

"At a certain level in this business, you quit listening to other people about your work. You become an artist. I wish writers would get to that spot sooner rather than later. You keep learning..., but don't let other people mess with it." Dean Wesley Smith

"I'm always facing forward. I'm always doing the next thing." Dean Wesley Smith

Questioner: "[If you're writing into the dark] how do you avoid running into a dead end?"

"Oh, you run into them all the time. Just get into your character's head. How would your character solve it? It truly is that simple. ... When you think you've written yourself into a horrid corner, write the next sentence. Don't try to figure it out, don't try to go out ahead. That's your critical voice trying to figure it out. The critical voice is what's got you stopped. Your creative voice knows where it's going. Just write the next sentence. It's such a piece of simple advice, and it works every time."

There's a great deal more in the interview. I suggest you listen closely and take notes. (Writing it down will help it sink in.)

Topic: The Value of Challenges (and the Attendant Deadlines)

Challenges...

1. Drive you to the computer when you might not otherwise go.
2. Provide you with a sense of accomplishment.
3. Necessarily include set, hard deadlines. By "hard deadlines," I mean deadlines that cannot be put off without consequences.

The consequences of deadlines were bigger in the old days of traditional publishing. If you didn't meet your deadline, you didn't get paid, period.

In this new world of indie publishing, deadlines are just as important, but the consequences aren't so concrete. After all, what will happen if you miss a deadline? Nothing. You simply pick back up tomorrow and go at it again.

Because of that, your critical mind is more active. It literally plays mind games with you. None of us are immune. So the real value (or another value) of deadlines to the indie writer and publisher is to beat back the critical voice. Every time you meet a deadline in indie publishing, you weaken the critical mind and embolden the subconscious creative mind.

If you can delay a deadline without suffering consequences, there's no reason to set one in the first place. That being said, the deadlines you set in conjunction with your personal challenges are all hard deadlines. If you don't reach them, you suffer (or should suffer) a sense of failure.

Then you get up, dust yourself off, and climb back on your challenge.

That impending sense of failure is what drives you to the computer, drives you to strive to reach your deadlines, and powers streaks and challenges.

I'm going through a time like this right now, right out here in public for all to see.

You'll remember I have a "lofty" goal to complete a new short story before every Saturday at midnight and to complete a new novel by midnight of the last day every month. Either one, by itself, would be a piece of cake for me. But together, not so much.

I had a head start of on the February novel, with 7 writing days in the bank as of February 3. And then the novel stalled and I set it aside on February 4th.

Yesterday, I mentioned in this blog that *Algae Prime* (the novel start I set aside) was speaking to me again. That was my conscious, critical mind "sweating" my monthly goal.

It would be easier, I reasoned, to "go back" (critical mind) to *Algae Prime*, "figure it out" (critical mind) and finish it than it would be to begin a new novel and still finish it on time: by my self-imposed deadline of midnight, 29 February. After all, starting and finishing a new novel by Feb 29 would be almost impossible (critical mind).

But listening to Dean's interview this morning and thinking back about what I've already done helped me screw my head back on straight.

I can easily write at least a 30,000 word novel before the end of this month. From scratch. Most of my novels, even the longer ones, come in at around 20 writing days or less. (Only one took longer than 28 days, and that one came in at 32 days.) Including today, there are 22 potential writing days left in February.

And the thing is, I've written probably two-thirds to four-fifths of my almost 50 novels in that length of time or less.

And this isn't sloppy writing. Because I write into the dark and cycle as I go, I turn out quality work the first time through. One and done. And I've done that almost 50 times in the past almost 6 years.

So today I'll write a few openings. Chances are, one or more of them will be short story starts. But chances are, at least one will be a novel start. And when that one hits, I'll begin my 48th novel. At the moment I don't know whether it will be action-adventure, western, SF, mystery or something else entirely. But I know it will be finished on or before February 29. (grin)

With such an over-reaching set of goals, it would be easy for me to set aside February and simply tack another month onto the end of my current challenge period (Jan 2020 – June 2021).

But if I do that once, it will only make it easier to do it again down the road. And what's worse, it will make it easier to become dissuaded and set aside the challenge altogether. And I don't want to do that, period. Just look at the bragging rights I'll have if I finish the challenge(s) successfully. (grin)

So setting aside *Algae Prime* put a stumbling block in the way of achieving my goals, but it didn't stop me. And friends, that is an important distinction.

Today I wrote an opening that immediately ran to a short story, "The Drubbing of Joseph McGee." It wrapped at 12:30 with a little over 2600 words. Probably off for the rest of today. Tomorrow I'll write another opening or two.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Got a Couple Letters" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/got-a-couple-letters/>. Worth the read. He talks about fear and deadlines.

See "Reader Friday: What's Your Very First Story About?" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/02/reader-friday-whats-your-very-first-story-about.html>. Join in the conversation! And can you boil your story down to one sentence?

See "CreateSpace is DEAD. Here's what you need to know." at <https://blog.reedsy.com/createspace/>. Umm, D2D offers paperback production now too.

Listen to "Why Revising Can Be Detrimental, Pantsing Like a Pro..." at <https://6figureauthors.com/podcast-player/161/why-revising-can-be-detrimental-and-pantsing-like-a-pro.mp3>. An excellent explanation of cycling begins at about 34 minutes in. A good discussion of Heinlein's Rules begins at about 39 minutes. And there's a great deal more.

See "Free Expression vs Proscribed Expression" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/free-expression-vs-proscribed-expression/>.

Browse the podcast episodes at <https://6figureauthors.com/> to see what interests you and set up a time each day or week to listen.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 2676
Nonfiction words today..... 1200 (Journal)

Writing of “The Drubbing of Joseph McGee” (short story)

Day 1..... 2676 words. Total words to date..... 2676 (done)

Total fiction words for the month..... 9589
Total fiction words for the year..... 75133
Total nonfiction words for the month... 3950
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 35210
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 110343

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 5
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 47
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 201
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [6 Figure Authors](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Reedsy](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: On Reverse Outlines

[February 8, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Topic: On Reverse Outlines
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Topic: On Reverse Outlines

A patron wrote to ask me, in part, to explain reverse outlines in more detail.

While I’m writing a novel, occasionally I have to fact-check something that happened earlier in the novel. That might be a place name (name of a town or building, etc.) or an aspect of a character description (eye color, hair color, what they’re wearing, etc.) or a timeline item (what time they left the bar, etc.) if correct timelines are important to the story.

Using a reverse outline is easier than searching for the fact I need using Word's search tool. And it's far easier than scrolling back through the previous chapters until I find what I need.

So first, a definition —

A reverse outline is basically a brief synopsis of each major scene or chapter. It's called a "reverse" outline because you fill it out as you write the book AFTER each chapter is written.

This is in no way an outline in the traditional sense. It isn't any kind of "plan" that you force on the story. It always occurs after the fact.

I take a break after writing about 1000 words. When I come back to the novel, I cycle back through what I've written. That's usually when I fill out my reverse outline for that chapter or major scene.

Sometimes, however, when I've finished cycling I get right back into the book, and writing the story ALWAYS takes precedence. When that happens, I wait and add to the reverse outline for the past two or three chapters at the end of the day.

I don't keep a reverse outline for short stories. Shrug.

I DO keep a reverse outline for novels and for series. (The reverse outlines from individual novels in a series can be compiled to create a series bible.)

For one-off novels, I don't usually add the last few chapters to my reverse outline. Why would I? As I near the end of the novel, the reverse outline has already done its job.

For novels in series, I usually DO add even the last few chapters to the reverse outline because characters, situations, and settings might return in a future novel in that series.

Constructing the Reverse Outline

I keep my own reverse outline in a text (.txt) document in Notepad. At the top is the title followed by the word "notes." (That also becomes the title of the Notepad document. So I have my Word file titled "Novel Name.doc" and my reverse outline file titled "Novel Name notes.txt".)

Below the title, my reverse outline is composed of three parts:

First I list the character names and what they do in order of appearance (if the characters and what they do matters). I add to this list each time a new character appears in a chapter.

Second, I make a list of place names (if necessary). Place names might be towns, cities, buildings, parks or whatever. Usually these are significant settings or destinations.

Then the actual reverse outline begins. In the actual outline, I write a sentence or two about what happened in the chapter. That is generally Who did What and Where it happened (setting). If I switched to a different POV character in that chapter, I write POV SWITCH right after the chapter number. If I write two major scenes (different settings) in one chapter, I write BREAK and then a sentence or two about the second scene.

If I wrote a thorough description of the character or setting in that chapter, I add DESC (also in all caps so I can see it easily) after the character name or place (setting) name. That tells me exactly where I can go in the book later to find the description.

So if I'm writing about Character C in Chapter 17 and I need part of his description, I can look at my reverse outline and see plainly that I described him back in Chapter 3. This is a huge time saver.

Then, in a bit of overkill, at the end of the document I add a full character description for each major character as a quick reference if I think I might need it later. That almost always includes height, weight, hair length and color, eye color, any distinguishing marks (scar, shape of nose, cauliflower ear, etc.) including their clothing.

This isn't something you "have" to do. But if you've ever spent minutes scrolling back through a novel to find a character's eye color, a reverse outline can be indispensable. Just sayin'.

Here's a screenshot of part of the reverse outline I created for my latest novel, [The Cazadores Lounge and Lonely Place](#) (The ellipses indicate where I cut out chapters to create a better sample):

Cazadores notes

Clarence Briscoe

Marie LeBlanc

Eugene "Gene" Mayeaux, owner, bass player

Leon Trudeau, bartender

Larry (off camera), former bouncer, Leon's brother

1 Jimmy Slick, walking to explore southern Louisiana, steps off a bus an hour after sundown. Cazadores, decides to go in for a beer and to rest awhile. As he approaches, the door blows

2 Clarence comes through leading Marie DESC. They talk, he convinces her to talk in his red

3 In the Cazadores DESC, meets Gene Mayeaux DESC, who offers him a job as bouncer, shows him

...5 POV SWITCH Clarence and Marie in his truck, tricks her into looking at the glove compar dash, knocking her unconscious. BREAK He takes her to a barn deep in the woods. His recon of lane, Marie wakes up.

6 Clarence takes her to the barn.

7 POV SWITCH Slick checks the tables again for Marie, then goes outside to check. Later tell

...9 POV SWITCH Slick sees his room DESC. BREAK The sound of a heavy boot outside his room w him. He grins, sits up, gets ready.

...waitress #1 and 2 - Both with great figures in halter tops and very short shorts. Thick, red hair in a pixie cut.

Eugene "Gene" Mayeaux - at least 6'2" and looked like he weighed around 240. He was broad en in his hands.

The band - guitarist and lead singer was about average height at around 5'9" or 10" and aver about the same, but with a little bit of a gut. The fiddle player, after he crouched to lay and stretched his arms high over his head. He was average height too, but skinny as a rail.

NOTE: If you can't read the graphic well enough or if you'd like a full example, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

Today I'm going to file this edition of the Journal early. Later today I'll read and study, and maybe write some fiction. I'm fully aware my Feb 29 deadline looms, but I honestly believe once I start my next novel, it will fly. So no worries. (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

FWIW see “Keeping Track” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/keeping-track/>. If this will help you, go for it. Seeing the numbers grow below does this for me.

See “Faux Writing Instructors” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/faux-writing-instructors>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 900 (Journal)

Writing of

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 9589
Total fiction words for the year..... 75133
Total nonfiction words for the month... 4850
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 36110
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 111243

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 5
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 47
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 201
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Harvey Stanbrough](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: A Matter of Authenticity

[February 9, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Topic: A Matter of Authenticity
- * Wow. I was looking over my files
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Topic: A Matter of Authenticity

Hey, folks, if you're ever writing a Marine Corps character, officer or enlisted, use a 24-hour clock when you're giving the time.

For example, 3 a.m. is "0300" (not even oh-three-hundred) and 6 p.m. is 1800. Most people know that, right? It's a matter of authenticity.

And if you're writing that Marine Corps character, NEVER add "hours" to the time. So 3 a.m. is zero-three-hundred (0300), not "0300 hours."

Adding "hours" after a stated time is an Army thing. Marines don't do that.

This comes up because I joined a local detachment of the Marine Corps League a couple of months ago. The first email newsletter I received from the commander said their next meeting would be on a particular date at "1300 hours."

What? To an old retired jarhead, something smelled bad. The Marine Corps League is allegedly open to membership only to Marines, not any members of any other of the armed forces. So they should know better, right?

When I'm reading a book, I trust the author to know what s/he's talking about. Even in fiction, the writer should strive to get facts right or omit them altogether. When a writer blatantly displays his or her ignorance of any fact, it jerks me out of the story in a heartbeat.

Things like a Marine or sailor calling the deck of a ship a "floor" or a bulkhead a "wall" or a head a "bathroom" (or worse, a "latrine").

Or a shooter about to load a "clip" into a semiautomatic pistol (it's a "magazine," not a clip). Or the smell of "cordite" on the air after someone fires a modern weapon (see "[The Smell Of Cordite In The Air Of Inaccuracy](#)").

One note on the article: the author says it's all right to use "clip" for "magazine." It isn't. A clip (or "stripper clip") is a thin strip of metal used to load cartridges into a magazine for a rifle or pistol. The clip never goes into a weapon.

Of course if the reader knows as little about weaponry as the writer apparently does, that won't be a problem. But do you really want to risk running off even one reader because you didn't do your homework and wrote sloppy?

There are folks out there, detractors, who say I "must" write sloppy because I write one clean draft and am done. But I get my facts straight and my stories work. Yet I know writers who outline everything to death, run their work through critique groups, revise and rewrite all but endlessly to "turn out a good story" and then make a stupid mistake like saying the character is putting a "clip" into the butt of a "revolver." Uhh, no.

Just sayin', write with authenticity, ya'll. It takes very little time to research something to get it right.

Wow. I was looking over my files yesterday (yes, I still keep files of story starts that interested me) and came across a novel start titled “The Three-Year Turn.” This is not to be confused with a novel I wrote later (March 2017) titled “The 13-Month Turn.” Completely different animals.

I wrote the opening to The Three-Year Turn way back in September 2016, but the novel died a quick death after three writing days at just under 5700 words.

Yet when I read over it yesterday late morning, it grabbed me. My storytelling skills have improved a lot in the past 3+ years, so I’m bringing forward only the idea: a man and his wife (and others) live and work in a mining colony on a harsh, distant planet. From there, I’ll recast the story, starting with word one.

It feels good to be excited about a story again. After all, it’s been 21 whole days since I finished my last novel, and 2 days since I finished my last short story. GAWD I’m a slacker! (grin)

So I spent a few hours writing yesterday to be sure the thing was going to take off like I thought it might. And it did. You can see yesterday’s numbers in Day 1 below.

I also designed another new spreadsheet, this one just to keep track of my short stories. Since those have no beginning date and only an ending date (Saturday of each week) I need to keep current on which story is for which week so I don’t lose track and accidentally skip a week.

Today I’ll write early, then post this, then spend the balance of the day doing whatever and reading.

Funny. It isn’t quite 6:30 a.m. yet and it’s already been a good day. (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “How Do You Pick a Title?” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/02/how-do-you-pick-a-title.html>.

See “Writing Exercises” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/writing-exercises>.

See “You Don’t Need to Suck at Marketing” at <https://indiesunlimited.com/2020/02/03/you-dont-need-to-suck-at-marketing/>.

See “Scientists Say Your “Mind” Isn’t Confined to Your Brain, or Even Your Body” at <https://getpocket.com/explore/item/scientists-say-your-mind-isn-t-confined-to-your-brain-or-even-your-body>. Maybe story ideas.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 4026
Nonfiction words today..... 830 (Journal)

Writing of The Three-Year Turn (novel)

Day 1..... 3570 words. Total words to date..... 3570
Day 2..... 4026 words. Total words to date..... 7596

Total fiction words for the month..... 17185
Total fiction words for the year..... 82729
Total nonfiction words for the month... 5680
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 36940
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 119669

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 5
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 47
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 201
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Indies Unlimited](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Further Elucidation on Firearms

[February 10, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Topic: Further Elucidation on Firearms
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Think like a wise man but communicate in the language of the people.” William Butler Yeats

Topic: Further Elucidation on Firearms

In my topic yesterday on authenticity I wrote that a clip is used to feed a magazine, the cartridge-feeding mechanism used to deliver cartridges to the chamber of a semi-automatic weapon.

My intention was to explain that the device a shooter would manually insert into the underside of a semiautomatic rifle or the butt of a semiautomatic pistol (but never a revolver) was called a “magazine,” not a “clip.”

One astute reader pointed out that “Many firearms are designed to use clips, the most well known one being M1 Garand. The clip goes into the rifle and is ejected when the last bullet is fired.”

That is accurate, except that the “en bloc (‘in block’) clip” actually drops away (it is not actually “ejected”) when the last cartridge from it is fed into the internal magazine of the M1 Garand and any other rifle or carbine with an internal magazine.

The takeaway is this: No matter its method of operation, any “clip” is used to feed ammunition into a magazine, whether automatically (en bloc clip to internal magazine) or manually (stripper clip to external magazine, which the shooter then inserts into the weapon).

But in every case, the magazine injects the individual cartridge into the chamber in preparation for firing, and the magazine is the device that most shooters insert into most rifles and carbines and into all semiautomatic pistols.

So if you’re writing a period story in which a combatant in the heat of battle is hurriedly inserting an en bloc clip into his M1 Garand or Chinese (or Soviet, etc.) SKS, you would be accurate. Otherwise, “the bullet-loading thingy” isn’t a clip. It’s a magazine.

The only weapons that do not have a magazine are single-shot firearms (including, usually, .22 caliber rifles and single- and double-barrel shotguns) that must be manually loaded after every shot, and fully automatic weapons (machine guns) which are fed with a belt of ammunition.

Before you ask, yes, revolvers have a magazine too, but it’s typically called a “cylinder.” And point of interest, most revolvers also have a kind of “clip,” though it’s most often called a “speedloader” or “quick loader.”

And while we’re on the topic, a complete piece of ammunition is a “cartridge” or a “round” (not a “bullet,” which is the actual projectile that is sent downrange from the “casing” through the barrel of the weapon after the “firing pin” contacts the “primer” and ignites the “gunpowder” which, in modern weapons, does not contain “cordite.”) (grin)

Hope this clears up any questions.

Today, the novel’s still racing. So much so that I haven’t even created the chapter-by-chapter part of my reverse outline yet. And this one could easily turn into a series (a thought that just struck home this morning), so a reverse outline is even more important than usual. (grin)

I’m already through six chapters, and whereas my chapters are usually 1000 – 1200 words long, each of these are closer to 2000 words. So I have some catching up to do. Maybe today, maybe

tomorrow or the next day. Or maybe the first time I have to scroll back to find necessary information. (grin)

I wrote over 3000 words this morning before 7 a.m., then took a longer break up at the house. I'll come back to the novel a time or two through the day, depending on how the rest of the day goes.

Well, my wife is busy with business things, so after I ate breakfast and changed clothes, I got to come back to the Hovel and the WIP by 8:30. Woohoo!

Well, I got one more session. Some other things to do, so I'll leave it there for today. Going great, though.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Anthology Workshop" at <https://www.deanwesleymith.com/anthology-workshop-2/>.

See "What Indie Authors Need To Know Before Translating Books" (or more accurately, having their books translated) at <https://www.thebookdesigner.com/2020/02/what-indie-authors-need-to-know-before-translating-books/>.

See "Where Am I? — First Page Critique" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/02/where-am-i-first-page-critique.html>.

See "Paint Yourself Into A Corner" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/paint-yourself-into-a-corner/>.

If you're a poet, see "85 Poetry Manuscript Publishers..." at <https://www.authorspublish.com/86-poetry-manuscript-publishers-who-do-not-charge-reading-fees/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 4251
Nonfiction words today..... 710 (Journal)

Writing of The Three-Year Turn (novel)

Day 1..... 3570 words. Total words to date..... 3570
Day 2..... 4026 words. Total words to date..... 7596
Day 3..... 4251 words. Total words to date..... 11847

Total fiction words for the month..... 21436
Total fiction words for the year..... 86980

Total nonfiction words for the month... 6390
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 37650
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 124630

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 5
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 47
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 201
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Book Designer](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Inviting Critique

[February 11, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Topic: Inviting Critique
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Topic: Inviting Critique

As most of you know, I'm dead set against running my work through critique groups. After all, I actively battle to keep my own critical mind out of my work, so why would I then turn around and actually invite criticism from others?

That being said, in the "Of Interest" section of the Journal, I often include a link to a "first-page critique" post from one of [The Kill Zone](#) bloggers.

In an email early this morning, one of my astute patrons wondered why I include those posts. If I think inviting criticism is a bad idea, then why do I seemingly support it by posting those links?

Really, it's a great question. Here's my response:

The Kill Zone bloggers are all successful professional fiction writers. They offer a free first-page critique of writers' work. However, I still do not recommend inviting critique into your work. To see why submitting your work to them or anyone else for critique is a bad idea, see [The Good and Bad of Critique](#) at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-journal-the-good-and-bad-of-critique/>.

I do not and would never recommend submitting your work for critique by TKZ or anyone else unless the work is finished and published*.

But since others have submitted their work to TKZ for critique, and since one of the TKZ bloggers have commented on that work publicly, we can learn from those comments.

Doing so might seem a bit mercenary, but it doesn't allow a critical mind into OUR work. It's only instructive, just as if the blogger had written the post without showing the accompanying first page. When we read the first-page critique of someone else's work, we're learning by example — with no skin off our own teeth.

What I DO recommend is having at least one good first reader who will read your manuscript for pleasure (not critically, “looking” for things). That reader will point out only things that pop out at him. For example, any wrong words or places where s/he became confused or was forced out of the story (and why).

I also recommend hiring a good copyeditor unless you were dipped in the language at birth. (But NOT a “book doctor” or “developmental editor” or any of that.) A good copyeditor will never change your voice or style. For copyediting, I can only recommend myself. Learn more at <https://harveystanbrough.com/copyediting/>.

*If you DO want to invite others to critique your work, make sure the work is already finished and published. Why? Because you can apply what you learn from the critique to FUTURE works. Always go forward, never back.

If you have any other questions about this, please either leave a comment or email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

Today wasn't so great. I'm a little under the weather, so I didn't spend as much time with the novel as I'd hoped.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Licensing 101 Workshop” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/licensing-101-workshop/>,

See “How Amazon tracked my last two years of reading” (and PG's take) at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-amazon-tracked-my-last-two-years-of-reading/>.

See “Listbuilding 201” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/listbuilding-201/>.

See “Finding An Opening Line Is Like Seeing The World In a Grain of Sand” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/02/finding-an-opening-line-is-like-seeing-the-world-in-a-grain-of-sand.html>.

See “Creating Worlds” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/creating-worlds/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 2117
Nonfiction words today..... 540 (Journal)

Writing of The Three-Year Turn (novel)

Day 1..... 3570 words. Total words to date..... 3570
Day 2..... 4026 words. Total words to date..... 7596
Day 3..... 4251 words. Total words to date..... 11847
Day 4..... 2117 words. Total words to date..... 13964

Total fiction words for the month..... 23553
Total fiction words for the year..... 89097
Total nonfiction words for the month... 6940
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 38190
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 127287

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 5
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 47
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 201
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Copyediting](#), [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: A Sad Letter

[February 12, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Topic: A Sad Letter
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Topic: A Sad Letter

I wasn’t planning to post the Journal today, but something came up that changed my mind.

On Steven Pressfield's site today, he posted "Writing is a Bad Idea" (see <https://stevenpressfield.com/2020/02/writing-is-a-bad-idea/>). After a brief introduction, he posts (with permission) a letter he received from a broken writer in Finland.

I hope you'll go read the post. Some of the comments are cruel. I left a comment too, but I've inserted it below, because this is important.

It's unfortunate that Kati was unable to look at writing as fun, as an escape instead of a burden. I was fortunate to have found Heinlein's Rules and a technique called writing into the dark.

I was also fortunate to understand that the conscious, critical mind is for learning, and the subconscious, creative mind is for creating.

But most of all, I am fortunate in that I've learned to trust myself and what I've learned about writing over the years. Now I drop a character with a problem into a setting and start writing.

This attitude enables me to allow my characters to tell the story that they, not I, am living. As a result, writing is the most fun I can have with my clothes on. (grin) And I'm making a pretty good living at it.

In short, if writing were work, I wouldn't write. I'd find something fun to do.

I'm really sorry Kati didn't find me or Dean Wesley Smith or some of the others out there who think their way past the same, tired-old BS to the freedom of Heinlein's Rules and writing into the dark.

But in the broader sense, Kati's only one of hundreds of would-be writers who fall to the wayside every single day. Why? Because they see writing as some grand calling. Because they choose to make it work. They choose to follow the myths of writing and believe if their work is to have any value, they have to suffer in its creation.

That's all pure, unadulterated bull cookies, folks. Big, soft, chewy, smelly, stinky, putrid bull cookies. And it'll stick to your boots or shoes until you find a way to scrape it off permanently. Here's one way:

1. Follow Heinlein's Rules.
2. Trust yourself, and trust your characters to tell their own story.
3. Have fun.

And for goodness' sake, if you know of a potential Kati out there who needs to see this Journal, recommend it. Recommend Dean's site.

Today I wrote fiction. Not a good day, not a bad day. Just sort'a blah.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Writers’ Group Trolls” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/02/writers-group-trolls.html>.

See “Worldbuilding: Crime and Fantasy Books Have More in Common Than You Might Think” at <https://crimereads.com/worldbuilding-crime-and-fantasy-books-have-more-in-common-than-you-might-think/>.

See “Hype Phrases” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/hype-phrases/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 3139
Nonfiction words today..... 460 (Journal)

Writing of *The Three-Year Turn* (novel)

Day 1..... 3570 words. Total words to date..... 3570
Day 2..... 4026 words. Total words to date..... 7596
Day 3..... 4251 words. Total words to date..... 11847
Day 4..... 2117 words. Total words to date..... 13964
Day 5..... 3139 words. Total words to date..... 17103

Total fiction words for the month..... 26692
Total fiction words for the year..... 92236
Total nonfiction words for the month... 7390
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 38650
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 130886

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 5
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 47
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 201
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [CrimeReads](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Steven Pressfield](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Feeling Overwhelmed

[February 13, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Topic: Feeling Overwhelmed: A Process Post
- * In light of Dean's post today
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Topic: Feeling Overwhelmed: A Process Post

I'm feeling a little overwhelmed. Well, actually, not a little. Actually a lot.

I have a pretty big goal, writing a short story every week and a novel every month. And I'm aiming at a streak, but I don't really care about that. Even if I miss, I intend to pick back up and keep the same goals just as if I hadn't missed. So my weekly and monthly goals are just like my daily word-count goal. If I miss, they simply reset and I keep going.

So none of that has me feeling overwhelmed.

But I'm also in the Licensing Transition class and the Shared Worlds class, and every few new videos Dean posts remind me of how much I don't know and how few hours there are in the day.

The length of day is a fixed given. We all have 24 hours in each day. What is flexible is how we prioritize our lives and use those hours. We're fortunate that we can revisit and adjust those priorities whenever we want.

I'm a writer first and foremost, so for me, WIBBOW (would I be better off writing) hovers over everything else. And at the moment, the answer is always yes. So my writing goals come first.

On the other hand, as a professional independent fiction writer, I'm also a publisher. So I have to get my publishing under control. That means putting my work into every English-speaking market around the world in ebooks (check), paperbacks (partial check) and hardbacks for books for which hardbacks are appropriate.

No check at all on that last one. I have to figure out which of my books, if any, would be appropriate for hardback. At the moment, I'm leaning hard toward sticking with trade paperbacks and not publishing hardbacks at all.

Then there's audio.

I have to look into Findaway Voices, ACX, Audible and any others out there. I'll also look into the cost of good recording equipment and consider reading my books into audio myself, especially my shorter novels in series (and with my voice, especially my Wes Crowley series) and my short stories and short story collections.

The only thing about audio is that it can be expensive (Still, at all times I safeguard my copyright, so I have to research and find the best prices for audio vs. the price of good recording equipment).

What's worse, audio is also time consuming:

1. If you do it yourself, you still have to do the recording. (Some consumers would rather have a book actually read by the author.)
2. If you don't do it yourself, you still have to spend the time necessary to find the right narrator (interviews, readings, etc.), then go back and forth with revisions of how the book is read, etc.

Setting priorities in the writing and publishing business is all about focus. My new business manager and I decided she will focus on marketing for the time being. That leaves me with the other two major aspects: writing and publishing.

So here are my personal new current priorities:

1. Keep writing novels and short stories to keep meeting my goals. That's of primary importance.
2. Get my publishing back under control. That realization forced me to further revise my priorities. I had to ask what's more important to me as an indie publisher at the moment:
 - a. Publishing in traditional magazine markets might make me a few hundred dollars and help with marketing. The downside is that identifying markets, submitting to them, and waiting for rights to clear after publication takes up a lot of time. More than a few hundred dollars worth.
 - b. I'm 67 years old, so the long-term (5, 10, 20 years) health of my publishing company shares primary importance with my writing. That health will suffer while I'm waiting for responses to submissions and/or for rights to clear.
 - c. So I've decided to hold off on submitting short stories to traditional markets for now, probably until after the time-frame of my current goals. Those stories have more value to me at the moment out there in my body of work.
3. So back to bringing my publishing house under control, beginning today,
 - a. I'll create covers and promo docs and publish my unpublished "back" short stories. (Thank God I have only 5 or 6 at the moment.) I'll do this only after I've written fiction for the day (remember WIBBOW?) and/or on any nonwriting days.
 - b. As I move forward with my goals, I'll publish novels and short stories as I finish them so I don't have to play catch-up again.
 - c. I'll (begrudgingly) begin doing the research and work necessary to put my remaining novels (first) and short story collections (second) into trade paperbacks. For maximum exposure, I'll do that through both Amazon Print and Ingram/Spark. (I'll also look into D2D's POD feature.)

4. I'll find a good accountant and turn StoneThread Publishing into a full C corporation. (It's currently an LLC. That or an "S" corp means all monies and the resulting tax bills drop straight down into my personal life. Ugh.)

5. I'm continuing to brainstorm and watch for licensing opportunities outside of publishing (merchandise, etc.).

6. We plan to attend the Licensing Expo in Vegas this coming May, just to learn and see what's out there.

If you're serious about making money off your writing, I suggest you think about licenses beyond publishing for your work too. Think about specific things (beyond writing and publishing more stories and novels) that you can do now or within the next several months with not only your IP but what I call your "inner IP" (characters, settings, situations and worlds you've already created).

So that's my thinking and my new priorities at the moment. But setting them doesn't do any good if you don't then work toward them.

So how about you? Do you have your priorities set? Are you steadily moving forward in your writing and publishing business?

In light of Dean's post today (see "Of Interest") as a gentle reminder I thought I'd mention that even with all of the above I still offer mentorships on everything from clearing out the myths (and what they are and why you should), to setting and attaining goals, to specific writing techniques, licensing and much more. If you're interested, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

Today, again, I wrote. Not much else to say about that. Despite an early start on the day, I spent the first five hours on this and some other things, so I got a late start on the actual fiction writing. Which made me even more determined to reach my daily word-count goal. (grin)

I made my goal, but I didn't get a cover done for any of the short stories. Back at it tomorrow.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Last Week of Mentorship..." at <https://www.deanwesleymith.com/last-week-of-mentorship/>.

See "Business Musings: Then And Now" at <https://kriswrites.com/2020/02/12/business-musings-then-and-now/>. Wow is this a great post!

See “Serial Killers and Bull Castrators” at <https://leelofland.com/serial-killers-and-bull-castrators/>. Much better than it sounds. Basically a rundown on aspects of serial killers and how they’re caught.

See “The intelligence coup of the century” at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/world/national-security/cia-crypto-encryption-machines-espionage/>. Possible story ideas.

See “Book Promotion: Do This Not That – February 2020” at <https://www.thebookdesigner.com/2020/02/book-promotion-do-this-not-that-february-2020/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 3191
Nonfiction words today..... 1210 (Journal)

Writing of *The Three-Year Turn* (novel)

Day 1..... 3570 words. Total words to date..... 3570
Day 2..... 4026 words. Total words to date..... 7596
Day 3..... 4251 words. Total words to date..... 11847
Day 4..... 2117 words. Total words to date..... 13964
Day 5..... 3139 words. Total words to date..... 17103
Day 6..... 3191 words. Total words to date..... 20294

Total fiction words for the month..... 29883
Total fiction words for the year..... 95427
Total nonfiction words for the month... 8600
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 39860
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 135787

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 5
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 47
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 201
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Kristine Kathryn Rusch](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [The Book Designer](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Tidbits and Thoughts

[February 14, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Putting this right at the top
- * The above is not something
- * On Amazon exclusivity
- * Clarification on critiques
- * I'm bone weary of listening
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Putting this right at the top. Probably a great opportunity for somebody. See "Collaboration Special Class" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/collaboration-special-class/>.

The above is not something I would personally be interested in for the simple reason that I can't imagine collaborating on a short story. Though I do know a few novelists with whom I would welcome a collaboration if the genre and premise of the novel or novel series was right. Probably won't ever happen, but there it is.

This in my ongoing effort to share what might work: A friend reports via email that she "made more money *and reached more readers* [emphasis mine] in a week on KDPS than [she] had in 2 years wide. Go figure." And she's "slowly moving stuff back to D2D from Amazon-exclusive that's no longer performing well on KDPS. ... Always in flux, this publishing thing." KDPS means Kindle Digital Publishing Select.

If you're wondering about genre, this is a very good author who writes Christian Romance and Christian Paranormal Fantasy. Frankly, I was surprised to hear that Romance does better in KDP exclusive rather than wide, but I do trust and believe this author.

As a side note, bestselling author JA Konrath, who writes in the Thriller, Horror, Erotica and Comedy genres, also swears by KDP Select.

Finally, DWS has long advised against exclusivity primarily because he doesn't want to put all his eggs in one basket when that basket might get dropped on a sidewalk. But I don't think Amazon's going away anytime soon.

Publishing is "always in flux" indeed. I personally will continue going wide with everything. But as your unofficial adviser, if you suspect Amazon KDP exclusivity will work for you, I suggest you try it.

In response to another email, here's a clarification of my take on critiques: I would never recommend submitting your unpublished work for critique by anybody for any reason ever. Period.

That said, if others submit their work for criticism, you might as well take advantage and learn from the critiquer's comments. Sometimes a comment will be good, valid advice. Other times it will be horrible. Often it will be a mix. Take what works for you and leave the rest.

Oof. I'm bone weary of listening to young-in-the-craft writers (and not-writers) holding forth on how to write and publish fiction. If they would only strive to utter an original thought now and then, or to at least spread the word on something that isn't parroted in every how-to-write book out there and in (almost) every writer's group to come down the pike, maybe that would lend their utterings just a little bit of credence.

Speaking of Credence, my favorites were "Bad Moon Rising" and "Born on the Bayou." If you don't know what I'm talking about, it doesn't matter.

Rolled out at 1 this morning. Now, at 2:30, I'm turning to the novel. Made my word count today.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "First Page Critique: A Thousand Cuts" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/02/first-page-critique-a-thousand-cuts.html>. (As always, offered in case you can glean a gem or two.)

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 3220
Nonfiction words today..... 540 (Journal)

Writing of The Three-Year Turn (novel)

Day 1..... 3570 words. Total words to date..... 3570
Day 2..... 4026 words. Total words to date..... 7596
Day 3..... 4251 words. Total words to date..... 11847
Day 4..... 2117 words. Total words to date..... 13964
Day 5..... 3139 words. Total words to date..... 17103
Day 6..... 3191 words. Total words to date..... 20294
Day 7..... 3220 words. Total words to date..... 23514

Total fiction words for the month..... 33103
Total fiction words for the year..... 98647
Total nonfiction words for the month... 9140
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 40400
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 139047

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

| | |
|---|-----|
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 5 | |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 47 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 201 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#)

he Journal: Big “Of Interest” Section

[February 15, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Info-packed “Of Interest” today
- * Today and critical mind
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“That which horrifies me interests me, and those things that horrify me the most sometimes become a book.” Douglas Preston, suspense author (with Lincoln Child)

I like to think what I pass along in “Of Interest” is good every day, but today is a little special.

During some research yesterday I stumbled on Strand Magazine. They have a blog. Within that blog they have a “Writing Tips” category. A lot of the “Of Interest” section today is devoted to posts in that category from Strand.

I’m always excited to find a new (to me) source of knowledge. As always, take what works for you and leave the rest.

But I encourage you not to be a genre snob. For example, even if you have no interest in writing mysteries, you might find some great ideas/gems in the post on mysteries. I’ve learned 99% of everything I know about writing fiction from picking up bits and pieces here and there, filtering gems from piles of rubble.

Rolled out late at 3 this morning. I wish I could get it right.

I most often go to bed at 7 p.m. When I get up at 1 (6 hrs), I’m a little groggy and I feel like I have time to fill, and frankly, I most often fill it with nonsense. When I get up at 3 (8 hrs), I’m

also a little groggy and I feel rushed. When I rise at 2 (7 hrs), I'm wide awake and it feels just right. I'll keep working on it.

I put together the stuff above, read some of the articles below and browsed a few others, went to the house to release the hound, and finally got to the novel at 5:30.

By the way, as it sometimes does my critical mind tried playing havoc with me this morning. As I walked to the house, I reconsidered a scene I wrote yesterday. *That scene might make some readers uneasy. Maybe I should back up and take the story in a different direction.* (Translated: Maybe I should force my will on the story.)

Fortunately, I recognized it for what it was. I reminded myself to leave the scene alone and leave it in-place. To Just Write The Next Sentence. And I reminded myself that I don't know what role that scene might play as the story continues to unfold. Only my characters and my creative subconscious know that. And it's my characters' story, not mine.

In MY story, I was on my way to let the pup out of his kennel. In THEIR story, the characters are doing what they do. Duh. My only job is to provide the physical fingers the characters need to put their story on the page. Then I muttered aloud, "It's worked well-over 250 times before, Stanbrough. Whaddayou, stupid? Leave it alone."

Just so you know, even after you learn to Trust your subconscious creative mind, the CM still never goes away, but it does become easier to recognize. After that it's up to you to make it go sit in its corner and be quiet.

Some cycling (I do a lot of that in this very psychological WIP) and a little over 1000 words later, I'm headed to the house for breakfast.

Pretty good day today. It isn't noon yet and I have well over 4,000 words.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "March Workshops Available" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/march-workshops-available/>. This is much more than just about the March workshops.

See "9 Time Management Tips For Writers" at <https://www.thecreativepenn.com/2020/02/13/9-time-management-tips-for-writers/>.

See "How the Earliest Crime Scene Investigators Identified Murder Victims" at <https://crimereads.com/how-the-earliest-crime-scene-investigators-identified-murder-victims/>. Great if you're writing a story set in the early 20th century.

See "The Art of Collaboration" at <https://strandmag.com/the-art-of-collaboration-2/>. This is strictly coincidence, I swear. (grin)

See ALSO “The Art of Collaboration” at <https://strandmag.com/the-art-of-collaboration/>. Again, this is strictly coincidence. (grin)

See “The Ten Best Ways To Find And Develop Story Ideas For Mysteries” at <https://strandmag.com/the-ten-best-ways-to-find-and-develop-story-ideas-for-mysteries/>.

See “Writing Tips: 5 Tips for Building a Page-Turner” at <https://strandmag.com/writing-tips-5-tips-for-building-a-page-turner/>.

See “Karin Slaughter’s Killer Writing Tips” at <https://strandmag.com/karin-slaughters-killer-writing-tips/>.

If it isn’t a repeat, see “Worldbuilding: Crime and Fantasy Books Have More in Common Than You Might Think” at <https://crimereads.com/worldbuilding-crime-and-fantasy-books-have-more-in-common-than-you-might-think/>.

Explore the “Writing Tips” category at <https://strandmag.com/category/writing-tips/> but be prepared to be sucked down a very enjoyable rabbit hole.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 4866
Nonfiction words today..... 730 (Journal)

Writing of The Three-Year Turn (novel)

Day 1..... 3570 words. Total words to date..... 3570
Day 2..... 4026 words. Total words to date..... 7596
Day 3..... 4251 words. Total words to date..... 11847
Day 4..... 2117 words. Total words to date..... 13964
Day 5..... 3139 words. Total words to date..... 17103
Day 6..... 3191 words. Total words to date..... 20294
Day 7..... 3220 words. Total words to date..... 23514
Day 8..... 4866 words. Total words to date..... 28380

Total fiction words for the month..... 37969
Total fiction words for the year..... 103513
Total nonfiction words for the month... 9870
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 41130
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 144643

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 5
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 47
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 201
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Creative Penn](#), [CrimeReads](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Strand Magazine](#)

The Journal: Change Is in the Wind

[February 16, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Yesterday over at [Pro Writers Writing](#)
- * Topic: Change Is in the Wind
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“After the New Yorker piece I decided that I would never give another interview to anyone on any subject and that I would keep away from all places where I would be likely to be interviewed. If you say nothing it is difficult for someone to get it wrong.” Ernest Hemingway, emphasis added

Yesterday over at [Pro Writers Writing](#) I shared a post on “The POV Character’s Opinion.” In today’s “Of Interest” I’ve linked to several posts from the Kill Zone blog on related topics. Even if you have a handle on POV, I strongly recommend you read them. You might pick up a few things you hadn’t thought about.

I received six comments on that post. I appreciate that. When a reader comments on a post, it helps web-crawling spiders find the website and helps it gain in popularity in search engines. In short, leaving comments helps other writers find the website. That’s why I ask so often that you leave comments on the Journal. However, the need for that is ebbing.

Topic: Change Is in the Wind

Yesterday I experienced an epiphany: I talk entirely too much, especially about writing. And somehow, to some folks, that makes me suspect.

Ernest Hemingway once wrote, “It’s none of their business that you have to learn how to write. Let them think you were born that way.” Wise advice.

I heard that quote long ago, but I didn't listen. Somehow, my having shared openly that I had to learn the craft (and sometimes, who I learned it from) managed to degrade, in the opinions of some, the knowledge that I later passed along. I don't really understand that, but there it is.

Even Dean Wesley Smith himself once told me, blatantly, "Never share your process [WITD] with anyone. All readers and most would-be writers want to think writing is 'work,' that it's labor-intensive and all that. If you try to tell them otherwise, chances are they'll only pounce on you." More wisdom.

Obviously, I didn't listen to that either. I plowed ahead, sharing what I'd learned after making it my own through trial and error.

And I shared some of my sources too, reasoning that readers of this blog might glean something useful from those sources that I either missed or did not find particularly useful. God knows there's little enough truly valid information out there about writing. Most of the writing information out there is invalid and repeated verbatim (and ad nauseam) in millions of places per day.

Finally, another writer recently wrote to me in an email, "Frankly, I think you teach [New York Times and USA Today bestseller Dean Wesley Smith's] techniques better than he does."

Well, I appreciate that, really. Who wouldn't? But I only explain those techniques "better" because I'm not actually explaining Dean's techniques. I'm explaining my *own* techniques, which I first learned from Dean or others. There's a difference.

Just as Dean explains in his own way *his* own techniques, which he also first learned from others. (He often talks about his own mentors.)

Just as you will explain *your* own techniques, which you first learned from others.

The point is, all of us stand on the shoulders of those who have come before us. Likewise, all of us who would be teachers or mentors have a responsibility to make what we've learned our own before we even attempt to share it.

But finally bearing in mind Hemingway's and Dean's quotes above, I think I'll start cutting back on what I share out here in public. I'll still share tidbits from my life, and I'll still share my numbers (both for myself and so others can see what is possible). And I'll still share links in "Of Interest" in case you might pick up a juicy tidbit here or there.

I'll also still share my thoughts on writing with my patrons, of course, including my mentoring students and my first readers. Those folks have skin in the game.

But let me state definitively, I will never share anything that I haven't personally practiced and advanced. I will only share what I know (from long practice) works for me and what I hope might work for you if you will only try it.

So that's the What It Is on that. (grin)

Today I rolled out early again, but I spent an inordinate amount of time deciding about the stuff above, then actually writing it, then stomping out a few forest fires. (grin) My boots are getting really thin-soled.

The upshot is, this probably will not be a fiction-writing day for me.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Mastering the Basics: Point of View and Dialogue" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/02/mastering-the-basics-point-of-view-and-dialogue.html>.

See "POV 101: Get into Your Protagonist's Head and Stay There" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2014/08/pov-101-get-into-your-protagonists-head.html>.

See "POV 102 – How to Avoid Head-Hopping" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2014/09/pov-102-how-to-avoid-head-hopping.html>.

See "POV 103 – Engage Your Readers with Deep Point of View" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2014/09/pov-103-engage-your-readers-with-deep.html>.

See "Writing into the Shadows" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/writing-into-the-shadows>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 850 (Journal)

Writing of The Three-Year Turn (novel)

Day 1..... 3570 words. Total words to date..... 3570
Day 2..... 4026 words. Total words to date..... 7596
Day 3..... 4251 words. Total words to date..... 11847
Day 4..... 2117 words. Total words to date..... 13964
Day 5..... 3139 words. Total words to date..... 17103
Day 6..... 3191 words. Total words to date..... 20294
Day 7..... 3220 words. Total words to date..... 23514
Day 8..... 4866 words. Total words to date..... 28380

Total fiction words for the month..... 37969
Total fiction words for the year..... 103513
Total nonfiction words for the month... 10720

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 41980
 Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 145493

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 2
 Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
 Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 5
 Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 47
 Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
 Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 201
 Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Writer Fear

[February 17, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Topic: Writer Fear
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“A good story is a good story no matter how you classify it.” Claire Langley-Hawthorne

Topic: Writer Fear

By now, anyone who follows this blog regularly or even irregularly knows I advocate Heinlein's Rules and a technique called Writing Into the Dark (WITD). This is not original to me, nor is it original to Dean Wesley Smith, from whom I learned it. Nor was it original to whomever taught it to him.

WITD is all about overcoming unreasoning fear. I'll explain that statement after a little history and an explanation of the WITD technique. What follows are facts, not theory.

Back in the day, pulp writers (many of whom are still read today) banged out stories and novels on manual typewriters and sold them for a penny per word. And many of them made a very good living at it. To do so, they had to type fast (which means “spend time in the chair”) and turn out clean copy.

They knew the secret that Robert A. Heinlein later abbreviated in Rule 3 of his Business Habits for Writers (You must not rewrite except to editorial order). The secret?

You're paid per word for what you write. You aren't paid anything for what you REwrite.

1. If you rewrite, your story WILL get farther from your unique, original voice with every pass.
2. The time spent on rewriting could better be used writing the next story.

And yes, there are still pulp writers turning out a million words per year today. And being paid very well for it. Ever heard of Stephen King? How about Lee Child? How about Ray Bradbury? JA Konrath? Dean Wesley Smith? Kristine Kathryn Rusch? The list goes on.

WITD is nothing more than trusting what you've already learned about writing over 12 or 12+ years of school and however many years of reading fiction and watching TV sitcoms and movies.

And when you trust what you know, what you've absorbed, you can eventually let go of all the "You Can't" fears that were drummed into you and me and everybody else in school:

- * "You Can't" write without outlining first. You have to know where the story's going.
- * If you try to write without outlining, you still need to know where the story's going so you must at least erect "signposts" along the way, and
- * "You Can't" possibly write a "good" story in only one clean draft. To that end

** "You Can't" send out a work without revising.

** "You Can't" send out a work before you run it past a critique group or critique partner or "at least a second set of eyes," and then

** "You Absolutely Can't" send out a work without rewriting it X number of times. If you do, it can't possibly be any good. Some proponents of this nonsense, all of whom are steeped in that unreasoning fear I mentioned above, actually say with a sage, knowing look, "You know, only REwriting is really writing."

* And if you don't do all of that, "You Can't" ever be a successful professional writer.

Yet almost every successful professional long-term writer does NOT outline, revise, run their work through critique groups, or rewrite. Because they've let go of all the "You Can'ts." They've let go of the fear.

What's the worst that will happen if you write a story or novel but don't do any of the things above? Some reader somewhere whom you'll never meet won't like your story. So what? It isn't like he's going to come to your house and pull a gun on you.

So most long-term pro writers have released that fear. And it isn't because they've written a lot or published a lot. ALL of us used to cling to these "You Can't" myths.

New York Times and *USA Today* bestseller **Dean Wesley Smith**, in particular, has said repeatedly that he was never able to sell a short story until he stopped listening to all the “You Can’t” stuff (he calls them “myths”) and started writing into the dark.

But he thought that sale was a fluke, so he went back to rewriting. And he stopped selling again. So he returned to WITD and started selling again. And he’s never looked back.

Admittedly, there are some long-term professional fiction writers who DO outline, rewrite, etc. Or at least they SAY they do. But most of them don’t. Most who say that are lying. They lie for a living, remember?

For just one example, Harlan Ellison used to tell people he wrote several drafts of even his short stories. He said that because it added a perceived value to his stories for readers. “Oh, well, if he worked that much on it, it must be good.”

Yet at one point, Ellison blew his own cover. He actually set up a typewriter in a storefront window and literally “wrote in public,” creating page after page of stories while people stood on the sidewalk and watched him type. And to prove what he was doing was valid, he took each sheet from the typewriter as he finished it and taped it to the window, face-out, so the people could read it. How’s that for writing into the dark?

As you sit in English and Literature classes, and as you read, and as you watch sitcoms and movies, your subconscious absorbs sentence structure, where to place periods and commas and question marks, where to break paragraphs. And most importantly, it absorbs story structure.

Think about it. You’ve been telling stories since you were a tiny kid. Even before you knew there *was* an alphabet, when you were two or three years old, you were telling stories to your parents to explain how that lamp got smashed or how the cat wound up with no hair on her left ear. You couldn’t tell the truth, so you Made Up A Story.

Then you went to school and all of those “You Can’ts” were drummed into you.

So here’s the deal. If you want to have FUN telling stories again, you have to forget all those stupid “You Can’ts.” Set them aside and just write. Refuse to let even your own critical mind into your stories, much less the critical minds of anyone else. In fact, refuse to let *anyone* else into your work in progress, even your significant other. And refuse to rewrite.

What you need is already in your head.

Do you know everything? No, of course not. But you DO already know how to tell a story. What do you do when you get home from a harried day during which some jerk cut you off in traffic? You tell your significant other the story.

All you need is practice. And you don’t get practice by going over and over and over and over the same short story or novel to revise and rewrite until you’ve revised and rewritten your

original voice off of it. I call this “hovering.” If you hover, you only get practice hovering, and your work gets worse the longer you hover.

You practice by sitting down down, putting your fingers on the keyboard, and writing.

You take a character, give him a problem (any little problem will do, like an untied shoelace or mucus draining onto his upper lip while he’s holding a coffee cup in one hand and a briefcase in the other), and drop him into a setting. Then you let your fingers move over the keyboard. You write what the character says, and you write what he does, and you write what happens as a result.

And when you get to the end of the story (the character will lead you through to the end), you take a 5- or 10-minute break, and then you sit down and write another story. And another. And another.

You don’t worry about individual words and sentences. You don’t worry about structure. Story is flowing out of you. You write the story your characters give you, and then you write the next one and the next one.

And what if a story doesn’t stop? What if it runs long and the characters do unexpected things? What if they keep getting into and out of different situations, each situation tied to the next and the next? Then when you finally reach the end you will have written your first novel.

Know the difference between a short story and a novel? A short story is about One Event. That’s it. And a novel is about several related events. That’s the only difference, other than word count.

Now (let me take a breath)... Writing into the dark isn’t for everybody. If you’re unreasonably frightened—if you flat can’t let go of outlining, the desire for your critique partners’ approval, and rewriting—then writing into the dark is not for you.

I once taught WITD to a room of 12 students. Of those 12, one was all but hyperventilating. She kept repeating, “I can’t. I just can’t,” and she finally left the class early at all but a dead run. Of the other 11, I know for a fact 7 or 8 are still writing into the dark and loving it. (The other 3 or 4, I don’t know.)

If you can start to push aside those stupid “You Can’t” myths—all of which you and I and we all were taught BY PEOPLE WHO DO NOT WRITE FICTION—then a wonderful, exciting new world awaits you.

Now, just to clarify, do I really care whether you WITD? No. What difference does it make to me? I get zero benefit if you try WITD and nothing bad will happen to me if you don’t. I share WITD with others only to pay it forward because I know how freeing it is and how much fun writing is now that I’m doing it that way.

My short stories are still going out week after week, my novels month after month. People are buying them, and the money's flowing into my account. That would still be true even if every other writer in the world was outlining, asking for critiques and rewriting. So no, I don't care.

It's just a wonderful thing—a wonderful, freeing technique—and I want to share it. That's all.

In the past five years, I've written over 200 short stories and almost 60 novels and novellas. All of them were written into the dark, and all of them are Good Stories (at least my readers say so).

I didn't outline even one of them. I didn't rewrite even one of them. I didn't run even one of them through the critique-group gauntlet. Why? Because it's MY story, not THEIR story. How the hell can they possibly know what it needs?

So if you're ready, if you can dare to be bad, if you can risk some reader somewhere not liking your work (while 8 out of 10 DO like it), then I invite you to climb on board.

I've outlined above what WITD is. I hope you'll try it. If you do, I doubt you'll ever go back to outlining, critique groups, rewriting, etc. Writing won't be “work” anymore. It will be fun.

You'll be free to write as fast as your little fingers can move, your characters will surprise you at every turn (and therefore surprise the reader too) and you'll absolutely have the most fun you can have with your clothes on. (grin)

Now, to reward you for having hung around this long and to put my money where my mouth is, here's a special offer just for you:

I'll mentor ANYONE who's reading this absolutely free via email for one week on how to set aside the myths and write into the dark. All you have to do is give me your word that you'll give it an honest try.

(But note: If you're already comfortable writing into the dark, please don't sign up. Leave room for others. However, if you have questions, email me and I'll answer them.)

You read that right. No strings. I won't even ask whether you want to continue the mentoring on a paid basis when we're through.

At the worst, I will have lost the few hours I spend mentoring you, and you will have lost nothing but the time it takes to exchange a few emails with a crazy professional fiction writer.

So what do you and I stand to gain?

If you come out of our little experiment writing into the dark, a whole new fun world will open up to you. That's your reward. And I get to feel good about breaking the chains off one more writer. No strings. No catch. I'm an honest guy. I don't live in that other world.

If you're interested, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com. If I get too many students (I seriously doubt it) I'll simply put them in different weeks. You and I will work that out as we go.

But please don't wait. There's very little chance I'll offer this again. If you're interested, email me today and I'll start building my list and arranging my schedule.

Oh, and if you're a "conventional" writer who absolutely knows WITD won't work although you've never tried it, don't email me. I'm through responding. Instead, go eat your spinach or do something else you know you won't like though you haven't tried it. (grin)

Today I rolled out early, wrote the stuff above, then went to the novel. By 7 I had around 1500 new words on my novel and took a break for a shower and breakfast.

Then I came back to the Hovel and fine-tuned the stuff above, answered some email, and turned back to the novel at 9:30.

Nope. We went to the grocery. When we got back, I checked email and dealt with more fallout from the PWW fiasco yesterday. No more writing today. I'll return to the novel tomorrow morning. Have a great evening!

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "10 New Publishing Scams to Watch Out for in 2020" at <https://annerallen.com/2020/02/new-publishing-scams-2020/>. This is an extremely important post.

See "8 Ways to Make Your Book's Press Release Work Harder" at <https://www.thebookdesigner.com/2020/02/make-your-books-press-release-work-harder/>. I don't recommend press releases at all, but if you use them this is a good post.

See "Subscription Marketing for Authors: A Primer" at <https://www.janefriedman.com/subscription-marketing-for-authors/>.

See "Are the 1980s 'history' yet?" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/02/are-the-1980s-history-yet.html>.

For any poets out there, see "29 Poetry Markets Seeking Submissions" at <https://www.authorspublish.com/29-poetry-markets-open-to-submissions-in-february-plus-9-poetry-contests/>. PLEASE be sure to read the fine print on any submissions, especially to contests.

More for poets, see The Raintown Review at <http://www.theraintownreview.com/about>. My old home. (grin)

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 1809
Nonfiction words today..... 2440 (Journal)

Writing of **The Three-Year Turn** (novel)

Day 1..... 3570 words. Total words to date..... 3570
Day 2..... 4026 words. Total words to date..... 7596
Day 3..... 4251 words. Total words to date..... 11847
Day 4..... 2117 words. Total words to date..... 13964
Day 5..... 3139 words. Total words to date..... 17103
Day 6..... 3191 words. Total words to date..... 20294
Day 7..... 3220 words. Total words to date..... 23514
Day 8..... 4866 words. Total words to date..... 28380
Day 9..... 1809 words. Total words to date..... 30189

Total fiction words for the month..... 39778
Total fiction words for the year..... 105322
Total nonfiction words for the month... 13160
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 44420
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 149742

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 5
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 47
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 201
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Anne R. Allen](#), [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Raintown Review](#), [The Book Designer](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Another Myth Revealed

[February 18, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Update on my offer
- * Topic: Another Myth Revealed
- * Today

- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“We’re very lucky as prose writers. We can market our practice. We don’t see the reactions to it in real time.” Kristine Kathryn Rusch

Update on my offer

If you don’t know what offer I’m talking about, you can read all about it at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-journal-writer-fear/>.

I know not everyone reads the Journal every day, so I’ll leave the offer open for a week. If you browse these posts less often than once a week, then you’re just out of luck. (grin)

You can sign on anytime through Sunday, February 23. At that point I’ll close it off. I was insane to make this offer in the first place, but I did make it so I’ll stick with it.

But just to clarify, this offer is open only to readers of this Journal. Please don’t offer it to your Facebook or Twitter friends, etc. though you’re welcome and even encouraged to publicize the Journal itself. The URL is HEstanbrough.com. Subscriptions are free.

Topic: Another Myth Revealed

In an email, a writer told me his big fear with writing into the dark is that “the stories will be random, maybe pointless.... I’m okay with calling it ‘practice,’ but practice does not often equal publishable words. (Maybe that’s a myth.)”

Yes, that’s a myth, and a strong one. It’s also couched in an inadvertently erroneous statement. Practice, in fact, ALWAYS equals publishable words. The only unpublishable words are the ones you delete or replace with other words during cycling (revision while still in the creative subconscious).

Maybe the writer meant practice doesn’t often equal “palatable” words or a palatable story. But that would be erroneous too. Every story is palatable and enjoyable to someone. And every story is random and pointless and maybe even distasteful or downright “offensive” to someone.

I’ve mentioned before the short story I wrote that I thought was garbage. But knowing I’m the worst judge of my own work, I published it anyway. And a few weeks later a reader wrote to tell me my story was one of the best she’d ever read, even that it was favorably comparable to Hemingway’s short stories. Reader taste. Go figure.

But none of that, good or bad, matters. What matters is that you write, that you tell a story, preferably one that entertains You. That’s the whole purpose of writing fiction: to entertain, first

yourself and then others... maybe. You write it and publish it, and others are either entertained by it or they aren't.

But who cares? Read the Quote of the Day above again.

The fear that a story might be “random” or “pointless” is your critical mind’s ploy to get you to pay attention to it. It’s another of those “You Can’t” I wrote about in yesterday’s topic.

“You Can’t” write a story without thinking it through (critical mind). If you do, it might be random and pointless.”

Translation—”I will have wasted my time and nobody will buy the story. And chances are, nobody will buy any other stories in the series because of that one stupid random, pointless story. (At this point, you’re on the verge of hyperventilating.) Nope. I’d better not risk it.”

And the critical voice has won another round.

So what if you feel the story is random and pointless or whatever other adjectives your critical mind wants to throw at you? Every short story and every novel ever published probably was judged random and pointless by someone. Again, so what? It all goes to reader taste.

A short story or novel is not important in and of itself. Or rather, its level or degree of importance is determined by each individual reader. What’s important is that you write.

Don’t write to make a point. Don’t write to illuminate a theme. You’re writing fiction, not a handbook on creating a nuclear device. You can make up settings and the legends and local lore that appear in your stories. You can make up character names and street names and town names and glades and woods and castles and bodies of water.

Write to entertain yourself, to see what a particular character or set of characters has been up to lately in the story they’re living over in that other dimension even when you aren’t visiting them.

If a story entertains you as you write it, chances are it will entertain most others who read it. So stop worrying, stop thinking consciously about it, and just write it already.

Today, at a half-hour after midnight, my little girl cat decided I’d slept long enough. I’d planned to get up at 2. But I was afraid if I went back to sleep I might sleep too far beyond that, so I got up, got my coffee, and shuffled out to the Hovel.

There I learned that one hearty soul had taken me up on my offer of free mentoring for a week. One. Lucky me. (grin)

So I spent the first half-hour composing the email that will become my boilerplate, standard reply to those who would like me to mentor them. Then I spent 2-3 hours on my response to the writer who enlisted my help. Then I wrote all of this stuff.

A short break up to the house, and finally to the novel at 7. Yeah, six and a half hours into the day. (grin) Doesn't matter. I only need to write for 3 hours sometime today to reach my writing goal.

Had another writer take me up on my offer. He and I will work together in early March.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Death Surrounds Us — How One Writer Escapes" at <https://www.suecoletta.com/death-surrounds-us-how-one-writer-escapes/>. Long but interesting.

See "Write Like a Warrior" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/write-like-a-warrior/>. If you pay attention, you'll see a lot of the same stuff I tell people but from a different direction.

See "You Can Now Download 150,000 Free Illustrations of the Natural World" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/you-can-now-download-150000-free-illustrations-of-the-natural-world/>.

See "Alphas and Betas" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/alphas-and-betas/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 2914
Nonfiction words today..... 1010 (Journal)

Writing of The Three-Year Turn (novel)

Day 1..... 3570 words. Total words to date..... 3570
Day 2..... 4026 words. Total words to date..... 7596
Day 3..... 4251 words. Total words to date..... 11847
Day 4..... 2117 words. Total words to date..... 13964
Day 5..... 3139 words. Total words to date..... 17103
Day 6..... 3191 words. Total words to date..... 20294
Day 7..... 3220 words. Total words to date..... 23514
Day 8..... 4866 words. Total words to date..... 28380
Day 9..... 1809 words. Total words to date..... 30189
Day 10... 2914 words. Total words to date..... 33103

Total fiction words for the month..... 42692
Total fiction words for the year..... 108236
Total nonfiction words for the month... 14170
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 45430
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 149742

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|---|-----|
| Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... | 2 |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... | X |
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... | 5 |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 47 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 201 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Sue Coletta](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: This is Important

[February 19, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Topic: This is Important: What I Offer
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Topic: This is Important: What I Offer

Today I'm tooting my own horn, letting you know what you can learn from me and the various ways you can learn from me. I realized this morning I've never enumerated the various ways I teach.

In case you didn't know or as a gentle reminder, first I write this Journal almost every day. In it, I often post a topic that I believe will help someone out there. Sometimes some readers see my topics as "refreshers" of what they already know. That's fine. But try to remember, we're all at different stages of our own writing career. Not everyone who reads the Journal has heard from me the things I include in topics.

Also remember that even if I've held forth on a particular topic before, sometimes saying the same thing in a different way gets the point across to some readers who didn't understand the concept the way I stated it before.

Sometimes too, I'll inadvertently drop quotable or memorable little "gems" as I write about a particular topic. Those too are valuable to different people (or not) in different ways. Gleaning similar gems, in fact, is how I've learned most of what I've learned about writing over the years.

But to specifics—

Probably the number one way you can learn generally about writing from me is to sign on with me as a patron or a first reader. You can see the rewards for different levels of patronage at <https://harveystanbrough.com/be-a-patron/>. If you're interested in becoming a first reader, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

The second way is to subscribe to and read this Journal. And please, if you find it of value, spread the word. The URL is HEStanbrough.com.

The third way is to email me when you have writing questions. I'll usually respond to emails quickly, and pretty much always within 24 hours (barring emergencies). A handful of writers email me regularly with specific questions about writing.

Another handful email me less regularly when they encounter a problem with anything from punctuation to encountering the critical mind to specific writing techniques like characterization or writing setting or scenes to.... No worries at all. I enjoy sharing what I know.

The fourth way is to buy my nonfiction writing books and audio lectures. You can find my nonfiction books at <https://stonethreadpublishing.com/writing-books/> as well as at your favorite ebook retailer. But if you order them (and/or my fiction) directly from StoneThread (email orders@stonethreadpublishing.com), you get a discount.

You can find the audio lectures at <https://harveystanbrough.com/lecture-series/>. Both my nonfiction books and audio lectures, like the topics in this Journal, are filled with little gems that are maybe off-topic but still focused on various aspects of writing. (Note: You get freebies on nonfiction books and audio lectures and much more as a patron.)

And the fifth way is to sign on with me as your mentor. I've outlined the different levels of mentoring in detail below. I can only take on so many mentoring students, so after you've read them if you're at all interested, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com to let me know. At worst, I'll put you on a waiting list.

Of course, I realize I'm mentoring you in general through this Journal and in the other ways listed above (as well as through my fiction if you read and enjoy that).

But when you sign on with me as your mentor, the program is tailored specifically to you and your own writing. It's tantamount to enrolling in a masters course in which I am the instructor and you are the only student.

I'm currently offering a free week of mentoring that's limited to 1) overcoming the myths about writing and 2) learning to write into the dark. You can read about that [HERE](#). That offer will close on Sunday, February 23.

My other (paid) mentoring services, all of which are tailored to your writing and your needs, are as follows below. These are updated for 2020 and strictly limited due to my own stringent writing and publishing goals.

Note: In the three mentoring levels below, I mention the various stages of a fiction writer. (I am an advanced Stage 4 fiction writer.) To see definitions of those stages, I recommend reading “My Take on the Stages of a Fiction Writer” at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-tuesday-july-9/>.

Level A — Beginner to Intermediate (Stage 1 to Stage 3 writers) — This is completely focused on You and your writing. If you’re serious about building a career as a fiction writer, Level A is all-inclusive program designed to get you to (and beyond) where I am now. The mentoring consists of literally whatever You need to jump-start your writing from the very beginning or if you’re sputtering along, including (but not limited to)

- * establishing and assessing priorities
- * establishing a writing habit
- * overcoming the fear of failure (and success)
- * establishing the ability to Keep Coming Back
- * setting obtainable goals that make you reach
- * in-depth discussions of Heinlein’s Rules and Writing Into the Dark as necessary,
- * personalized, drilled-down, in-depth instruction on specific writing techniques**
- * personalized in-depth instruction on setting up a publishing company and indie publishing
- * personalized in-depth instruction on cover design techniques and eformatting
- * personalized assignments and review (if you want them)
- * in-depth discussions of IP (what it is, how to keep track of it)
- * personalized licensing advice
- * email Q&A anytime, and
- * limited Q&A by phone* or in person if you’re in the region.

* I always recommend doing Q&A by email so you have a written record of my comments so you can refer back to them later as necessary.

The fee for Level A is \$199 per month, paid in advance on a month by month basis. You can cancel anytime or keep going as long as you like.

If you’re interested, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com with any questions or concerns.

Level B1 — Beginner to Intermediate (Stage 1 to early Stage 2 writers) — This one focuses on the abstracts, clearing out the myths of writing and getting out of your own way. If you’re just starting out or are sputtering along, this will set you firmly on the road to a fiction writing career. It’s both a personal and group mentorship, which means I can take on more students. It includes (but is not limited to)

- * establishing and assessing priorities
- * establishing a writing habit
- * overcoming the fear of failure (and success)
- * establishing the ability to Keep Coming Back
- * setting obtainable goals that make you reach
- * in-depth discussions of Heinlein’s Rules and Writing Into the Dark,

- * in-depth discussions and instruction on writing into the dark and cycling (revising while in the creative subconscious)
- * some in-depth instruction on specific writing techniques** as applicable
- * some discussion of the basics of indie publishing
- * email Q&A anytime

The fee for Level B1 is \$109 per month, paid in advance on a month by month basis. You can cancel anytime or keep going as long as you like.

If you're interested, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com with any questions or concerns.

Level B2 — Intermediate to Advanced (Stage 2 to mid-Stage 4 writers) — **Note:** This includes no abstracts, so you need to have cleared out most of the myths about writing already, though we'll deal quickly with any critical-mind dregs and myths that pop up (and they will). It includes everything in Level A minus the abstracts.

This is focused on one or more specific aspects of your process, especially as they go to structure and actual writing. This includes personalized instruction on specific writing techniques** and manuscript review, plus IP inventory and personalized licensing instruction.

In the licensing part of this, both the instruction and brainstorming are tailored to your specific IP (intellectual property). We'll define what IP and "internal IP" actually are with regard to licensing, what to include in your inventory, and possible ways to market it.

If you at least believe you have a good handle on most of what you're doing or if you've reached that very dangerous place in late Stage 2 where you think you've "learned enough" (you haven't) this is the stage you need and should want.

The fee is \$149 per month, paid in advance on a month by month basis. You can cancel anytime or keep going as long as you like.

If you're interested, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com with any questions or concerns.

** The "specific writing techniques" above include but are not limited to (as necessary)

- * openings
- * cliffhangers and hooks
- * paragraphing and pacing
- * adding depth to hold your reader
- * adding suspense
- * punctuation
- * sentence structure and alteration
- * the use of italics or not
- * story structure
- * aspects of different genres and reader expectations

- * what constitutes an ending
- * and much more

That's it. If you see anything that interests you above, jump in. If you have specific questions or concerns, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

I spent the first three hours of the day exchanging pleasantries and wisdom with one of my free mentoring students, then the next couple of hours writing the stuff above this. Now for a break for a shower and breakfast, then to the novel.

I'm back at 9 a.m., clean, fed and a load of laundry started. I found a few more items for "Of Interest," left a comment on one, and now I'm turning to the novel at 9:30.

Should be an interesting day, not that I'll bore you with additional details. (grin)

With my pickup battery shot (I learned when it wouldn't start) and laundry and a whirlwind that would measure F2 on the Fujita scaled (grin) and other stuff, I was amazed I reached my daily goal today.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "How to Build an Author Website: Getting Started Guide" at <https://www.janefriedman.com/author-websites/>.

See "The biology of love" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-biology-of-love/>.

See "The Web of Writing" at <https://writerunboxed.com/2020/02/18/the-web-of-writing/> (via The Passive Voice). In case you might find a gem or two.

See "What if it doesn't?" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/what-if-it-doesnt/>.

See "Kati's Reply (and Mine)" at <https://stevenpressfield.com/2020/02/katis-reply-and-mine/>.

For anyone who hasn't seen it yet, see "Six Things Writers Need To Stop Worrying About" at <https://jakonrath.blogspot.com/2019/07/five-things-writers-need-to-stop.html>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 3442
Nonfiction words today..... 1670 (Journal)

Writing of The Three-Year Turn (novel)

Day 11... 3442 words. Total words to date..... 36545

| | |
|---|--------|
| Total fiction words for the month..... | 46134 |
| Total fiction words for the year..... | 111678 |
| Total nonfiction words for the month... | 15840 |
| Total nonfiction words for the year..... | 47100 |
| Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... | 158778 |
| | |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... | 2 |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... | X |
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... | 5 |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 47 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 201 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [J. A. Konrath](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [overcoming writer's block](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Steven Pressfield](#), [The Book Designer](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#), [Writer Unboxed](#)

The Journal: Not Much Today

[February 20, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Not Much Today
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“This is a hard technique to teach writers: how do you write setting from the point of view of someone who sees the same thing every day? You write about what’s different, as well as describe what they’re actually doing. If you’re not careful, you’ll overdescribe—or underdescribe. And if you’re wondering, overdescribing is better.” Kristine Kathryn Rusch

Not Much Today and a Minor Change

If you missed yesterday’s post, I encourage you to read it. It’s necessarily long. If there’s a way I can help you, let me know.

A day or two ago, someone asked me (in a comment, I believe) about whether I “count” emails in my nonfiction word totals. I don’t.

But I'm writing a lot of nonfiction words each morning in my mentoring sessions, so I've decided to include those in my nonfiction totals below. I'll figure that out sometime later today. Or before too long.

I started the day by spending a couple of hours responding to a mentoring student. I have five of them now, and starting my day that way is slowly becoming a habit. I do that first thing, even before I browse for items for "Of Interest."

Mentoring in this way is fun, and in addition to the good feeling of helping someone else, I'm also learning a ton about other people and about new ways to teach certain techniques.

I've also noticed that recently I'm puttering around, letting much of the morning and mid-day fritter away. Then, driven by my daily word-count goal, I write almost in a frenzy the last couple of hours of the day (early afternoon). Seems to work.

Today I have to buy a new battery for my pickup, swap it out, and return the core. So I'm trying to get my fiction writing done early today. Maybe. Mostly cycling to begin with.

Ah, then I remembered I had to make some adjustments over at PWW. I did that, then sent out an email to that effect for our contributors, then took a break at 6 a.m. up to the house.

Then my neighbor dropped by to talk. He's leaving for a few days so I'll watch his horses for him.

Wow. Then I had to make some MORE adjustments to the PWW schedule. And at 9-ish I have to go swap the battery for my truck. Then there will be lunch, maybe. The day is slipping away. I almost decided to call it and just not write fiction today. We'll see.

Got the battery, installed it in the pickup, threw away the stupid cover they had over the old battery because it's a massive PITA to take off and put on. Washed my hands, learned to breathe again.

Then a sample edit came in, so I did that and got it sent back out. Then fielded a few more questions re PWW.

Okay. Nope. Fiction writing isn't gonna happen today. That's okay. Back at it tomorrow, maybe, depending on how early I get up. I'll be out smoking ceegars and terrorizing the locals with an insane brother of the cloth tomorrow. So I might not be back here (and to fiction writing) until Satiddy.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "DMCA Review Begins. Watch the Red Flag." at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/dmca-review-begins-watch-the-red-flag/>.

See “The Convertible Cloud, Extended — Google Docs” at <https://www.thebookdesigner.com/2020/02/the-convertible-cloud-extended-google-docs/>.

See “Business Musings: The Upside to Crap” at <https://kriswrites.com/2020/02/19/business-musings-the-upside-to-crap/>.

See “Collaboration Spots” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/collaboration-spots/>.

For fun, see “Kick Starting WITD” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/kick-starting-witd/>. This is the brother of the cloth I mentioned above. Nutcase extraordinaire.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 510 (Journal)

Writing of **The Three-Year Turn** (novel)

Day 11... 3442 words. Total words to date..... 36545

Total fiction words for the month..... 46134
Total fiction words for the year..... 111678
Total nonfiction words for the month... 16450
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 47810
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 159388

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 5
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 47
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 201
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Kristine Kathryn Rusch](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Book Designer](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Just a Thought

[February 21, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Just a thought
- * Today

- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Just a thought— As I told a mentoring student this morning,

“There are two kinds of writers: The first kind are those who live on high in an ivory tower. They dress in heavenly robes and exert control over every aspect of their characters’ lives as the characters move at the writer’s command (begrudgingly) through the trenches of the story.

“Then there are those writers who aren’t afraid to get dirty and don’t WANT to control others’ lives. Those are the fortunate ones. They don jeans, a t-shirt and sneakers, then roll off the parapet into the trenches and race through the story WITH the characters, just trying to keep up. Now and then, those writers take a break and go over the previous scene to add anything they missed as they were trying to keep up with the characters. And when they get back to where the characters are waiting, they all race off into the next scene. That writer would be me.” (grin)

Today I spent the first two hours browbeating (grin) a mentoring student. Sometime during that discourse, I suddenly remembered I have a short story due by tomorrow at midnight (gasp!) if I’m to keep meeting my weekly challenge.

And I’ve also decided to take much of today off for a silly side trip with my buddy (gasp!). And I have NO IDEA what I’ll write for that short story (gasp!). Oh no! How will I ever get the story done in time to meet my challenge and not break my streak!

Well, not gasp. Not really. I know it takes only a few hours to write a short story, and I have a BUNCH of hours (about 47 as I write this) between now and midnight Saturday night.

My characters are living their lives (their stories) 24/7/365 even when I’m not paying attention.

All I have to do is drop in on them, pick a character with a problem in a setting and write an opening to ground the reader (suck the reader into the story) and then keep writing until the character leads me to The End.

Easy-peasy. Yawn. Stretch.

In fact, it’s SO easy-peasy that I’m adding a level of difficulty. I’ve decided, in the few hours I have remaining before I have to leave to meet my friend, I’ll ignore the need for a short story and add to the novel instead.

Well, after I’ve checked for items for “Of Interest” and posted this Journal. Barring emergencies, I’ll write the short story tomorrow.

Witing into the Dark: It’s a great life. Just sayin’.

I finally got to the novel at 4. I wrote about a thousand words in the first hour, then went to the house for a brief break. By 6:20 I'd written another 1200 words. Not bad, considering I thought today might be a nonwriting day. (grin)

So I missed my daily word-count goal ("failed"), but I failed to succeed. Off to play for the rest of the day

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "The Best Small Presses Publishing Crime Fiction Today" at <https://crimereads.com/the-best-small-presses-publishing-crime-fiction-today/>.

See "I'm Just Sayin': 'Buy Print' vs 'Buy Paperback'" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/im-just-sayin-buy-print-vs-buy-paperback>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 2278
Nonfiction words today..... 540 (Journal)

Writing of The Three-Year Turn (novel)

Day 11... 3442 words. Total words to date..... 36545
Day 12... 2278 words. Total words to date..... 38823

Total fiction words for the month..... 48412
Total fiction words for the year..... 113956
Total nonfiction words for the month... 16990
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 48250
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 162206

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 5
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 47
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 201
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [CrimeReads](#), [Kinds of Writers](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: A Matter of Mindset

[February 22, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Topic: A Matter of Mindset
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Topic: A Matter of Mindset

You might consider this a little tough love. In this business, and it IS a business, your mindset is all-important.

If you want to be a writer, you have to write. It really is that simple and, for some, that difficult.

Please remember that I'm not talking from some magical ivory tower here. I've been where all other writers have been before or are now.

Some writers outline. Been there, done that.

Some writers research, research, research. Until research takes over. Been there, done that.

Some writers take classes, lectures, and workshops. Attend writers' groups and critique groups and writers' conference and conventions. Check, check, check, check, check, check, and check.

Some writers do any or all of the above to delay actually writing. Yep, I've even done that.

But you can't escape the bottom line: If you want to be a writer, you have to actually write.

Increasing your knowledge is important too. So write, read, and take classes. Get a mentor. Attend select writers' conferences. Do all of that. But write.

I was just thinking back about when I "made my bones" as a poet. I wanted to be a poet. I'd always read a lot of poetry, especially by Nemerov, Hecht, Frost, both Brownings, Dickinson, Shakespeare, Sassoon, Wilfred Owen, Langston Hughes and many, many others, and I enjoyed it like I enjoyed nothing else.

I loved the rhythms of the language, the nuances. I loved rhyme and internal rhyme. I loved form and a lack of form. I loved knowing that poetry is a genre, whereas verse is a mode of expression. I loved knowing that the poem is based on the Line, not the Sentence. I invented the blank verse sonnet. So one day I sat down and started writing poetry.

I didn't attend classes on poetry in high school or college (except one class in college in which, as it turned out, the professor had never had a poem published—take that as you will). I didn't learn much in that class beyond the importance of checking credentials on folks I wanted to learn from. I didn't attend groups or conferences or conventions. I just wrote poetry.

After awhile one of my collections of poetry was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize ('95 or '96). A few years later, I was the first poet to publish a book-length collection of poems as an electronic book. It took 3rd prize at the Frankfurt Book Fair in FICTION (they didn't have a poetry category) and was later nominated for the National Book Award ('98, I think).

My work wasn't short-listed for either the Pulitzer Prize or the National Book Award, but still. And one of my collections came in second (to Maya Angelou) for the then-prestigious Foreword Magazine Engraver's Award.

My point here isn't to brag. My point is that you can do sort-of writing-related things, or you can solve the old Dual Application Problem. You can apply the seat of your pants to the seat of your chair, apply your fingertips to the keys on your keyboard, and write.

There really isn't any way around it.

Now, if you only want to TALK ABOUT being a writer or hang out with writers at conferences and in writers' groups, that's fine. You can call yourself anything you like. These days, I suppose you can even "self-identify" as a writer without ever having committed a word to screen or page.

But if you want to actually BE a writer... well, then you have to actually write.

Then you have to come to understand, somehow, the truth of this statement: WHAT you write isn't important; THAT you write is what's important. After all, you're a writer.

And then you'll encounter another problem, a big problem, one that seems like a paradox to many, although it isn't.

You have to learn to VALUE your work (don't give it away, get it OUT of the 99-cent ghetto, and don't sell all rights for a pittance). That's the first half of the seeming paradox.

But at the same time you have to remember that WHAT you write isn't important. That's the second half.

So your stories should be VALUED because they're VALUABLE, but they aren't IMPORTANT. Get it?

Everything you write has potential value. Any short story or novella or novel or series you write MIGHT be made into a TV series or a film or a play or a new game for gamers.

THAT's its value. And that's why traditional publishers are more than happy to send you a check for \$15,000 or \$20,000 for all rights to your novel, and then add it to their assets spreadsheet

where it automatically increases the value of their company by a cool million dollars or more. Even if they never publish it.

But every short story or novella or novel or series you write is also nothing more than a few minutes' (or hours') entertainment for a reader. So seriously, it isn't all that important. It's just a way for you to have fun.

Now, if you don't understand that, you can still be a writer, but chances are you won't be a SUCCESSFUL writer. So if you don't get that, I invite you—no, scratch that—I ENCOURAGE you, I URGE you, to reread (aloud if necessary) and study the preceding six paragraphs.

Because when you get that—all of it—not only will you be a writer, but you'll be well on your way to becoming a successful writer.

Today

A day or two ago, one of my mentoring students asked whether I ever write on two different pieces of fiction in the same day. The answer is, it depends.

Today will be one of those days when I almost certainly will. I'm pretty sure I'll write on two different stories today because I have a short story due by today at midnight. And the novel's running very well, so I probably will write on it too. (I'm anxious to get back to it to find out what happens next. That, for me, is the mark of a writer.)

So today probably will be a very good writing day: 4,000 or even 5,000 words or more. And I probably won't write past about 1 p.m. because my sister-in-law comes in today.

By the way, I'm feeling the slightest bit of pressure on the novel because at the moment it's sitting at almost 39,000 words and the ending is nowhere in sight. Which is fine. I won't force it to wrap (critical mind stuff) just because my goal is to have it finished on or before February 29.

I set goals to make me reach, to Prod me, not to Pressure me. There's a difference.

If I go over on finishing my novel by a day or a week or whatever, I will have missed my goal to publish a novel by the end of February. BUT the goal resets to zero on 1 March and I'll have to finish 2 novels (this one and the one for March) by 31 March. See how that works?

Will I be disappointed if I don't finish this one by 29 February? No. Not really. I will have failed, but I will have failed to success, with another novel notch added to my writerly gun.

And back to the short story that's due sometime today. Do I feel pressure from that?

No. Why should I? My minimum word count for a short story for this challenge is 2,000 words. So around two hours of writing. If I can't find two hours out of the whole day today to write, I should probably just give up writing and open an Earth Shoe franchise or something.

So now it's almost 3 a.m. and I'm about to start the short story. No idea what it will be. As I advise others, I'll start with a character with a problem, drop him/her into a setting, and write an opening. If it runs, I'll be back in a few hours to move over to the novel. (If it doesn't run, I'll trash it—yes, outright—and write another opening.)

The opening ran. (grin) I finished my latest short story at 6, then took about 40 minutes to read over it (cycling) and add a little more sensory detail. You'll see it below. And I've decided to send it in PDF to my patrons. Then a break for breakfast and back to write on the novel in progress.

It's now 9 a.m. I wrote the topic above, and now I'm finally turning to my novel.

Didn't write quite as much as I wanted to, but I had an unexpected trip to Tucson. Still a very good day.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Feeling Overwhelmed: A Process Post" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/feeling-overwhelmed-a-process-post/>.

See "How We Bury the War Dead" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-we-bury-the-war-dead/>. Possibly good research.

See "A Miss That Should Have Been a Hit" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/02/a-miss-that-should-have-been-a-hit.html>.

See "How to Spot A Tech Scam Before You Get Stung" at <https://preview.mailerlite.com/c6d2b9/1361468932300478245/16c9/>.

See "The Life and Work of C.W. Grafton: Crime Novelist, Lawyer, and Father to a Mystery Icon" at <https://crimereads.com/cw-grafton/>. Yes, the father of Sue Grafton was a writer too.

See "Did Three Prisoners Really Survive..." at <http://dyingwords.net/did-three-prisoners-really-survive-their-escape-from-alcatraz/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 4942
Nonfiction words today..... 1550 (Journal)

Writing of "Silence Is Better" (SF short story)

Day 1..... 3265 words. Total words to date..... 3265 (done)

Writing of **The Three-Year Turn** (novel)

Day 11... 3442 words. Total words to date..... 36545

Day 12... 2278 words. Total words to date..... 38823

Day 13... 1677 words. Total words to date..... 40500

Total fiction words for the month..... 53355

Total fiction words for the year..... 118899

Total nonfiction words for the month... 18540

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 49800

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 168699

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 2

Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 5

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 47

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 201

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [CrimeReads](#), [DyingWords.net](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Digital Reader](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Boredom and the Power of I Am

[February 23, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Topic: Boredom and the Power of I Am
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

“[B]oredom comes when a reader anticipates (even subconsciously) what will happen next—and then it does.” James Scott Bell

Know how to beat boredom for your reader? Don't plan. Just write.

Topic: Boredom and the Power of I Am

Even if you're a non-believer, the bible and other religious texts hold important lessons for everybody. There's much wisdom there.

In my humble opinion, the most important is the concept of I AM.

I Am is the strongest, most positive force in existence.

“I want to” and even “I will” are weak and distant secondary also-rans. They at least carry possibilities, but those possibilities exist only in an undetermined future. If you don’t believe me, the next time you hear someone say one of those things, ask, “When?” Chances are, the response will be “Tomorrow” (which as we all know, never comes) or worse “Someday.”

But “I wish,” “I hope,” “I can,” and “I might” aren’t even in the same constellation. They carry only the illusion of possibilities. They are a before-the-fact acceptance of failure.

What does this have to do with writing?

I constantly hear “I want to write a short story” or “I want to write a novel.”

Every time, the first thought in my mind is, “Then why don’t you?” As Nike says, Just Do It.

How much stronger is “I Am writing a short story” or “I Am writing a novel”?

But back to the problem of “I Want To”: Of course, critical mind moves in.

If I heard “I Want To” and actually ask, “Then why aren’t you?” the answers are always the same. And they all start with, “Well, ‘I will’ (see above), but first I have to [fill in the blank*].”

I have To *outline, research, come up with an idea, go to the store, feed the dog, get another cup of coffee, etc. etc. ad nauseam, including study or learn how to [again, fill in the blank**].

I Have To Study or Learn How To **develop characters, plot, outline, write hooks, write openings, add suspense, add tension, meet reader expectations, identify my audience, develop my voice, again etc. etc. ad nauseam.

If you want to write a short story or novel, the only thing you need to do is beat the application problem I mentioned [in this Journal yesterday](#). If you haven’t read that topic, I urge you to do so. If you have, you know the application problem I’m talking about.

At the end of the day, either I Am a writer or I’m not. And if I’m not, that’s perfectly fine.

Because I learned this lesson a long time ago:

1. Stick your hand into a 5-gallon bucket of water. With your other hand, mark the level of the water.
2. Pull your hand out. Mark the level again.
3. That’s how much people will miss my fiction if I suddenly stop writing.

There is no middle ground, and there are no buts. “I wish,” “I hope,” “I can,” “I might” and even “I want to” and “I will” simply don’t matter.

I Am or I am not.

Today I spent the first five hours of the day in several pursuits: corresponding with a mentoring student, feeding the babies, checking the web for items for “Of Interest” and writing the stuff above. I also screwed off for awhile.

To the novel for the first session at 6.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “WWYWTR – Story Tense” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/wwywtr-story-tense/>.

See “The Authors Guild Rehashes Bogus Author Income Survey as a ‘New’ Report” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-authors-guild-rehashes-bogus-author-income-survey-as-a-new-report/>.

See “Have Shocking Coffee With Your Lead Character” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/02/have-shocking-coffee-with-your-lead-character.html> in case it resonates with you. In response to his question at the end of the post, my characters surprise me every time I sit down to write.

See “A Detailed Review of Vellum’s Book Formatting Software” at <https://kindlepreneur.com/vellum-software-review/>.

See “Stop the Monkey Mindset (for writers)” at <http://happyselfpublisher.com/stop-the-monkey-mindset-for-writers/>.

See “Self-Publishing: Carnival of the Indies Issue #113” at <https://www.thebookdesigner.com/2020/02/self-publishing-carnival-of-the-indies-issue-113/>.

Note: I do not recommend much of what the listed articles recommend. Submitted for your leisurely perusal.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 3030
Nonfiction words today..... 700 (Journal)

Writing of The Three-Year Turn (novel)

Day 11... 3442 words. Total words to date..... 36545
Day 12... 2278 words. Total words to date..... 38823

Day 13... 1677 words. Total words to date..... 40500
Day 14... 3030 words. Total words to date..... 43530

Total fiction words for the month..... 56385
Total fiction words for the year..... 121929
Total nonfiction words for the month... 19240
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 50500
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 168699

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 5
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 47
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 201
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Happy Self Publisher](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [KindlePreneur](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Book Designer](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: A Quick Lesson on Openings and Hooks

[February 24, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Topic: A Quick Lesson on Openings and Hooks
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“I’m letting the story and characters unfold... and writing whatever comes. It’s definitely faster. It’s not at all exhausting. I’m not feeling the ‘brain drain’ I get when I try to craft a story from the outside in. And I’m eager to pick [the story] up again tomorrow.” Patrick Dorn, a new proponent of writing into the dark

Topic: A Quick Lesson on Openings and Hooks

One of my patrons emailed me about the short story I just wrote on Saturday and sent out to them. He said he was “right there” in the story and that the threat of nuclear devastation was real as he was growing up so the story resonated with him.

So far, so good.

Only I didn't remember that the story had anything to do with nuclear devastation. So I had to go back and look at it.

I had to read only the first paragraph to remember that nuclear devastation was the whole story!

So I'm just sayin', it feels really good, early on Monday morning, to know I wasn't able to remember a short story I wrote only two days earlier.

And that is what I mean when I say *what* you write isn't important. (grin) The title of the story is "Silence Is Better."

Here's the opening (75 words, a character with a problem in a setting) that grabbed me and took over:

Richard Grayson stood just inside his living room and tentatively reached for the door knob. The lingering scent of Marion's perfume was finally gone. The only smell now was of dust. His hand trembled as he touched the cold bit of hammered bronze.

Do I really even want to open it? Do I want to see what's out there? What's left?

It had taken him a little over two hours to get to this point.

Note that the physical senses of sight, smell, and touch are included, plus the emotional sense of trepidation. (I should have inserted the sense of sound here too. I could have done that by inserting "silent" between "his" and "living room." The other physical senses come into the story very soon.)

But if I wanted to move backward* and rewrite this very short opening, I might write

Richard Grayson stood in his silent living room and tentatively reached for the door knob. All the furniture was still in place, but the lingering scent of Marion's perfume was finally gone. The only smell now was of the hovering dust.

His hand trembled as he touched the cold bit of hammered bronze.

Do I really even want to open it? Do I want to see what's out there? What's left?

It had taken him a little over two hours to get to this point.

The opening is now 10 words longer, yet those 10 words add the sense of sound and enhance the sense of sight.

**But I never move backward. I'll let the story stand as-is as a marker of my current skill level.*

One more note—The opening above is actually a prologue. There was a big discussion on PWW awhile back about whether to use prologues. I say use them when doing so feels right and don't use them when it doesn't. This was the quickest way to build suspense and pull the reader into the story.

By the way, if the story idea (character with a problem in a setting) above grabs you, write it if you want. Ideas do not fall under the purview of copyright law. (How that idea is presented in either of the fixed forms above is ©2020 Harvey Stanbrough, but the idea itself is not protected.)

Turned to the novel at 3:30 after a mentoring session and writing the stuff above. Before 5:30 (with a short break in the middle) I'd put down around 2300 words. It promises to be a good day.

By 6 another 700 words, then a much longer break up at the house.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "I Am Fully Unqualified To Talk About All Of This" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/i-am-fully-unqualified-to-talk-about-all-of-this/>.

See "The Secret Language of Vikings" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/02/the-secret-language-of-vikings.html>.

See "The Best Fonts for Books" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-best-fonts-for-books/>.
Grain of salt.

See "8 Social Media Scheduling Apps for Writers" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/8-social-media-scheduling-apps-for-writers/>.

See "Two pretty easy ways to add revenue that most publishers are missing" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/two-pretty-easy-ways-to-add-revenue-that-most-publishers-are-missing/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 5247
Nonfiction words today..... 740 (Journal)

Writing of The Three-Year Turn (novel)

Day 11... 3442 words. Total words to date..... 36545
Day 12... 2278 words. Total words to date..... 38823
Day 13... 1677 words. Total words to date..... 40500
Day 14... 3030 words. Total words to date..... 43530
Day 15... 5247 words. Total words to date..... 48777

Total fiction words for the month..... 61632
Total fiction words for the year..... 127176
Total nonfiction words for the month... 19980

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 51240
 Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 178416

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 2
 Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
 Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 5
 Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 47
 Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
 Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 201
 Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: When Rewriting Is (Maybe) Appropriate

[February 25, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Getting close
- * Topic: When Rewriting Is (Maybe) Appropriate
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

At almost 52,000 words, I finally have a sense that I'm nearing the final scenes of my WIP. The end isn't in sight (thankfully) but probably within another 10,000 words or so. So it looks like I'll finish it in February. Woohoo!

Topic: When Rewriting Is (Maybe) Appropriate

Yeah, I actually said the R word. But I didn't really mean it. What I actually meant was Cycling After the Fact (after a book is published).

I actively teach (and practice) not to rewrite. Coming as it does from the critical mind (actively looking for things that are "wrong"), rewriting is a Bad Idea.

When you rewrite a work you've just finished (before publication), most of the "improvements" you make will move the story farther from your own unique, original voice, which resides in your creative subconscious.

I also advocate not looking backward, not rewriting works that are already published and out there. I advise letting them stand as markers of your skill level at the time when you wrote them.

And up until now, I've followed my own advice.

But what later became Book 4 of my Wes Crowley series was also the very first novel I wrote. What later became Books 5 and 6 of that series, were also early novels (the second and third novels I ever wrote).

I learned a lot about writing (new-to-me techniques, etc.) before I wrote my fifth novel, which would later become Book 1 in that same series. Then I wrote Books 2 and 3. Then I skipped ahead and wrote Books 7 through 11.

It's always bugged me a bit that I wrote Books 4–6 at a lower skill level than Books 1–3. For just one thing, Books 4–6 have much longer paragraphs (I wrote them before I learned anything about Pacing). For another, I hadn't yet learned to include all five physical senses in every major scene.

In short, I didn't know to ground the reader and keep him grounded, and I didn't know how to pull him through the book with pacing techniques. I think I finally learned all of that by the time I committed Book 7 to the screen.

So in my spare time (grin) I'm going to start reading through Books 1–6 and letting myself touch them as I go.

This won't really be rewriting, which by definition is a function of the critical mind. I won't be consciously "looking for" things that are "wrong."

I'll be cycling, a function of the creative subconscious. It will be fun and it will be easy. And when I'm finished, the entire series will read as smoothly as the last several books in the series do now.

What is cycling? As I said above, it's a function of the creative subconscious. I'll read the books for pleasure and, as I also said above, I'll allow myself to touch them as I go, adding sensory detail to more deeply ground the reader. That and hitting the return (Enter) key now and then to enhance pacing.

I would never do this with a stand-alone novel, or with the novel series I wrote later. For one thing, it would bore me to read a story I already know by heart and for which I already know the ending.

But I'm far enough removed now (5+ years later) to read Books 1–6 of the Wes Crowley series and still be surprised at what happens in the story. At least that's my hope.

I probably won't start this until after I've finished with the free mentoring sessions in mid to late March. I'll probably let the cycling sessions take the time slot currently reserved for the mentoring sessions.

By the way, I got the idea to do this from the Kill Zone blog post referenced in today's "Of Interest."

Salesmen have a mantra ("the ABCs of selling"): Always Be Closing.

Writers should have a mantra too: Always Be Learning.

I automatically tossed out most of what the author wrote in that post, but that one idea grabbed me as an attractive possibility and here we are. We'll see how well it works.

Today I reversed my morning sequence a bit. I wrote the stuff above first and poked around for items for "Of Interest" first, and now I'm putting on my mentoring hat.

I'll write a little after that if there's time, then take a long break after that to see my wife and her sister off on their annual adventure.

At 5 I turned to the WIP. Wrote about 1000 words, then headed up to the house at 6.

The ladies left at 7:30. I straightened up a few things, then went back to the Hovel and the novel. By 8:30 I had another 1100 words. Back to the house now to check on the babies.

An okay writing day. I'm a little tired today so I quit early.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Writing Tips: Using Authentic Dialogue From Languages Other Than English" at <https://www.thecreativepenn.com/2020/02/19/writing-tips-using-authentic-dialogue-from-languages-other-than-english/>.

See "Regrets?" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/regrets/>.

See "When You Write a Perfect Story" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/when-you-write-a-perfect-story/>.

See "How To Rewrite Your Whole Darn Book" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/02/how-to-rewrite-your-whole-darn-book.html>. Despite what I teach (and practice) this is a good post for those with whom it will resonate, so I decided to pass it along.

See "Tennessee Becomes Next State Seeking Public Library Oversight, Censorship" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/tennessee-becomes-next-state-seeking-public-library-oversight-censorship/>. In my humble opinion, oversight boards and librarians making decisions regarding age-appropriate literature for children is not censorship.

For fun, see “Worried a Robot Apocalypse Is Imminent?” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/worried-a-robot-apocalypse-is-imminent/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 3057
Nonfiction words today..... 920 (Journal)

Writing of The Three-Year Turn (novel)

Day 11... 3442 words. Total words to date..... 36545
Day 12... 2278 words. Total words to date..... 38823
Day 13... 1677 words. Total words to date..... 40500
Day 14... 3030 words. Total words to date..... 43530
Day 15... 5247 words. Total words to date..... 48777
Day 16... 3057 words. Total words to date..... 51834

Total fiction words for the month..... 64689
Total fiction words for the year..... 130233
Total nonfiction words for the month... 20900
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 52160
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 178416

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 5
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 47
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 201
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Creative Penn](#), [David Farland](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Recognizing Life Rolls

[February 26, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * I felt a little disjointed
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

I felt a little disjointed yesterday, a little out of sorts. I was fatigued, felt less than interested in the novel I'm writing, etc. I wanted only to go sit on my recliner and watch reruns of old Twilight Zone episodes. (The writing in most of those is excellent, though the dialogue often leaves a lot to be desired.)

So that's what I did. I barely got my 3000 words yesterday, and as soon as I did, I retired to the house. But the whole time I was wondering in the back of my mind what in the world was wrong with me.

Then it dawned on me, and I laughed with relief. I realized I was going through a minor life roll that I hadn't recognized.

My wife left yesterday for her annual few days sisters celebration trip. That not only left a gap in my life (an essence that was usually there suddenly wasn't) but it also disrupted some small parts of my routine.

For example, I have to feed the chihuahua each morning and put him to bed in his kennel each evening (something my wife does when she's here). And many other little things like that.

These are not a big problems in and of themselves, and even combined they don't pose a large problem. It's just a disruption of the norm, so something I have to adjust to for a few days.

It just means I have to stay up a little later in the evening than I'm used to and let the pup out a little earlier in the morning, etc. And I have to make more efficient use of my breaks as I'm writing during the day. (There needs to be a 'purpose' for each break now.)

The big problem was recognizing it for what it is. Once I recognized that, it was a relief. (grin)

Sometimes life rolls come to us blatantly with a move from one city to another or the sudden illness or passing of a loved one. But other times they're more subliminal and more difficult to recognize, just little changes that tweak or disrupt the norm.

If you find yourself wondering what's going on with your own mind or your own routine, take a few minutes to check in with yourself and figure it out. Then you can get back to what you need to be doing.

You know, like writing. (grin) Even with a later start, I expect today to be a good day.

Today I expected a good day, and it was. Better than I expected. Today I missed my daily word-count goal, but I finished *The Storm* (formerly *The Three-Year Turn*). This is my third novel since December. Woohoo! The challenge is on track.

Tomorrow I'll write the short story that's due this week. Then I'll start the next novel. No idea what it will be.

The Storm will be published in two separate editions. I think I mentioned before, one edition will contain two extra chapters (around 2800 extra words) and will be titled The Storm [Blue Edition]. Because those two chapters, frankly, are a tad warm. (grin) Though maybe not by today's standards.

If anyone would like to jump aboard as a first reader, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com. (You can first-read either edition.)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Think Small to Make Big Scenes Work" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/02/think-small-to-make-big-scenes-work.html>. Some excellent pointers on POV characters and focusing down to details to bring out the big picture.

See "Copyright Small Claims Act Needs Our Help" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/copyright-small-claims-act>.

See "What's the Real Motive?" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/whats-the-real-motive-2/>.

See "Audiobook Publishing and Distribution: Getting Started Guide for Authors" at <https://www.janefriedman.com/audiobook-publishing/> if your interested.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 2772
Nonfiction words today..... 630 (Journal)

Writing of The Storm (formerly The Three-Year Turn) (novel)

Day 11... 3442 words. Total words to date..... 36545
Day 12... 2278 words. Total words to date..... 38823
Day 13... 1677 words. Total words to date..... 40500
Day 14... 3030 words. Total words to date..... 43530
Day 15... 5247 words. Total words to date..... 48777
Day 16... 3057 words. Total words to date..... 51834
Day 17... 2772 words. Total words to date..... 54606 (done)

Total fiction words for the month..... 67461
Total fiction words for the year..... 133055
Total nonfiction words for the month... 21530
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 52790
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 185795

| | |
|---|-----|
| Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... | 3 |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... | X |
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... | 5 |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 48 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 201 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: A Cover Reveal and On Being Prolific

[February 27, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Clive Cussler
- * Topic: A Cover Reveal and On Being Prolific
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Clive Cussler, one of our better authors, passed away today at the age of 88. May his family and friends heal quickly and well.

Topic: A Cover Reveal and On Being Prolific

Part 1

I'm taking a day off today, sort of.

Early this morning, I was tempted to let Heinlein's Rule 4 slip. But not from fear of what readers might think of my story.

I was tempted to let it slip because publishing just isn't that big a deal to me. Shrug. Writing, telling stories, is of maximum importance.

Dean Wesley Smith gets it. Were it not for his publishing company, which is staffed by a lot of other people, Dean would fall off HR4 more than I do. (grin)

And Kristine Kathryn Rusch and Stephen King and a lot of others get that writing is what's important. And I get it. A handful of others I know get it too. We write. We turn out story after story, novel after novel. We keep going, generally, until we come to the end and assume room temperature. For us, writing isn't special or some kind of calling. It's just what we do.

We know some readers will love the stories we tell, and we're grateful for them. We know many more will like or enjoy the stories we tell, and we're grateful for them too.

And we know a few will hate our stories, and that's fine. They're entitled to their opinion. Besides, it's really none of our business what readers think of our stories. We let the story, the writing, stand on its own.

Still, I took the temptation to slip off Heinlein's Rule 4 as a critical-mind diversion.

So I started the day by finding cover art (courtesy of Pexels), then created a cover and a promo doc for *The Storm*.

And here's my story description from the promo doc:

Harold Sloan is the chief terraformer on Galen, a planet in another solar system.

Harold is also a man who lives very much within himself, and he loves nothing more than his work. Or so he believes.

Which is worse? The work-stopping storm that sometimes rages outside his annex apartment window? Or is it the internal storm, the one he can never escape?

Search tags: SF, other world, terraforming, romance, love, treachery, horror

Later today maybe I'll write the short story that's due on Saturday.

Part 2

Well, I guess I'm a prolific writer. I don't feel especially prolific. I just write. It's just what I do. But every now and then someone mentions that I'm prolific. I suppose it all depends on your definition of the word.

That word always causes me to think immediately of the old pulp writers, many of whom churned out well over a million words per year in clean, one-draft stories on manual typewriters. Think about that.

Of course, that was in a time before all the excuses for not writing hit.

Most of the old pulp writers didn't outline, but those who did also wrote.

And none of them rewrote because they understood they were paid to write. They knew if they spent precious writing time going over a manuscript a second or third or twelfth time, they would still be paid for only the one manuscript.

Instead of fearing that one manuscript might not be perfect, they feared they might not make their rent if they didn't use that time to write more stories.

I keep that thought in the back of my mind all the time. Along with my age and level of health, it drives me to the computer and it drives me to write one clean draft.

Of course, I can't say those old pulp writers didn't Talk about writing or Think about writing. But they didn't talk and think about writing INSTEAD of writing, which today seems all the rage.

I talk a lot about writing, don't I? And I think about it even more. And frankly, I probably talk about it and think about it much more than most would-be writers who never get past talking and thinking about it. Yet somehow, I'm prolific.

Go figure.

Today, after all of the above (talking and thinking about writing), I'm taking the rest of the day off. (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "These self-published authors are actually making a living. Here's how." at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/these-self-published-authors-are-actually-making-a-living-heres-how/>.

See "Attract Your Readers: 4 Steps to Your Author Branding Statement" at <https://www.thebookdesigner.com/2020/02/attract-your-readers-4-steps-to-your-author-branding-statement/>. Branding shmanding. Write the next story.

See "The Book Launch: eBook Preorder and Presale Strategies to Grow Readership" at <https://blog.smashwords.com/2020/02/the-book-launch-ebook-preorder-and.html>.

See "Stuck in the Muddle with You" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/stuck-in-the-muddle-with-you>.

See "Business Musings: Comfort Zones" at <https://kriswrites.com/2020/02/26/business-musings-comfort-zones/>.

See "TPW 116: The End." at <http://theprolificwriter.libsyn.com/tpw-116-the-end>. Ryan interviews Sashka Hanna-Rappl and Peter Seth for his final show. (You'll still be able to check out the 144 episodes he's done at <http://theprolificwriter.libsyn.com/>.)

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... El Zippo
Nonfiction words today..... 830 (Journal)

Writing of "" (short story)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 67461
Total fiction words for the year..... 133055
Total nonfiction words for the month... 22360
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 53620
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 186625

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 5
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 48
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 201
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Kristine Kathryn Rusch](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Smashwords](#), [The Book Designer](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Dean Wesley Smith and Exciting News

[February 28, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * About Dean Wesley Smith
- * New Patronage Tiers
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

I have a feeling (I hope I'm wrong) that Dean Wesley Smith is moving away from sharing writing tips in his daily blog. That's why I haven't linked to his posts much lately in "Of Interest."

He's a great teacher, which in my mind, for my way of learning, means he drops gems of information that I can glean, figure them out on my own, and learn from them. But it seems to me he isn't doing that as much recently.

And I think I know why.

As he opens more and more "big" classes he seems to be moving more toward sharing his knowledge only in those classes. By "big" classes, I mean his Licensing Transition, Shared

Worlds, and Decade Ahead classes as well as his various inclusive, participatory challenges, of which he now has four:

- * Short story challenge
- * Novel challenge
- * Publishing challenge
- * Collaboration challenge

I support him in this endeavor. You can find information on any of the above (and a lot more) at <https://wmg-publishing-workshops-and-lectures.teachable.com/>.

Understand, I don't blame Dean for shifting his focus. Over the years he's shared tons of excellent information on both WITD and various writing techniques, and I personally have found them invaluable. If I hadn't rediscovered Dean six years ago, I wouldn't be where I am today as a writer. Period.

I also don't think Dean is withholding information on writing from his blog intentionally. I think he's doing so many videos for the classes and challenges that he simply doesn't have anything left to post in his blog.

To my knowledge, that leaves me and this Journal as the only constant source of valid information on writing into the dark and the various specific writing techniques that feed it or stem from it (depth, pacing, setting, scene, openings and hooks, grounding the reader, etc.).

If you feel the same way, please share the URL of this Journal: hestanbrough.com. And by all means, if you know of anyone else who shares knowledge regularly (at least once a week) on this wonderful technique, please let me know so I can follow that person too.

Exciting News

In light of the above, I'm redesigning the patronage tiers, adding a new level, and moving the patronage page to the Journal site.

NOTE: This change will NOT affect current patrons. ALL CURRENT PATRONS will be grandfathered-in and moved to the next higher tier while maintaining their current donation level.

For example, if you signed on earlier for \$3 per month, you will receive the rewards listed under the \$6 per month level (Patron Reader) while still donating only \$3 per month. If you signed on earlier at the \$11 level, you will now receive the rewards listed under the \$12 per month level (Patron Saint). So you will continue to receive the rewards you signed up for and more.

If you are NOT yet a patron but you find this Journal of value, I'm asking for your support. If you can sign on as a patron at any level, please do so. The best way is to sign on via PayPal (see the selections at the bottom of the [Become a Patron](#) page. If you can't, please at least share the URL of this Journal with other writers.

Today, I'm redesigning my three main websites a bit. It's looking more and more like the story of the week will come down to me writing it on the deadline day. (grin)

I'm posting this very early. If I do happen to write fiction today, those numbers will be reflected in tomorrow's totals. Anyone else feel like March is approaching faster than usual?

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "First Of The Month!" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/first-of-the-month/>.

See "Out of This World: Shining Light on Black Authors in Every Genre" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/out-of-this-world-shining-light-on-black-authors-in-every-genre/>.

See "Give older children story time to halt fall in young readers, urge experts" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/give-older-children-story-time-to-halt-fall-in-young-readers-urge-experts/>. Uh, you can also donate age-appropriate books. Even your own. Just sayin'.

See "Count – Don't Count" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/count-dont-count/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... Nada
Nonfiction words today..... 670 (Journal)

Writing of "" (short story)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 67461
Total fiction words for the year..... 133055
Total nonfiction words for the month... 23030
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 54290
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 187295

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 5
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 48
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 201
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: A Short Story Contest

[February 29, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

This morning I was handed a theme for my upcoming short story: People are strange.

It's a contest prompt, and the deadline is midnight EST, 1 March. That's TOMORROW. Just in case you want to and can pound out a short story in that time, I've included the link in "Of Interest" below.

Apparently the opening date was Feb 10, but I didn't learn of it until today. Probably due to my own inattention.

Anyway, I turned-to. Wrote a short story to meet my own deadline and then submitted it to the contest. (grin)

You'll see it below. Now I'm giving the rest of this month to my wife.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "People Are Strange: The Book, and a Short Story Contest" at <https://leelofland.com/people-are-strange-the-book-and-a-short-story-contest/>.

See "Florence Osmund Joins The Book Designer..." at <https://www.thebookdesigner.com/2020/02/florence-osmund-joins-the-book-designer-as-a-contributing-writer/>. Submitted in case the internal links strike your interest.

See "Early Bird Discount Ending" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/early-bird-discount-ending/>. An opportunity.

Via The Passive Guy, see "Renewable Books Leads Industry with Green Initiatives" at <https://themillions.com/2020/02/renewable-books-leads-industry-with-green-initiatives.html>. This has GOT to be satire.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 3690
Nonfiction words today..... 190 (Journal)

Writing of “A Gesture of Friendship” (short story)

Day 1..... 3690 words. Total words to date..... 3690 (done)

Total fiction words for the month..... 71151
Total fiction words for the year..... 136695
Total nonfiction words for the month... 2320
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 54480
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 191175

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 6
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 48
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 202
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Book Designer](#), [The Millions](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: On the Perceived Threat of Writing Off Into the Dark

[March 1, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * On Amazon Prime
- * Topic: On the Perceived Threat of Writing Off Into the Dark
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“It is not merely enough to love literature if one wishes to spend one’s life as a writer. It is a dangerous undertaking on the most primitive level. For, it seems to me, the act of writing with serious intent involves enormous personal risk. It entails the ongoing courage for self-discovery.

It means one will walk forever on the tightrope, with each new step presenting the possibility of learning a truth about oneself that is too terrible to bear.” Harlan Ellison

A seeming addendum—”Don’t be afraid to go there.” Harlan Ellison

“I hate when a director says to me ‘Here’s how I envision this scene’.... Excuse me? It’s right here in the script. I ‘envisioned’ it FOR you. Do what I wrote. If you want to ‘envision,’ you should become a writer. Where the fuck were you when the page was blank?” Harlan Ellison

“NO ONE GETS OUT OF CHILDHOOD ALIVE. It’s not the first time I’ve said that. But among the few worthy bon mots I’ve gotten off in sixty-seven years, that and possibly one other may be the only considerations eligible for carving on my tombstone. (The other one is the one entrepreneurs have misappropriated to emboss on buttons and bumper stickers: ‘The two most common elements in the universe are hydrogen and stupidity.’ I don’t so much mind that they pirated it, but what does honk me off is that they never get it right. They render it dull and imbecile by phrasing it thus: ‘The two most common things in the universe are....’ Not *things*, you insensate gobbets of ambulatory giraffe dung, *elements*! Elements is funny, things is imprecise and semi-guttural. Things! Geezus, when will the goyim learn they don’t know how to tell a joke?” Harlan Ellison

“I don’t mind you thinking I’m stupid, but don’t talk to me like I’m stupid.” Harlan Ellison

Via Dan Baldwin, If you have access to Amazon Prime on TV, search for Harlan Ellison: *Dreams With Sharp Teeth*. This is a must-see for every serious writer.

And by “serious writer” I mean one who is not afraid to bare his soul and his faults and his dreams and nightmares and insanity and splay them across the page. I watched *Dreams With Sharp Teeth* last night, and I’ll watch it at least one more time. When the price drops, I’ll probably buy it and watch it several more times.

It is absolutely excellent and should be mandatory viewing for all writers once or twice a year, or whenever they start thinking they need to be careful, they need to outline or rewrite, or anytime they start to believe that anyone else knows more about their story than they do.

As you’re watching it and soaking-in all of Ellison’s accomplishments, try to remember that he wrote off into the dark.

Topic: On the Perceived Threat of Writing Off Into the Dark

Recently two of our regular contributors to Pro Writers Writing fled the website because it was becoming, in their view, too much about writing into the dark, even “a WITD site.” As the site’s founder, I can assure you it wasn’t planned that way. The writers on PWW simply express their own thoughts on writing and publishing. I (a major advocate of WITD) didn’t and don’t control what contributors write there.

Nor did I censor or control what proponents of outlining, rewriting, etc. wrote there, though I did occasionally take exception in the comments section when one of them misrepresented WITD, something of which proponents of outlining, etc. know nothing about. (“Write what you know” springs to mind for some reason.)

Here’s the thing—We were all taught the same techniques: we must outline, revise, run our work through critique groups, and rewrite (often a specific number of times—one now-defunct magazine I know of required in their guidelines that a story must be rewritten a minimum of six times and professionally edited at least twice before it would be considered for publication). We were taught that our work can’t possibly have value if we enjoy it, and that it can’t have value unless we labor over it.

And we were all taught those things, at least initially, by nonwriters: by English teachers and Literature professors and (of all things) even professional critics.

We were taught to limit ourselves, to mistrust our own creative subconscious and to trust our inner critic.

And yet, writers universally believe “Writers are the worst judges of their own work.” But those who “labor” at writing believe it much more strongly when they think what they’ve written is “good.” Somehow the notion disappears when they think what they’ve written is “bad.” (Then, into the drawer it goes, never to see the light of day.)

It’s all silliness. Writing isn’t some elevated calling. It’s a job of work. It’s what some people do, like plumbing or working on cars or carpentry or being a cop or a lawyer or a doctor. But that’s a realization that doesn’t come, generally, until the person who would be a writer gets out of his own way and, you know, actually writes, day-in and day-out.

Though I’m far from famous, I’m one of many, *many* accomplished, successful professional writers who write off into the dark. But I’m also one of very few (only two that I know of) who talk and share regularly about the joy and freedom of that ability to trust the creative subconscious.

Yet there are literally millions of places where would-be writers can (re)learn that they “should” fit the mold: outline, revise, run the critique gamut, rewrite, etc. We who write off into the dark are vastly outnumbered by those who believe they know the story better than their characters do.

Maybe that’s why it amuses me so (in a very Harlan Ellison kind of way) that those of us who write off into the dark are somehow perceived as a threat by those who work their way word-by-word, sentence-by-carefully-crafted-sentence, cautiously, and above all thoughtfully, through their stories.

Trust me, those of us who write off into the dark are not a threat. We honestly don’t care how others write. We’re too busy writing our own stories. Some of us will pay it forward and help others if they ask, but we don’t pressure anyone. After all, how do I benefit if someone else writes 4 or 6 or 12 novels in a year instead of only 1 or 2?

I've been writing for 50 years. I've now written 48 novels (I'll start my 49th today), 8 novellas, over 200 short stories and hundreds of poems and articles. I wrote the first-ever book-length poetry collection published as an ebook (Lessons for a Barren Population, Hard Shell Word Factory, around 1998). Some of my poetry collections have been nominated for major awards, including the National Book Award. One of my nonfiction books on writing took 5th place in the Book Expo America (BEA New York) Book of the Year Awards. I think that was in 2006.

Yet recently, when I offered a week of free mentoring on Heinlein's Rules and Writing Into the Dark (at least a \$50 value) to around 100 writers, I had only 4 takers. (The offer is closed now.)

But I wasn't surprised. It's difficult to "dare to be bad" (as Nina Kiriki Hoffman put it), to risk that some reader you'll never meet will not like your work. I get that. But it's also exciting. And it's exciting to be confident enough in yourself and your abilities not to worry about what others think.

If I lie and tell readers I wrote all those novels over the past 50 years, they would consider me accomplished and seek out my work. But if I tell them (truthfully) I've written those novels and novellas and most of those short stories over the past 6 years, they would think I'm either lying or a hack.

So I don't tell readers anything. I just write, and let them do the math on their own. (They won't.) And as to whether the work is "good" or "bad," I leave that judgement to the readers too, where it belongs.

I *do* tell other writers, those who seem interested, about Heinlein's Rules and writing off into the dark, but frankly I get very few takers. And most of even the takers eventually succumb to the fear of working without a net and revert to at least some version of "knowing what's going to happen next" in their stories.

Again, I understand. It's safer that way.

But I prefer to live life on the razor's edge, always a little frightened, always a little crazy, and always interested. I always look forward to writing the next scene or the next short story or the next novel to find out what happens next.

I hope you eventually find your way to this exciting technique, whether through me, Dean Wesley Smith or through your own determination. Once you do, you'll find that risking it all is endlessly more rewarding than being timid and cautious.

And if you happen to be interested, I'm still offering mentoring sessions. You can see the various levels and prices in the topic at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-journal-this-is-important/>.

I'm 67 years old. If you want to learn from me and take a leap forward in your work, don't delay too long. (grin)

Today I'll write because that's what I do. Probably I'll begin my March novel, but I'll report numbers tomorrow so I can get this out early.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "A Great Writing Article" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/a-great-writing-article/>. Note that your job as a writer is to cause what psychiatrists call an "adjustment reaction."

See "Writers Ought to be Better Than This" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/writers-ought-to-be-better-than/>.

See "What's the Best Way to Discover Your Story?" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/03/whats-the-best-way-to-discover-your-story.html>. For those who need to do it this way. This also provided the impetus for my topic above.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 1670 (Journal)

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... XXXX
Total fiction words for the year..... 136695
Total nonfiction words for the month... 1670
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 56150
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 192845

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 6
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 48
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 202
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: More Quotes and On Teasing a Piranha Tank

[March 2, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * If you read James Scott Bell's
- * As seems to be becoming my habit
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“When you're all alone out there, on the end of the typewriter, with each new story a new appraisal by the world of whether you can still get it up or not, arrogance and self-esteem and deep breathing are all you have. It often looks like egomania. I assure you it's the bold coverup of the absolutely terrified.” Harlan Ellison

“It is not my job to lull you with a false sense of the rightness of the universe. This wonderful and terrible occupation of recreating the world in a different way, each time fresh and strange, is an act of revolutionary guerrilla warfare. I stir the soup. I inconvenience you. I make your nose run and your eyeballs water.” Harlan Ellison

“Fear not your enemies, for they can only kill you; fear not your friends, for they can only betray you. Fear only the indifferent, who permit the killers and betrayers to walk safely on the earth.” Polish poet Edward Yashinsky

If you read [James Scott Bell's post](#) on the Kill Zone blog yesterday, and if you read the comments, you'll see why I very seldom mention WITD to those who are still steeped in the myths. I want so badly to help, but as Twain said, it's much easier to fool folks than it is to convince them they've been fooled. I tried. Someday, knowing me, I'll try again. In the meantime, it's nice to be home among those of you who at least put up with me. (grin)

Our former PWW blogger Terry Odell even said in a comment that she had “never been exposed [in school] to anything like the ‘you musts’” I listed: outlining, revising, critique groups, and rewriting. She must be truly unique. Did anyone else out there *not* hear those things in Jr. High or Middle School, High School or college?

Which line of reasoning left me wondering where she learned them. But no, I didn't bother saying anything.

The whole experience was not unlike being lowered into a tank of piranha while wearing meatloaf underwear. Of course, it was my own fault. It was still fun though. (grin) I also left the URL for the Journal. It will be interesting to see how many TKZers actually visit. (I'm betting on none, but I hope some do.) I did pick up one new subscriber today.

For the record, more than one person said they had “tried both ways,” which I assume meant the myths and WITD. If that is indeed what they meant, to correct the record I’ll just leave this right here:

Nobody who has ever really tried WITD and learned to trust their creative subconscious has ever gone back to outlining, revising, rewriting etc. To those of us who write off into the dark, all of that just seems a massive waste of time.

Anyway, as seems to be becoming my habit, I didn’t write fiction yesterday. (I didn’t write the first three days of February either, but that worked out all right. [grin]) That isn’t to say I take the writing for granted. I don’t. But like all other things in WITD, it’s a matter of trust. My creative subconscious is aware of my goals, and it will provide.

I did get the yard mowed yesterday though, mostly mustard grass and dandelions. My little girl cat will be annoyed with me; it was her jungle. (grin)

Today I started what might be my next novel, a they-come-here future-Earth SF story.

Still, not all that good of a day. Only 3000 words when I should have hit at least 4000 easily. The only really good news is, if this one’s going to stall, it will stall early. If it does, I’ll discard it and start something else.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “IngramSpark introduces new quality rules for self-published authors” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/ingramspark-introduces-new-quality-rules-for-self-published-authors/>.

See “Time Management For Unruly Writers” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/time-management-for-unruly-writers>.

See “New Videos Are Up” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/new-videos-are-up/>.

See “24 Themed Calls for Submissions” at <https://www.authorspublish.com/24-themed-calls-for-submissions-for-march-2020/>. Always read guidelines/terms of service.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 3010
Nonfiction words today..... 700 (Journal)

Writing of The Others (tentative title, novel)

Day 1..... 3010 words. Total words to date..... 3010

| | |
|---|--------|
| Total fiction words for the month..... | 3010 |
| Total fiction words for the year..... | 139705 |
| Total nonfiction words for the month... | 2370 |
| Total nonfiction words for the year..... | 56850 |
| Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... | 196555 |
| | |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... | 3 |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... | X |
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... | 6 |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 48 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 202 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: A Smattering of Thoughts and Self-Hypnosis

[March 3, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Thus ends the current string
- * Correction
- * Topic: Self-Hypnosis
- * I love to write
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“If you make people think they’re thinking, they’ll love you; but if you really make them think, they’ll hate you.” Harlan Ellison

“The only thing worth writing about is people.” Harlan Ellison

“The trick is not becoming a writer. The trick is staying a writer.” Harlan Ellison

“I was the green monkey, the pariah. And I had no friends. Not just a few friends, or one good friend, or grudging acceptance by other misfits and outcasts. I was alone. All stinking alone, without even an imaginary playmate.” Harlan Ellison

“Thus ... the process that not even Aristotle could codify was triggered:
‘Where do you get your ideas?’
‘I purposely mishear things.’” Harlan Ellison

And thus ends the current string of quotes of the day from Harlan Ellison. The man was a font of wisdom on writing. Not ‘weird’ writing, but unique, original author-voice writing.

I wish he was still around. I wish I could be invited to his Los Angeles home to talk with him about writing, though I’d want him to do most of the talking. My role would be to cast bait.

I wish this so stringently that I might begin practicing self-hypnosis again, during which it is possible (I believe) to access the company of deceased folks to talk with them and glean some of their wisdom.

Correction: the quote from yesterday that begins with “Fear not your enemies...” is actually from Polish poet Bruno Jasiński (Thanks to Rikki M. for the correction.)

Topic: Self-Hypnosis

Self-hypnosis is one way to make a direct connection with the creative subconscious. It is an intentional, firm setting-aside of the conscious, critical mind in order to provide that direct, unfettered connection.

It’s a wonderful tool that can be used for anything from historical research to effecting or speeding-up healing of a physical wound.

Best of all, once you learn and practice self-hypnosis for awhile, it will be easier to drop at-will into “the zone” (the alpha “dream” state of the subconscious) while writing.

If you choose to try it, I strongly recommend finding a reputable hypnotist (operator) first. You should tell that person your goal is self-hypnosis. His or her job will be to get you used to the technique and teach you how to do it yourself. I recommend attending no more than five sessions with that person. (A subject can easily become dependent on an operator.)

You can also learn the technique from books though it’s a little more labor intensive. I especially recommend books by William W. Hewitt.

Just putting it out there.

I love to write.

I don’t mean just telling stories, though that’s a good reason to write. I mean the actual physical act.

There’s almost nothing I enjoy more than the feeling of my fingers poised on the keyboard, tapping out the actual little black marks that seem almost miraculously to appear on the page

(typewriter) or screen (computer) and convey the story eventually to my readers, many of whom are hundreds or thousand of miles away.

We all have certain keyboards we're more comfortable with.

Harlan Ellison famously typed almost everything he wrote on an Olympia SG3. He kept several (like a dozen or so) "spares" on shelves in a closet or spare room just in case something went wrong with the one he was typing on.

I've typed almost all of my novels, novellas, short stories, nonfiction books, responses to mentoring questions and emails, and blog posts, including this Journal, on a little 14" Hewlett-Packard 6460b, my "writing 'puter."

I own a few other computers, including other brands and other HPs, but I've never found one where my fingers feel so much at home as they do on this machine.

But it's getting old. I've literally even worn the letters off some of the keys. (grin) So I've decided, just in case, to order at least one more from an ebay seller. Like Harlan, I'll keep it on a shelf "just in case."

If something happens and this one goes bad, I could easily have it repaired. But chances are, while it's being repaired that One Story Idea that would make my first million will occur to me, and of course, that idea will disappear five minutes before I retrieve my writing 'puter from the shop. (grin)

Just food for thought. And how about you? What's your favorite writing machine? (Even if it's your dominant hand and a Bic pen or Number 2 pencil.)

Today, I'm finally turning to the WIP at 6 a.m. I'll cycle through what I've already written. If it takes off I'll go with it and you'll see the results below. If it doesn't, I'll write another (or a few more) openings and you'll see those results below. So many stories to write, so little time. (grin)

To get the Journal off my desk, I've decided to post early again today. I'll update whatever fiction numbers tomorrow.

By the way (if anyone was interested), for the time being, I've set aside my intention to create a shared-world bible and share a world in which others may write. I might bring it back someday (maybe in 2021) but right now I just don't have time to devote to it.

Welcome to our recent new subscribers. I hope you'll find the Journal of some practical use in improving your craft and bringing joy to your writing. Just so you know, you can always email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com with questions or concerns.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Choices” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/choices/>.

See “Outlining in Reverse” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/03/outlining-in-reverse.html>. This from a self-identified “pantser” (god I hate that term) at TKZ of all places.

See “Two New Projects” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/two-new-projects/>. Shared Worlds class is about to get very exciting. Still time to jump in if you want. (Licensing Transition is still open too. It’s focused on business, and SW is more focused on writing.)

See “What Makes a Great Writing Group?” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/what-makes-a-great-writing-group/>.

See “End the Debate: Why the Oxford Comma (or Serial Comma) is so Cool!” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/end-the-debate-why-the-oxford-comma-or-serial-comma-is-so-cool/>.

See “A Couple of Potentially Helpful Sites/Services” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/a-couple-of-potentially-helpful-sites-services/>.

For those who haven’t seen it yet, see “Six Things Writers Need To Stop Worrying About” at <https://jakonrath.blogspot.com/2019/07/five-things-writers-need-to-stop.html>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 1060 (Journal)

Writing of **The Others** (tentative title, novel)

Day 1..... 3010 words. Total words to date..... 3010

Total fiction words for the month..... 3010
Total fiction words for the year..... 139705
Total nonfiction words for the month... 3430
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 579150
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 197615

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 6
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 48
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 202
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [JA Konrath](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: You Want to Read This

[March 4, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Yesterday
- * A great mentoring student
- * Topic: How Specifically to Write Into the Dark
- * My mentoring student also asked
- * Because I know
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“To move past obstacles you need to move. The hardest obstacles to do that with are the ones you create yourself.” Colin Mobey

Yesterday, as promised, I read over the 3000 words I'd written on The Others. It was gibberish. I threw it out. I kept only the idea.

Sometime today I'll write a new opening for that idea or for another one (character with a problem in a setting) and if it runs I'll continue with it. If it doesn't, I'll write another one.

A great mentoring student emailed me with some problems he's encountering while trying to write off into the dark. He's giving it that old college try. (grin)

He's “trying to stay in the head of the character,” by which he means he's “focusing on small things like where should the character move to next in the setting, what would he/she do with her hands now, would he look up or down at this point etc.”

Finally, he wrote, “Do you have any advice to make this easier?”

And here we are. I decided to share here what I wrote in my lengthy response. Bear with me. This will be long, but you might find a gem or two here.

Topic: How to Write Into the Dark

I went through exactly the same thing when I first decided to give WITD an honest try. Plus I was skeptical.

In the back of my mind, I was going to prove Dean Wesley Smith wrong. How could he possibly ‘know’ WITD would work for me? After all, he was already a successful writer with over a hundred novels and several hundred short stories published. OF COURSE it would be easy for him to give up the myths and Just Write.

Then I found out he NEVER SOLD A SHORT STORY until he stopped rewriting. And that was almost by accident.

Back in the mid-‘70s, he was writing a story a week in a mutual challenge and sending it off to a publisher. (He and another writer, Nina Kiriki Hoffman, challenged each other. The first to fail to send off a short story to a publisher every week would have to buy the other a steak dinner.)

He was late one week, so he sat down and hammered out a short story, then mailed it off just before the deadline.

And the publisher bought it. Even though Dean hadn’t revised or rewritten it. (This is about the time he stumbled across Heinlein’s Rules in a tiny old book of essays in his bookstore.)

Still, he figured it must be a fluke, so he went back to writing stories earlier in the week so he would have time to revise and rewrite.

And his stories stopped selling.

He finally put two and two together and decided to do it Heinlein’s way: Write (rule 1). Don’t rewrite (rule 3). Send it off (rule 4).

And his stories started selling again. And very soon afterward, he sold his first novel to a New York publisher.

He soon became known as a “fast” writer because he could write a 60,000 word novel in 60 hours. (Because he wasn’t rewriting, duh.) And with New York understanding he could write “fast” the offers started to pour in.

All because he trusted Heinlein’s Rules.

Along with that, Nina Kiriki Hoffman advised him to “dare to be bad”; in other words, risk trusting his own creative subconscious. He took that dare, and he never looked back.

I did the same thing. I wrote my first short story in this new way on April 15, 2014. The title was “Consuela,” my very first WITD story (If you’d like to see it, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com and I’ll send it to you.)

The point is, I'd chosen Dean as a mentor, and I knew the only way I could prove him wrong (or right) was to give WITD and Heinlein's Rules an actual try. (He wasn't advising me directly. I was gleaning things from his website and occasionally emailed him.)

So I did. The more I tried to WITD, the louder the critical voice became: (what happens next? what does the character do with his hands now? what would the character notice in the setting next? etc.) Sound familiar? (grin)

One day Dean told me to "Stop 'trying.' Just write the stupid story." Then he said, "But if you can't, that's all right. Every writer is different."

Well, I thought if WITD really works, then that "every writer is different" thing was just a way to give myself an out. The thing is, I didn't WANT an out. I wanted to either prove WITD worked or didn't work.

And I'm stubborn. His "every writer is different" sounded like challenge to me, like maybe I didn't have what it takes to let go and just write off into the dark.

So I pushed that critical voice down each time it popped up because I was determined to give WITD a real try. (But I was still skeptical.)

Sometimes when my critical mind tried to stop me, I physically laughed, or snorted and shook my head, or physically said, "Go sit in your corner and leave me alone." Sometimes I only shook my head, or only thought those things.

Then I put my fingers on the keyboard and continued typing. I wrote the next sentence, then the next, then the next. And it worked. So that's what I recommend you do.

Within a couple of weeks, I was finishing stories, spell-checking them, and publishing them. And readers were BUYING them. (I was writing every day—a character with a problem in a setting—then running with the opening if it took off. If it didn't, I trashed it and wrote a new opening, different character, different problem, different setting. If it ran, I went with it, etc. Lather, rinse, repeat.)

And frankly, I was surprised and amazed at the things my characters did and how much fun it was to just let them tell their own story. And that was an epiphany and my turning point.

I finally realized it wasn't MY story at all. It was the CHARACTERS' story. They, not I, were living it. I was only moving through the story WITH them. I was their invited guest, a reporter, writing down what they said and did as they moved through the story.

This is about the time I found the Bradbury quote: "Plot is only the footprints the characters leave as they run through the story." That rang absolutely true with me.

The characters raced through the story, with me trying to keep up. I wrote down what they said and did.

Later, when I learned (with my conscious mind) to use the POV character's five senses to ground the reader in the setting, I learned to take my time. I wrote what the POV character saw and smelled and heard and tasted and touched or felt emotionally. Sometimes I wouldn't get that on the first pass, so I'd cycle back and add it. And my stories became richer.

But notice, all description is through the POV character's senses, not mine. And it includes the POV character's OPINION of the setting: the 'stench' or 'sweet aroma' of something in the setting; the 'glaring' or 'soft' lighting; the 'raucous' or 'startling' or 'enjoyable' sounds; etc.

Of course, you won't find a lot of that opinion in my first short story, "Consuela." That came in later, after I learned to ground the reader in the setting by adding depth to my stories and my descriptions.

And I learned over time that I really AM the worst judge of my own work, both when I think it's good and when I think it's bad. Judging my work isn't my place. My job is to write the story for the characters. The readers' job is to judge it, to enjoy it or not.

So what do I think you should do? I think you should do exactly what I did.

1. Stop "trying" to be in the character's head. Stop making it complicated. Let go and Just Write what the characters say and do. And write what the POV character sees, hears, smells, tastes, and feels, physically or emotionally.

2. Realize it's the characters' story, not yours. Realize you're an invited guest. The characters need your fingers on your keyboard in order to tell their story. Run through the story WITH the characters (as opposed to "directing" them from on high in an authorial ivory tower).

3. Realize the story isn't important. It doesn't matter, so it's nothing that has to be "perfect." It's only a story, one of dozens or hundreds. It's only a few minutes' (or hours' in the case of a novel) entertainment for the eventual readers.

4. Don't worry or think about where the character should move or what he should do next. Just watch and write down what he does.

5. Don't "imagine" anything. Just follow the characters around. Follow them through the story, and above all else

6. Don't worry about what will happen next or where the story's going. It's none of your business until something happens. Then write it down.

It isn't YOUR story. In YOUR story you've gotten a good night's sleep and you're sitting down to write for an hour before your wife and babies get up and you have to go off to work.

In YOUR story you'll go to work each day, then come home and do whatever you do and deal with whatever you have to deal with as your life unfolds.

In YOUR story, on weekends and days off, you'll enjoy your family and friends and, sometimes, you'll drop in on your character's lives to see what's going on in THEIR story.

Do this, and soon you'll be ANXIOUS to drop in on your characters and their story. You'll be curious and you'll want to SEE (not "figure out") what happens next in that fantasy or science fiction or mystery or action-adventure world in which your characters are living.

What happens next? You can't possibly know until you drop into the story and run through it with your characters, because it's THEIR story. You can't possibly know what will happen next until it does. And then you write it down.

All of that being said, I'd be remiss if I didn't say this: Writing off into the dark isn't for everybody. As Dean told me long ago, Every writer is different.

WITD is dependent first and foremost on your desire and ability to let go of all the safety nets (outlining, revising, critique groups, rewriting) you learned ages ago in high school and/or college.

The desire to let go is required because if you don't want to let go, you won't, and ***the ability to let go*** is required because in order to let go you have to overcome your fear of your manuscript not being "perfect" and your notion that you can prejudge what another reader will like. You have to overcome your fear that somebody out there might not like your work.

I recommend turning that fear around: instead of being afraid someone won't like your work, think of how many people will never get a chance to like it if you don't write it and publish it.

Once you've overcome those fears, you will write and publish in your own unique, original voice, and you'll be pleasantly surprised at how many readers will love your stories.

My mentoring student also asked, "What other areas do you help with in mentoring?"

If you wonder too, please see "The Journal: This is Important" at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-journal-this-is-important/>. Scroll down to "Level A" and read down from there.

Because I know not all of you read the Journal every day, I'm going to make a dual announcement. Today, I'll let you know that in a few days, Dean's going to launch a new Kickstarter project called Cave Creek.

The proceeds of the Kickstarter, if it's successful, will go to help WMG Publishing pay the writers whose work is accepted for Dean's Cave Creek anthology and to enable him to put together (he hopes) three anthologies.

I'm asking you to support that Kickstarter, even if for only a \$1 or \$5 donation (as I will and as will other hopeful participating writers).

The support will not only help in the long run, but it will help with the algorithms to help promote the Kickstarter itself. I'll announce this again in a few days when the Kickstarter launches.

Today I started off with the lengthy email to my mentoring student, much of which became the topic above. Then I browsed awhile for the excellent items in "Of Interest" below, then attended the Shared Worlds class. It's going to be a great day.

I watched the most recent videos (twice) on the Shared Worlds class, and man am I stoked! Now for a break, then back to the Hovel to write for the day.

Prompted by a quote from Harlan Ellison, I wrote an opening for a story called The Visitors. The concept is already far too big to be a short story or novella, and it might run to be a new SF series. (grin)

Here's the quote, which I'm using for an epigram: "[A]fter a decimating war ... food, weapons, shelter and women become valuable chattel." Harlan Ellison

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "How to Write Believable, Realistic, and Responsible Violence" at <https://crimereads.com/how-to-write-believable-realistic-and-responsible-violence/>. A really GREAT post.

See "The 16 Best Writing Apps to Boost Your Writing in 2020" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-16-best-writing-apps-to-boost-your-writing-in-2020/>. Note: I do NOT recommend Grammarly. They get too much wrong.

See "A New Writer's Tool: Glossary Generator" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/a-new-writers-tool-glossary-generator/>.

See "Oops" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/oops/>.

See "I Think This Is Cool!" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/i-think-this-is-cool/>.

See "Bad advice" at <https://www.perpetualized.com/bad-advice/>. And my comment, of course. (grin)

See "To Move Past Obstacles You Need to Move" at <https://www.windwardcoaching.com/post/to-move-past-obstacles-you-need-to-move>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 3863
Nonfiction words today..... 2350 (Journal)

Writing of The Visitors (tentative title, novel)

Day 1..... 3863 words. Total words to date..... 3863

Total fiction words for the month..... 6873
Total fiction words for the year..... 143568
Total nonfiction words for the month... 57800
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 60260
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 203828

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 6
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 48
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 202
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [CrimeReads](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Perpetualized](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Whom Should I Trust?

[March 5, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * My conscious, critical, teacher mind
- * Topic: Whom Should I Trust? (and on “getting” concepts)
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

Via The Passive Guy, “Writing is not necessarily something to be ashamed of, but do it in private and wash your hands afterwards.” Robert A. Heinlein

“In the creative mind, the story and the characters are controlling the writer. In the critical mind, the writer is controlling the characters and the story.” Harvey Stanbrough

My conscious, critical, teacher mind is almost swimming. I had an interesting email from a writer this morning.

He pointed out that some points about WITD, specifically the critical voice vs. the creative voice, “seem to contradict each other.” He wanted to know, Was it maybe my critical mind that caused me to toss out that 3000 words I mentioned yesterday (almost in passing)?

The answer is no, it didn't. That jumble of words just wasn't working, so I tossed it. That's the best way I can explain it.

How do I know it wasn't a critical-mind decision? Because it didn't stop me from writing.

After I threw out those 3010 words, I wrote a new story opening based on the same idea (a quote from Harlan Ellison). The opening ran to almost 4,000 words (with none of the words I threw out, just in case you wondered) and it's still running.

Topic: Whom Should I Trust? (and on “getting” concepts)

I admit, learning to write into the dark was fairly easy for me. But that's only because I just “decided” one day to stop questioning it and try it.

The “steps” or “rules” for WITD were (and are) easy:

1. Stop consciously thinking about writing.

Outlining, revising, rewriting, trying to figure out what's going to happen in the story next, trying to figure out what the characters “should” say or do next etc. are all “thinking” about writing. They are all different versions of you trying to control the story. Every hour you spend thinking about writing or talking about writing is a wasted hour. It's another hour you could have spent actually writing. Duh.

2. Write the story.

It really is just that easy.

But frankly, for me, following those steps required blind faith. It required me to trust that Dean Wesley Smith was telling me the truth.

And trusting him made sense to me. I asked myself one question: Whom should I trust for writing advice?

Should I trust the nonwriters and beginning and wannabe writers out there who keep saying I should outline and revise and run my work past critique groups and then rewrite it X number of times? (And how successful are those folks? I don't judge people on what they say; I judge people on what they DO.)

Or should I trust the mega-successful, best-selling professional writer who has over 200 published novels and a few thousand published short stories? One who was honest enough to tell me bluntly, “Frankly, I don’t give a shit whether you write into the dark. (Shrug.) I’m just paying it forward.”

For me personally, whom to trust wasn’t a difficult decision. But you ask the question yourself and come up with your own conclusions.

Whom should you trust for writing advice? The nonwriters and novices and wannabes or an actual professional writer?

Really, all of this boils down to basic math. It all boils down to time and how you have to/want to spend it.

Here are a few hard, absolute facts:

I can write a 60,000 word novel in 60 hours. I believe anyone can. That isn’t writing “fast.” It’s only 17 words per minute. So given that...

There are 1800 hours in an average 30-day month. If you automatically subtract 240 hours for sleeping 8 hours per night, there are still 1560 hours left. (I personally sleep only about 6 hours per night. Your life might vary.)

If you have a day job and subtract another 9 hours per day for 22 weekdays (rounded up, 200 hours), that still leaves you with 1360 hours. (I don’t have a day job other than writing.)

Now, go ahead and subtract another 8 hours per day for spending time with the family, chores, etc. Remember, this is in addition to your day job and your 1 hour round-trip commute. That’s another 240 hours.

That **STILL** leaves you with 1120 hours per month for writing. So you can write a 60,000 word novel and **STILL** have 1060 waking hours left in the month. In fact, you could write **TWO** 60,000 word novels per month and still have 1000 hours left in the month.

But I’ve recommended you question everything, remember?

So whip out your calculator and do the math for yourself. How many hours do you sleep? How many hours do you spend total on your day job? Include lunch and your round-trip commute. Your figures will vary from what I presented above, but not much.

So why isn’t every writer writing one or two novels per month?

Because they’re spending their precious time **THINKING** about writing instead of writing.

They're outlining and revising and rewriting. They're trying to figure out where the story's going or what the character "should" do or say next instead of just letting the characters live their story and writing it down.

So what are you doing with your time?

Note: I follow Heinlein's Rules. As part of that (rule 3), I don't rewrite, so the story remains in my original, unique voice. Now, that voice is boring to me because it's with me 24/7, but apparently it's exciting to a lot of readers. And look at the volume *And Quality* of stories and novels I produce.

And as you know, all you have to do to check the quality of my fiction for yourself is to read some of it. And you know I share freely. You only have to let me know which story collection or novel you want, and I'll send it to you free. You can email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

I'm not sure how I can be more open than that.

Now, all of that being said, it took me awhile to "get" certain concepts.

For example, when I was learning how to ground the reader in the setting, I had to hear or read several times that adding the POV character's "opinion" of the setting would enrich my writing.

His *opinion*? What the hell does that mean? That one took months before I finally understood. I nearly drove Dean nuts asking him about that one concept.

But I TRUST Dean, so I kept going over it in my mind and one day I understood. Each POV character would have a DIFFERENT opinion of the same setting based on that character's personal baggage. Ding! Epiphany.

So if you don't "get" something automatically, don't be dissuaded. Keep trying. Eventually it'll sink in and you'll get it.

I sincerely hope something above helps you personally. But please don't misunderstand. Feel free to try writing into the dark for yourself, or not. I learned long ago, what doesn't affect my paycheck or my time off isn't worth worrying about. (grin)

Today I wrote more on the story, but we also took a trip to Sierra Vista. That cut into my writing time. Tomorrow should be a lot bigger day.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Some Shared World Fun!" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/some-shared-world-fun/>.

See PG's take on "The Other American Dirt Issue: Is Fear of Appropriation Fomenting a Culture of Censorship?" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-other-american-dirt-issue-is-fear-of-appropriation-fomenting-a-culture-of-censorship/>.

See "Pardon My Rant" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/pardon-my-rant>.

FWIW, see "Tips & Pitfalls to Writing in First Person – First Page Critique: Organization K" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/03/tips-pitfalls-to-writing-in-first-person-first-page-critique-organization-k.html>.

See "Business Musings: Disruption" at <https://kriswrites.com/2020/03/04/business-musings-disruption/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 2408
Nonfiction words today..... 1270 (Journal)

Writing of The Visitors (tentative title, novel)

Day 1..... 3863 words. Total words to date..... 3863
Day 2..... 2408 words. Total words to date..... 6261

Total fiction words for the month..... 9281
Total fiction words for the year..... 145976
Total nonfiction words for the month... 7050
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 61530
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 207506

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 6
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 48
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 202
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Kristine Kathryn Rusch](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: What Is a Story Idea?

[March 6, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Correction
- * Quotes of the Day
- * Over the next few months
- * Topic: What Is a Story Idea?
- * I talk too much
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Correction

Yesterday, I really screwed up the math in my post on time, as pointed out [by Céline in a comment](#). I'll re-address the time thing in a future post. And I'll double-check my math.

Quotes of the Day

“Every accomplishment begins with the decision to try.” Brad Cook, professional fiction writer, St. Louis Writers Guild (Wow. Is this appropriate for writing into the dark, or what?)

“Writing is a socially acceptable form of schizophrenia.” E. L. Doctorow

Over the next few months, I'll be writing stories for a great new series of anthologies set in the fictional town of Cave Creek, Nevada.

Cave Creek: Where the unexpected meets the real world.

Asked how he would describe Cave Creek, the “mayor” of the town and editor of the anthologies, [Dean Wesley Smith](#), said, “If Twilight Zone still existed, it's home town would be Cave Creek.”

The first anthology will be historical, set in the past. The second will be set in the present, and the third will be set in the future.

To support the exciting new Cave Creek shared-world project, please visit <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/403649867/cave-creek-where-the-unexpected-meets-the-real-world>.

There are some pretty good rewards at different levels, or you can support it Just Because with any amount you want from a dollar on up. (grin)

After you watch the video (you can also see it in “Of Interest”), especially if you're interested in possibly jumping into the Shared Worlds class, be sure to read the Story below the video (at the Kickstarter site above).

Topic: What Is a Story Idea?

A commenter on another blog recently wrote “The only part of this that is essential is the story idea. I have to love it and I have to love the MC or I won’t want to write it.”

I think she might be confused about what a story idea is. And that’s fine. Many writers are.

Many writers (most, in my experience) think a story idea is born whole, with a beginning, middle and end. They believe it’s a complete concept. It isn’t.

I suppose some folks can write that way. I can’t. If a story idea came to me whole, I wouldn’t bother writing it. I’d be bored the whole time. Writing would be “work.” Ugh. Why write a story when I already know the ending?

The commenter mentioned this exact thing: “I took off on another person’s prompt, added a personal experience, and hated it almost all the way wanting to quit.”

I’m not surprised. She was guiding the story with her conscious, critical mind, so of course it was painful. Had she run with only the prompt and let the characters tell their own story, she would have been fine.

A story idea is only something that gets you to the keyboard to start writing. That’s it. (This is another lesson I learned from Dean a long time ago.)

That’s why I say so often, if you don’t have a story idea and you want to write, come up with a character with a problem (doesn’t have to be “the” problem of the story), drop him or her into a setting, and start writing.

A story idea might be a snippet of dialogue that you overhear or that pops into your head. A snippet of dialogue will almost always enable you to “see” and “hear” a character, thereby giving you the tone and setting of the opening of the story. Often, it will also include the problem. But again, only the problem for the opening. Just enough to get you started writing an opening.

A story idea might also be a phrase you read or something you see or a taste or smell that brings up a memory or make you think of something in particular.

Yesterday on our way to Sierra Vista, I glanced out the window and noticed two fishing ponds with grass-lined banks and trees. And I “saw” a Huck Finn looking boy standing there with a cane pole, his line in the water.

What if a game warden walked up behind him and asked to see his fishing license? And a story was born. (I haven’t written even the opening yet. We were on the road.)

If the idea above intrigues you, please run with it, and welcome. The story you write will be vastly different from the one I write (*if* I write it) anyway.

Questions or concerns about story ideas, please leave a comment or email me.

I talk too much. There's a good chance (as I've said before) I'll back off a bit in the Journal.

I've written everything about WITD and Heinlein's Rules that I want to say, really. There's plenty just in the past two days to get anyone started down that wonderful path if only they'll risk it. And if they won't or don't, well, nothing I say in the future will change that for them anyway, so why bother?

Going forward, unless a new thought on WITD strikes occasionally, I'll talk a little in topics about various actual writing techniques (vs. writing processes), but more from a "what to include" standpoint (like focus and pacing and grounding the reader, etc.) rather than from a "how to get started writing" standpoint (like WITD). As I said, I've already given you all of that.

As always, Comments, questions, and concerns are welcome.

Today I rolled out about 2 hours later than usual. So I'm going to write as much as possible on my WIP. Not because I'm worried about it, but because it's a great story and I'm truly anxious to find out what happens next. (grin)

No pressure. Just playing and having fun.

Well, I WAS just playing and having fun. I wrote about 1000 words, then found myself defending WITD from two particularly vehement detractors who literally slandered it in comments over on PWW. I allowed that silliness to cost me two hours.

Why do some people have such a strong urge to put down things they don't understand? And why can't they at least be up front about it? Why use innuendo and misinformation? Why talk at all about a process they don't want to try and don't understand?

Anyway, as a result of all that silliness by 1:30 I'd added only 1500 words to the WIP. By 3 I hope to have at least met my word-count goal. Then tomorrow, it'll be Katy bar the door. (grin)

Twenty minutes before my self-imposed deadline at 3, I had just over 3100 words. Good enough.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Cave Creek Kickstarter Live!" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/cave-creek-kickstarter-live/>.

For a little about Dean's writing process, see the comments on "Some Shared World Fun!" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/some-shared-world-fun/#comments>.

See "The Bakers and the Pot of Gold" at <https://blog.smashwords.com/2020/03/the-bakers-and-pot-of-gold.html>.

See “THE LEAP – Writing Into The Dark” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/the-leap-writing-into-the-dark/>. And wow, do I ever recommend you read the comments for what not to do.

See “Balancing the ‘New’ and ‘Notable’” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/balancing-the-new-and-notable/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 3116
Nonfiction words today..... 1180 (Journal)

Writing of The Othgygnrkthers (tentative title, novel)

Day 1..... 3863 words. Total words to date..... 3863
Day 2..... 2408 words. Total words to date..... 6261
Day 3..... 3116 words. Total words to date..... 9377

Total fiction words for the month..... 12397
Total fiction words for the year..... 149092
Total nonfiction words for the month... 8230
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 62710
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 211802

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 6
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 48
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 202
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Smashwords](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: More Boredom with Time Management

[March 7, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Topic: More Boredom with Time Management
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“I write high-standard, quality fiction, not slop. Why the hell would I spend even one hour writing slop? I wouldn’t do that even to ‘just get it on the page’ so I could rewrite it later.”
Harvey Stanbrough

Topic: More Boredom with Time Management

Yep, I screwed up big time so here I am again to try to fix it. A 30-day month has 720 hours (not 1800). Duh. I had a senior moment there.

Rather than reposting the whole long thing I wrote a few days ago on time management <https://hestanbrough.com/the-journal-whom-should-i-trust/>, I’ll just give you an example with my own real numbers here. Your results, based on your life, will vary:

There are 720 hours in an average 30-day month. I automatically subtract 180 hours for sleeping 6 hours per night. That leaves me with 540 hours.

I don’t have a day job. Been there, done that, got the olive-drab t-shirt. My day job now is keeping up with this Journal and all that goes into that, plus PWW, mentoring, and my other blogs. So let’s call that an average of 5 hours per day. That’s 150 hours gone, so that leaves me with 390 hours.

I typically spend 5 hours per day with family (an hour broken into bits during the day plus 4 straight hours in the late afternoon and early evening). So that knocks another 150 hours off, leaving me with 240 hours.

Those 240 hours depend purely on my priorities, which often change in the moment (not including emergencies).

My number one priority overall is writing fiction. Therefore, in my own life, I balance everything else against WIBBOW: Would I be better off writing. Just the way I roll. But I’m a fiction writer, so duh.

But if my wife wants to go to Sierra Vista etc. I most often will take time off to go with her. And I spend some of that time improving my craft or learning about Licensing or Shared Worlds. So things like that, doing chores, etc. all come out of my 240 hours.

So this is where I lose track of my specific numbers because sometimes things just “come up” (or I choose to just “screw off”). So to get the numbers back on some kind of track, I’ll be generous.

Let’s say I lose another 4 hours per day (average) of “whatever” time. That sucks another 120 hours out of the month, leaving me with only 120 hours.

Well so what? I write 1000 words per hour on average. That's only 17 very slow words per minute. It leaves plenty of time for staring off into space, cycling back while in creative mind to let the characters revise what I've written on their behalf, a brief break once per hour, etc.

So a 40,000 word novel takes no more than 40 hours of time in the chair to write (1.5 hours per day). A 60,000 word novel takes 60 hours (2 hours per day). A 120,000 word novel takes 120 hours. (That's still only "working" 4 hours per day at my chosen profession.)

So there's no logical reason I can't write a 120,000 word novel every month. Or two 60,000 word novels per month. Or three 40,000 word novels per month. Just sayin'.

(Just in case any detractors are looking in, please note that I said "I," not "you." And these are high-standard, quality stories, not slop. Why the hell would I spend even one hour writing slop? That's reserved for those who "just get it on paper so I can revise and rewrite later." Silly. But hey, whatever works for you.)

Oh, and during the little bit of extra time I have left over while writing those novels, I write a short story per week too.

But I realize none of this probably matters to most of you. If it doesn't, I suggest you run your own numbers if you haven't already. In fact, I recommend keeping a "time diary" of sorts in 15-minute or half-hour increments to figure out where all your time's going.

Cliché or not, Time really is the most important commodity we have. My advice is to spend it wisely. And only you can define "wisely" for you.

Today I rolled out yesterday actually, a few minutes before midnight. (grin) I spent the first three hours writing the inconsequential gibberish above, responding to a mentoring student, and with Facebook and email and finding items for "Of Interest."

One email told me there are five new videos in the Shared Worlds class. Normally I'd listen to those now, but I decided to go back to my WIP early (3 a.m.) and listen to the vids sometime later today.

About 1200 words in the first hour and a half (included some cycling). Then I remembered I have a short story due today. I'll go eat breakfast a little early, get the babies all set, then come back and write the short story, then return to the novel.

It's exciting, knowing a few hours from now I'll have another brand-new short story finished. And the novel's still racing along, so I think it's going to be a great day. (Such is the power and freedom of writing into the dark. Just sayin'.)

Well, I knuckled under to curiosity to watch the Shared World videos. Then I decided to continue with the novel for awhile. In fact, I decided to reach my daily word count goal with the novel, then take a break and worry about the story story later.

The story is due tonight at midnight, but my brain shuts down after about 3 p.m. (today that'll be 15 hours after I started work) so I need to get it done by then.

So today my short streak of writing a short story every week will end or I'll have a really great day of fiction writing. (grin)

By 9:30 I'd added 3051 words to the novel. Now for a long break. Then I'll either write a short story for this week or (if nothing occurs to me) I'll add more to the novel later.

I got the short story done in just over 2600 words. (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See PG's take on "Exploring the Factors Leading to the Decline of the Writing Profession" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/exploring-the-factors-leading-to-the-decline-of-the-writing-profession/>.

See "Out Now! Audio For Authors: Audiobooks, Podcasting, And Voice Technologies" at <https://www.thecreativepenn.com/2020/03/06/audio-for-authors-out-now/>.

See "Sir Arthur Conan Doyle" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/sir-arthur-conan-doyle/>.

See "Cave Creek Funded!" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/cave-creek-funded/>.

For wonderful fun, see "The Weight | Featuring Robbie Robertson and Ringo Starr| Playing For Change | Song Around The World" at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ph1GU1qQ1zQ&fbclid=IwAR1pKmRFNO7ndyVav1Obj3xkXKQADkrMS9ZfU4Q7U5ZqUnJ0vDtWR3k5C-Y>. Not about writing, but wonderful.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 5662
Nonfiction words today..... 1090 (Journal)

Writing of "A Very Short Story" (short story)

Day 1..... 2611 words. Total words to date..... 2611 (done)

Writing of The Othgygnrkthers (tentative title, novel)

Day 1..... 3863 words. Total words to date..... 3863
Day 2..... 2408 words. Total words to date..... 6261
Day 3..... 3116 words. Total words to date..... 9377
Day 4..... 3051 words. Total words to date..... 12428

| | |
|---|--------|
| Total fiction words for the month..... | 18059 |
| Total fiction words for the year..... | 154754 |
| Total nonfiction words for the month... | 9320 |
| Total nonfiction words for the year..... | 63800 |
| Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... | 218554 |
| | |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... | 3 |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... | X |
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... | 6 |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 48 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 202 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Creative Penn](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: A Free Short Story

[March 8, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * A new free short story
- * Please continue to spread the word
- * Sigh... the lies continue
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

From The Passive Voice, “No publisher should ever express an opinion on the value of what he publishes*. That is a matter entirely for the literary critic to decide. I can quite understand how any ordinary critic would be strongly prejudiced against a work that was accompanied by a premature and unnecessary panegyric from the publisher. A publisher is simply a useful middle-man. It is not for him to anticipate the verdict of criticism.” Oscar Wilde

*This is especially true of Indie publishers, folks. Your opinion of your work is only one opinion, and it is not necessarily the reader's opinion.

A new free short story — I started the day by cycling through “A Very Short Story” this morning. I added 309 words. That's reflected in today's totals. I also changed the title to “White Ring Quilt.”

(For you writers out there, really I changed the title to give critics who look for “deeper meaning” and “theme” and “symbolism” and all that something to latch onto and think about.)

This story is a divulgence from the usual from me. Even the style is vastly different. The story is filled with very long sentences, sentence fragments, and maybe even a run-on sentence or two. Intentionally. For how it will affect the reader.

Style often goes to genre, and the genre categories for this one are Literary > War > Romance.

The tagline is “a literary, very short story of war and love and all things eternal.” I personally think it’s very Hemingway-esque.

Those few who believe they can learn something about writing from my fiction should definitely read it. It was written completely from the creative subconscious, yet every word occurred intentionally. Yes, you can do that. You only have to practice.

I’ve sent it to my patrons. If any of you would like a free copy, please email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

Please continue to spread the word about the Cave Creek Kickstarter. Writer goals kick in at the second stretch goal, and everyone who donates any amount from the beginning gets the stretch goals. Just sayin’.

Here’s the link to share: <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/403649867/cave-creek-where-the-unexpected-meets-the-real-world>.

Sigh... the lies continue, and it’s been a rough day.

This morning, in another blog, I was accused of harassing people who choose not to try writing into the dark. I was also accused of attacking them because of how they choose to write.

Nothing could be more ridiculous (or slanderous) or further from the truth. As most of you know, I strive only to help other writers.

If people are going to accuse me, they should at least base the accusation on something I actually say, not on something they made up or on what they assume I “meant.” I meant exactly what I said, word for word. No condescension, no hidden meanings. I am responsible for my intent, not for others’ perceptions.

Recently a couple of people were spreading misinformation about WITD (and misquoting me), and they were doing it on one of my own websites. To me, that’s the equivalent of walking into my house and spitting on the floor.

(Wow, was Dean Wesley Smith ever right when he advised me 6 years ago to NOT discuss my writing process with anyone else ever. Wow, was he ever right.)

Anyway, I called them on it and corrected them. And the crapstorm started. Whatever.

I honestly, *really* don't care how anyone else writes, or even whether they do. Others' process is none of my business.

I only ask that others don't come into MY house and spread misinformation. There are plenty of other websites out there where they can do that and feel welcome.

Either way, misleading others is wrong in my opinion, and I won't allow it on my websites.

Ah, and shock of shocks, two detractors who tried to comment just before I posted today's Journal were writing from fake email addresses. I emailed them and the "mailer-daemon" bounced both emails. Go figure.

Today I spent the first few hours as I indicated in the first paragraph above, then created a cover and published "White Ring Quilt," then found items for "Of Interest" (note that some are labeled FWIW).

Frankly, I've spent much of the rest of the morning and early afternoon fending off people who for some reason seem to want to keep the crapstorm alive. Why? If you want to write a different way, go do it. What do I care?

It's raining today, steadily and hard. I don't feel like working on the novel, even after having cycled through some of it.

I can't get back into the novel when I'm in a mood like this. I thought about writing another short story (one for this coming Saturday) but I don't feel like doing that either.

So I guess I'll just take the day off.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Publishing Platforms" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/publishing-platforms/>.

See "This Week in the Blogs" at <https://www.thebookdesigner.com/2020/03/this-week-in-the-blogs-february-29-march-5-2020/>. FWIW.

See "Scene Writing is Where the Fun Happens" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/03/scene-writing-is-where-the-fun-happens-2.html>. More drubbing of "pantsing" by a "plodder." FWIW.

Not about writing, but if you'd like to learn a LOT of valid information about the current coronavirus (COVID-19) see "A New Life! Retirement at its Best 2020-11" at <http://ronnyhermandejong.com/a-new-life-retirement-at-its-best-2020-11/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 900 (Journal)

Writing of *The Othgygnrkthers* (tentative title, novel)

Day 1..... 3863 words. Total words to date..... 3863
Day 2..... 2408 words. Total words to date..... 6261
Day 3..... 3116 words. Total words to date..... 9377
Day 4..... 3051 words. Total words to date..... 12428
Day 5..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 18368
Total fiction words for the year..... 155063
Total nonfiction words for the month... 10220
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 64700
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 219763

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 6
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 48
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 202
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#),
[The Book Designer](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: What the Journal Is All About

[March 9, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * I lost a whole day
- * What the Journal is all about
- * A new comment policy
- * About Atlas Obscura
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers



I lost a whole day yesterday, but I brought it on myself. I'm out here in public, an easy target for anyone who wants to snipe, but that doesn't mean I have to belabor you with the specifics.

You might take a lesson from all of this though: People who don't know you will hear whatever they want to hear, whatever suits their purpose and gives them ammunition. Be careful out there.

I had to remind myself this Journal is all about moving forward, not standing still or looking back.

I talk here about my own writing process (writing into the dark) and of course, I recommend it. Just as David Farland and most of those on the Kill Zone blog and dozens of others recommend outlining, rewriting, etc. And I often share their posts with you in "Of Interest."

And why wouldn't I recommend WITD? I want to pay it forward, and afford every writer who follows me at least the opportunity to enjoy the freedoms afforded by the process. Of course, whether or not you try it and whether or not you stay with it if you do try it are completely up to you. Really. I did my part in making you aware of it. I'm not tied to outcome. So that's all I'm going to say about that.

But the Journal is about a lot more than WITD.

For example, it's about learning specific new techniques and applying them (practicing them) in your next story. I'll be sharing a lot of specific techniques in topics here in the future, including some I'll copy over from my former "big blog" at HarveyStanbrough.com.

It's also about being excited about creating something brand new where there was nothing before (no matter your process of creation). And realizing that creating something new is all within your grasp and in your hands.

And finally, it's about letting you see what's possible when you sit down, put your fingers on the keyboard, and write. Some of you don't need that. Some of you do, maybe. Up to you. But that's why I share my short story or novel progress and my monthly and annual numbers below.

I've instituted a new comment policy on all websites for which I'm the administrator. I won't allow negative or hateful or baiting comments through, even if the author is obviously (to me) joking.

If a comment is otherwise positive or helpful or worthwhile, I'll let through an edited version with either "[edited out]" or a different word substituted and set off in brackets [] for any material I consider offensive toward anyone.

If you don't yet subscribe to Atlas Obscura, you might consider it. It's a wealth of bite-sized information and story ideas. Visit "Atlas Obscura" at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/>.

In just today's issue, they have articles on a 272 year old philosopher, "A Hard Dung's Night," and an article on the ruins of the oldest oilfield boomtown in California, among others.

For the record and just to be absolutely clear, I'm not "mandating" that you sign up for the free Atlas Obscura newsletter. I'm only mentioning it as something that might interest you.

Today, I finally got to the novel at around 4:30. Before I looked up at 6, I'd written a little over 1700 words. The count surprised me. I like surprises like that. A good start on the day.

After breakfast, I returned to the Hovel, still in my sweats. My jeans recently have been cutting me in two.

For those who like personal tidbits...

My back makes it difficult to walk any distance—I'm not complaining; it's just what it is—so I've been gaining weight again over the past couple of months. My feet have started to swell too, indicating I'm moving back into heart failure.

So I have no realistic choice. I'm gonna have to take my cane and start walking distance again. (But don't worry. I don't plan to update you on miles walked, etc.)

I've got to get my weight down again. Which is one reason I've been going so hard at the writing lately. I'd prefer to have at least my 3000 words done for the day before I go walk.

End of personal tidbits and back to the novel.

I managed over 3200 words and plan to walk for awhile

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “That’s Unreadable – Lessons for Unruly Writers” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/thats-unreadable-lessons-for-unruly-writers/>.

See “The Biggest Mistake New Novelists and Memoirists Make” at <https://annerallen.com/2020/03/biggest-mistake-novelists-and-memoirists/>. I don’t agree with all of this post, but there’s a lot of gold in it.

See “Something Fun...” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/something-fun/>.

See “Deep Dive into Craft: First Page Critique” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/03/deep-dive-into-craft-first-page-critique.html>.

See “Author Blogging: 5 Reasons to Start and 3 Ways to Do It Right” at <https://www.thebookdesigner.com/2020/03/author-blogging-5-reasons-to-start-and-3-ways-to-do-it-right/>.

See “Dynamic Character vs. Static Character: Definitions and Differences” at <https://blog.reedsy.com/dynamic-character/>.

See “22 Specialized Manuscript Publishers that Accept Direct Submissions” at <https://www.authorspublish.com/22-specialized-manuscript-publishers-that-accept-direct-submissions/>.

See “Simon & Schuster Is Up for Sale” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/simon-schuster-is-up-for-sale/>. I recommend you read this as a precursor to the Business Musings post you’ll see on Thursday from Kris Rusch.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 3285
Nonfiction words today..... 870 (Journal)

Writing of The Othgygnrkthers (tentative title, novel)

Day 1..... 3863 words. Total words to date..... 3863
Day 2..... 2408 words. Total words to date..... 6261
Day 3..... 3116 words. Total words to date..... 9377
Day 4..... 3051 words. Total words to date..... 12428
Day 5..... 3285 words. Total words to date..... 15713

Total fiction words for the month..... 21653
Total fiction words for the year..... 158348
Total nonfiction words for the month... 11090
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 65570
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 223918

| | |
|---|-----|
| Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... | 3 |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... | X |
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... | 6 |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 48 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 202 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Anne R. Allen](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Reedsy](#), [Sue Coletta](#), [The Book Designer](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: A Very Short Post Today

[March 10, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * A Question answered re FWIW
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

I received a question via email. What do I mean or what am I implying when I add FWIW (for what it's worth) to the end of a link in "Of Interest"?

First, I'm implying nothing. If I don't think a link might be valuable to any of my subscribers, I simply don't include it in "Of Interest" in the first place.

I use FWIW when I don't actually read the whole post before I add it to "Of Interest." In other words, when a post seems like it might be valuable and when the author has a proven track record of posting valuable information, I add a link just in case you might find the post worth your time.

If I DO read a post and find it worthwhile to share but also find some of the advice offered a bit dicey (in my opinion), I might add "Grain of salt" to the end of that one.

So I hope that clarifies it.

Today was a slow day for various reasons. I didn't get nearly as much done as I'd hoped.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “What Is Writing In Public?” at <https://www.deanwesleymith.com/what-is-writing-in-public/>.

See “First Page Critique: Lost At Sea” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/03/first-page-critique-lost-at-sea.html>. FWIW.

See “On Writing and Goal Setting” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/on-writing-and-goal-setting/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 2486
Nonfiction words today..... 240 (Journal)

Writing of *The Othgygnrkthers* (tentative title, novel)

Day 1..... 3863 words. Total words to date..... 3863
Day 2..... 2408 words. Total words to date..... 6261
Day 3..... 3116 words. Total words to date..... 9377
Day 4..... 3051 words. Total words to date..... 12428
Day 5..... 3285 words. Total words to date..... 15713
Day 6..... 2486 words. Total words to date..... 18199

Total fiction words for the month..... 24139
Total fiction words for the year..... 160834
Total nonfiction words for the month... 11330
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 65810
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 226644

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 6
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 48
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 202
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: A Medium-Length Post and Mentoring

[March 11, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * I'm time-limited today, but in a good way
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“This is what Stephen King would write like if Stephen King could really write.” A review from an anonymous (and clueless) reviewer of a Richard Bachman novel

Not a lot to write about today, or much time. I started the day with a session with a new mentoring student, one I think I'm going to enjoy a great deal.

The guy seems honest to a fault and forthright and one who reads what's there. I like that. It's refreshing. I love exchanging information and even sparring with a respectful, honest opponent or partner.

I'm not tentative about sharing what I know with him, not frightened he might take my response in a direction I didn't intend. He isn't afraid to ask hard questions, or to ask them again if my explanation misses the mark of his intent.

I appreciate that kind of honesty and trust. And that's what it is. I trust him to ask what he wants to ask and tell me if my response doesn't cause a little light to turn on. And he trusts me to keep trying until it does.

This is exactly why I offered a free week of mentoring awhile back. For the sheer exhilaration of teaching and watching someone learn and for learning myself. For the sheer sake of an honest exchange of knowledge and ideas.

Later this morning I'll have to break away from my routine to meet with another mentoring student, one who lives close enough so we can meet every few weeks.

I enjoy that too. It's great to be around another writer who's serious about her work, who is always moving forward and striving to learn new things while simultaneously teaching me (she doesn't even know).

And I've been wrestling with myself lately. The knowledge I've gleaned over the years is worth something. It has monetary value.

On the other hand, it's important that I pay it forward, sharing my knowledge gratis. And it's important to me that I share my knowledge in a one-on-one or one-on-a-few basis, not only “in general” in my Journal or other venues.

I've also thoroughly enjoyed mentoring four avid, eager students on my process: Writing Into the Dark. But Process is different than Technique. Process is how you get there. Technique is what you do when you get there.

So now, I'm thinking about making the same or a similar offer of free limited mentoring on what I see as the more important specific writing techniques.

If this is something that interests you, please email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com. Be sure to include some background (who you are in your life [age, gender, children, general schedule, etc.]) and of course which technique you would like to learn.

If enough writers are interested and want to learn, I'll set things up and we'll do it. Again, this will be free.

Consider, you have nothing to lose but a little time and some possibly bad habits, and you have everything to gain.

Today, I finally turned to the novel at 7 after grabbing a quick breakfast, etc. My intention is to write on the novel until I have to break away to go meet my student (so around 9). Today's numbers below reflect what I got done. If I write more later today, that will carry over into tomorrow's numbers. They all end up in the same place. (grin)

I added almost two full chapters in a little over 2300 words in an hour and forty minutes (all written into the dark, and all absolutely squeaky clean), then came here to file this. More than likely I'll add to the story after I get back. I hope you're having a successful writing day too.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "New Pop-Up Coming" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/new-pop-up-coming/>.

See "Gotta Have Thick Skin" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/03/gotta-have-thick-skin.html>. FWIW.

See "To Self-Publish or Not to Self-Publish: That is the Question" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/to-self-publish-or-not-to-self-publish-that-is-the-question/>.

See "I Wore the Juice" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/i-wore-the-juice/>.

See "Can studying books that don't quite work make you a better writer?" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/can-studying-books-that-dont-quite-work-make-you-a-better-writer/>.

See “Writing Confidently In A Genre With Perceived Stigma” at <https://www.thecreativepenn.com/2020/03/11/writing-confidently-in-a-genre-with-stigma/>. FWIW.

See “An Ax Murder and Q-Tips: A True Story From My Files” at <https://leelofland.com/an-ax-murder-and-q-tips-a-true-story-from-my-files/>. FWIW.

See “Self-Control Is Just Empathy With Your Future Self” at <https://getpocket.com/explore/item/self-control-is-just-empathy-with-your-future-self>. Possible story ideas.

See “Known Alias: How Stephen King Was Outed as Richard Bachman” at <https://getpocket.com/explore/item/known-alias-how-stephen-king-was-outed-as-richard-bachman>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 2365
Nonfiction words today..... 750 (Journal)

Writing of The Othgygnrkthers (tentative title, novel)

Day 1..... 3863 words. Total words to date..... 3863
Day 2..... 2408 words. Total words to date..... 6261
Day 3..... 3116 words. Total words to date..... 9377
Day 4..... 3051 words. Total words to date..... 12428
Day 5..... 3285 words. Total words to date..... 15713
Day 6..... 2486 words. Total words to date..... 18199
Day 7..... 2365 words. Total words to date..... 20564

Total fiction words for the month..... 26504
Total fiction words for the year..... 163199
Total nonfiction words for the month... 12080
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 66560
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 229759

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 6
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 48
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 202
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Creative Penn](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Stephen King](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Life Rolls Happen

[March 12, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Life rolls happen
- * Hey Media, shut up already
- * Be Sure to Check "Of Interest"
- * Yesterday
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

"Even the pandemic flu of 1918 only killed one to two percent of the people who were infected."
Anthony Fauci, via The Passive Voice

Life rolls happen. I'll be headed out of town tomorrow morning (Friday) for up to a few days. How fortunate am I, to be able to love my day job and take it with me?

Thanks to eerie events in my current novel, I only hope aliens don't land in force while I'm gone.

Not that the media would notice if they did. Sigh. I'm sick of hearing about COVID-19, dubbed "the" coronavirus (it's "a" coronavirus, one of many) by the mainstream media. But wishing the media would be responsible is a losing proposition, especially in an election year.

As a novelist, though, I do have to admit it's amusing to watch people go nuts over something they can't control (beyond, you know, washing their hands.) Along with toilet paper (???) disappearing from store shelves, sales of Stephen King's 1978 masterpiece *The Stand* are way up at the moment.

Be sure to check "Of Interest" today. There are several really good articles, some about writing, some about distributors, etc. I recommend you don't miss it.

Had a great mentoring session with my local student yesterday, and a great writers' chat on Marketing, Websites, and other things. It was a good time that really sped by.

When I got back to the house, I could easily have added to the novel, but I figure I'd wait and start again this morning. Instead, I decided to spend some time setting up a reverse outline.

I didn't do a reverse outline at all for the SF novel I wrote in February (just didn't ever feel the need). But this one is not only "a" novel, it's also "the" genesis novel for what I expect to be a big series. So a reverse outline is important for this one, and to feed the series bible.

That took only about an hour, but I felt like I'd accomplished a ton.

Today, I thought I might post a topic, but it's not gonna happen. I'm going to write on the novel, then go pack my crap for the trip. But I've linked to a topic on my author website in "Of Interest" below.

And I have a short story due on Saturday. I'll probably write that in the morning before I head out. Or tomorrow night.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Subsidiary Rights – Wrong!" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/subsidiary-rights-wrong/>.

See "Finished a Novel" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/finished-a-novel/>. A very short mini-process post.

See "Business Musings: Traditional Publishing Stupidity" at <https://kriswrites.com/2020/03/11/business-musings-traditional-publishing-stupidity/>.

See "Readers Binge On Books About Pandemics (Really)" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/readers-binge-on-books-about-pandemics-really/>.

See "Between Books" at <https://stevenpressfield.com/2020/03/between-books/>. FWIW.

See "Book Promotion: Do This, Not That – BookBub" at <https://www.thebookdesigner.com/2020/03/book-promotion-do-this-not-that-bookbub/>.

See "The First Detective Story" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/03/the-first-detective-story.html>.

See "Why small presses matter" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/why-small-presses-matter/>.

See "How to Know When Your Work is Ready to Submit" at <https://www.authorspublish.com/how-to-know-when-your-work-is-ready-to-submit/>. Grain of salt. Note that cycling greatly reduces the chance your novel won't be "complete" while preserving your unique, individual authorial voice.

See “StreetLib Write ebook and POD editing and formatting tool re-launched with great new features” at <https://medium.com/streetlib/press-release-streetlib-write-ebook-and-pod-editing-and-formatting-tool-re-launched-with-great-e65335475c75>. Note: StreetLib is an aggregator, like D2D and Smashwords. Something to look into.

See “Character, Setting, and Grounding the Reader” at <https://harveystanbrough.com/pro-writers/character-setting-and-grounding-the-reader/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 3053
Nonfiction words today..... 560 (Journal)

Writing of *The Othgygnrkthers* (tentative title, novel)

Day 1..... 3863 words. Total words to date..... 3863
Day 2..... 2408 words. Total words to date..... 6261
Day 3..... 3116 words. Total words to date..... 9377
Day 4..... 3051 words. Total words to date..... 12428
Day 5..... 3285 words. Total words to date..... 15713
Day 6..... 2486 words. Total words to date..... 18199
Day 7..... 2365 words. Total words to date..... 20564
Day 8..... 3053 words. Total words to date..... 23617

Total fiction words for the month..... 29557
Total fiction words for the year..... 166252
Total nonfiction words for the month... 12640
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 67120
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 233372

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 6
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 48
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 202
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Harvey Stanbrough](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Kristine Kathryn Rusch](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Steven Pressfield](#), [StreetLib](#), [The Book Designer](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Barely a Post at All

[March 13, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Thin today on fact, fat with opinion
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Today's post is admittedly very thin. I'm posting it mostly to give you the opportunity to read the items in "Of Interest."

Thanks to Robert Sadler for the nod in his post on PWW today. Unfortunately, by the time his post goes live at five, I'll be on the road, or close to it. So I won't comment until later today, IF I have wifi at the hotel and it's working, etc. In my humble opinion, I suspect anytime now wifi will be cancelled because someone somewhere will hypothesize that the coronavirus is transmitted electronically. (grin)

I stayed up too late last night, but I still rolled out early this morning. As a result, it took me longer to gain full consciousness and emerge from the bubbly, fuzzy, Transition World of Waking Up.

And as a result of THAT, I'm pretty well satisfied that I won't reach my daily word-count goal. I almost decided to use that as an excuse to make this a nonwriting day, but that's just silly. I can write at least one session, which will enable me to add to the novel, learn more about what's going on in that world, and get my daily fix.

Perhaps best of all, being on the road for a few days will enable me to miss all the coronavirus hype popping up from various newsletters on my computer. But some of the most recent "news" did stir my imagination:

Re "a run on hand sanitizer"—seriously, how many people were running around with filthy hands until the media finally frightened them into actually washing or otherwise sanitizing them? (grin)

And with that in mind, I don't even want to think what the run on toilet paper means. (wider grin)

Of course, as always, what I write here is my own personal, private opinion, something intended to stir thought. I read somewhere that writers are supposed to be among the most open-minded humans, and that Thought is their chief currency. With that in mind,

Seriously, be careful out there, especially with regard to your writing business.

Businesses around the world (allegedly) and here in the US (for sure) are failing every day as a result of one of two current Black Swan events:

The first, of course, is the alleged coronavirus pandemic, which creates fear.

The second is the reaction of the seeming majority to the alleged coronavirus pandemic, which feeds the fear and causes it to spread like a pandemic of its own, a kind of societal cancer.

In short, people aren't thinking. In many cases, their head serves only as convenient storage for a hat or a ball cap.

Consider, people won't go into physical bookstores—but they'll order physical books online from their favorite booksellers and have those books delivered to them by human beings (either in person or via the mail) and then handle them without a second thought.

They won't shop in person for other items they need, but will likewise call or email and have those items delivered.

They make “runs” on hand sanitizer, toilet paper and other items. (And I'm betting when some of them get home with their horde, they use it only very sparingly, succumbing to the fear that they might run out.)

Professional sports organizations are suspending seasons and events. Many scheduled gatherings (political and not political) across the land are being cancelled.

And timing is everything, folks. I invite you to think about it. If it were late October or early November right now, even if there was still be a coronavirus “outbreak,” would it still be accompanied by all the media hype and the resulting cancelled events?

For just one example, is there any chance the scheduled mass gatherings at polling places on Tuesday, November 3, might be cancelled?

I can sum up my own (again, humble and humbly offered) opinion in two words: Fat chance.

Just sayin'.

I'll add to my fiction numbers day by day as I go, but probably not any “Fiction words today” enumerations until this trip is over.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “All Good Ideas” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/all-good-ideas/>. Don't skip this. There's a free class on Teachable.

See “The Gift of Permission” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/the-gift-of-permission/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 720 (Journal)

Writing of The Othgygnrkthers (tentative title, novel)

Day 1..... 3863 words. Total words to date..... 3863
Day 2..... 2408 words. Total words to date..... 6261
Day 3..... 3116 words. Total words to date..... 9377
Day 4..... 3051 words. Total words to date..... 12428
Day 5..... 3285 words. Total words to date..... 15713
Day 6..... 2486 words. Total words to date..... 18199
Day 7..... 2365 words. Total words to date..... 20564
Day 8..... 3053 words. Total words to date..... 23617
Day 9..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 29557
Total fiction words for the year..... 166252
Total nonfiction words for the month... 13360
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 67840
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 234092

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 6
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 48
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 202
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: A Lesson on Short- and Long-Term Goals

[March 15, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Had a great visit
- * Topic: A Lesson on Short- and Long-Term Goals
- * Lost a subscriber
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Had a great visit with some of my extended family over the past two days during a whirlwind trip to New Mexico. We even got a five-generation pic. That was fun.

I also learned I'm no longer able to work while on the road. So in the future, when I have to go somewhere for a specific reason, I'll focus on that without stressing over it. The writing etc. will necessarily take a back seat.

This morning I'm playing catch up. I spent almost two hours getting my writing 'puter display back in shape, repositioning all the icons, etc. from how much I messed it up while trying to work on the road without my large-screen monitor. Lesson learned.

Topic: A Lesson on Short- and Long-Term Goals

I missed writing my story for the week and the streak ended. However, the deadlines (Saturdays) were my own, so no big deal. I intend to continue with my goals as stated earlier: a new novel every month, a new short story every week.

To get back on track, I'll try to write two short stories before this coming Saturday at midnight. The first will be "for" yesterday, March 14, even though it's written after that date (today or tomorrow). The other will be to meet my March 21 deadline on time. If I make it, I'll consider the streak intact, more or less.

(Yes, I'm giving myself an "out" to keep the streak going, sort of, but more so I'll end up with at least 78 short stories at the end of 18 months from the time I started. I mention this only to show how long-term goals can help you reach your short-term goals. But in my mind, there will always be an asterisk beside the March 14 short story.)

Anyway, I wrote zero fiction while I was gone, so for those of you who follow the numbers below, they're correct as of today.

Well, I lost a subscriber to the Journal. It was right after I posted "Barely a Post at All" the last time I was up to bat. Too much opinion, I guess, or maybe the wrong opinion. (Oops.) Or maybe it was just a coincidence. Maybe not enough topics or something.

I hope it's the latter. I'm fortunate, I guess. I can separate a writer's skill and his or her ability as an instructor from his or her personal opinions and preferences. If I tied the two together and stopped learning from that writer as a result, it would harm me, not the writer in question.

Rolled out at 11:30 p.m. (misread the clock and thought it was 1:30 a.m.). By the time I realized my mistake a pot of coffee was brewing. So I came to the Hovel, wrote most of the stuff above, then went back to bed until almost 5.

And now I've decided I need a day to recover from my trip. I'm not as young as I once was. Who knew? (grin)

I'll be back in a day or two.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Licensing Expo Postponed” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/licensing-expo-postponed/>. Good news, at least for me. I like having longer to decide whether to go.

See “Mentorship Open For One” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/mentorship-open-for-one/>.

See “Quality or Speed?” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/blog/>. FWIW and I recommend taking it with a grain of salt. I say you can write quality *and* write “fast.”

See “This Week in the Blogs, March 6 – 12, 2020” at <https://www.thebookdesigner.com/2020/03/this-week-in-the-blogs-march-6-12-2020/>.

See “Something Free, Something Fun, and Something Important” at <https://kriswrites.com/2020/03/14/something-free-something-fun-and-something-important/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 610 (Journal)

Writing of *The Othgynrkthers* (tentative title, novel)

Day 1..... 3863 words. Total words to date..... 3863
Day 2..... 2408 words. Total words to date..... 6261
Day 3..... 3116 words. Total words to date..... 9377
Day 4..... 3051 words. Total words to date..... 12428
Day 5..... 3285 words. Total words to date..... 15713
Day 6..... 2486 words. Total words to date..... 18199
Day 7..... 2365 words. Total words to date..... 20564
Day 8..... 3053 words. Total words to date..... 23617
Day 9..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 29557
Total fiction words for the year..... 166252
Total nonfiction words for the month... 13970
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 68450
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 234702

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 6
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 48

| | |
|---|-----|
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 202 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Kristine Kathryn Rusch](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Book Designer](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: How to Manage and Expand Your Business

[March 16, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Kris Rusch's Patreon page
- * Topic: How to Manage and Expand Your Business
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

I'm fortunate that I support Kris Rusch's Patreon Page (at a lowly \$5 per month). She posted two back-to-back posts today re the current Black Swan (herein after referred to as BS, no joke intended) event. They were extremely helpful.

I'll be posting them here in "Of Interest" when they go live on her site next Thursday (or at least that's been her pattern).

Topic: How to Manage and Expand Your Business

Like any other business, a writing business takes time to grow. The standard wisdom I've always heard is that most businesses run in the red for the first few (usually 2 to 5, depending on whom you ask) years. So planning (the old "Where do you want to be in X years?") is essential.

Kris' posts showed once again that it's important to do as much of the actual production as possible yourself. Basically, if you don't depend on anyone else, you won't be disappointed.

For example, I write (duh), but I also create my own covers, write my own sales copy, etc. If you hire any of that out, the current BS event will affect you much more than it will affect me.

However, if you decide to start creating your own covers, etc. it's important to do so intelligently, which in this business means research, learn, prepare, and then take your "best guess."

How? Study the covers of best sellers in genre(s) in which you write and try to mimic them as to overall style (fonts, close-up or faraway photos, etc.), color(s), and other elements.

Study sales copy (book blurbs and descriptions) so you learn the various formulae for doing those correctly. Note that in this case, studying bestsellers isn't always the best idea. A month or so ago in this Journal I mentioned the sales copy for Steven Pressfield's latest novel—sales copy that actually made me decide NOT to buy the novel.

So if you want to study sales copy of others' books, study the sales copy that's intriguing to you, that actually makes you want to buy the book.

If you'd rather learn directly, the best source I've seen for studying sales copy is Dean's book *How to Write Fiction Sales Copy*, which you can see at <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0178MQVX2>.

And most importantly of all, continue to put out quality work, by which I mean the best you can do at your current skill level. Yes, it's good enough.

You really don't realize how much you know about writing fiction. Nobody does. So the big hurdle is learning to trust your subconscious.

And this is true no matter your particular process, whether you WITD or outline or whatever. When you're actually writing the story, trust your subconscious (trust what you already know, what you've absorbed over the years without even realizing it).

And then, of course, continue to learn actively through classes, mentoring, etc. and passively by reading in your chosen genres for pleasure.

Without going into specifics, I do all right with sales. If anything, as more people stay inside and read, this BS event will actually help my business.

If I was still making most of my income from personal appearances speaking at writers' conferences and conventions, I'd take a major hit. But I'm not. Lucky me. Really. Consider,

- I continue to churn out quality novels, novellas and short stories.
- I do all my own covers, etc. so I don't have to depend on someone who might not be there tomorrow if their business folds.
- My wife only recently came aboard and is learning marketing, so she'll learn during the transition from the "old normal" (before the BS event) to the new normal (however things settle out when all of this is over).
- And the Licensing Expo has been postponed until August of this year, meaning we can be even more ready to take advantage of it.
- If there's a "downturn" at all in reading habits, it won't affect my business harshly and will provide me with an opportunity to learn new things (for me, paper covers are on the near horizon).

So all in all, for the first time ever, I'm actually glad my own business isn't quite large enough yet for me to have set up a full C corporation, hired an attorney, etc.

I still believe personally the current mess going on wouldn't be nearly as big if the press would stop hyping it so much. That being said, what I think makes no difference. It is what it is.

The fact is, the press *is* hyping it, and businesses and organizations (and people) are reacting to that hype (closures, postponements, etc.). And those reactions are what create the Black Swan event we all have to live with.

I can also hardly wait to see what's waiting on the other side. (I have a couple of predictions, and I'm anxious to see whether they pan out.)

I wish you all calm and thoughtful planning as we move through the next few months.

Today I'll write a short story, then go back to the novel.

I think I really needed the day off yesterday. I did a few things out here in the Hovel, then did pretty much nothing the rest of the day. I even wondered whether maybe I'd contracted the virus, but no fever, so nope. Just worn out. (grin)

But one thing I did do yesterday was glance at the novel. I left it in a great place (in media res) so I know I can pick up on it again with almost no reading-back or cycling. So that's why I know I can skip it and write a short story today to catch up with my past weekly goal.

Results below.

Weird. I had the beginning of a scene in mind for the story: a biker pulls up to a Denny's just as another man is passing by on the sidewalk. That's it.

As I opened a blank Word doc, a title occurred to me: A Long Way Down. It apparently had nothing to do with the scene, but it felt right. That's the creative subconscious at work. (grin)

I started writing and 2961 words later the story was finished, and it was finished with that title.

I love it when that happens.

Oh, and I'll send "A Long Way Down" to anyone who would like it. Just email me.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Amazon is a Search Engine—Make Your Book an Easy-to-Find Product" at <https://www.thebookdesigner.com/2020/03/amazon-is-a-search-engine-make-your-book-an-easy-to-find-product/>.

See “Planning to Go to Your First Book Fair...” at <https://annerallen.com/2020/03/first-book-fair-13-tips/>.

See “New Pop-Up Available” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/new-pop-up-available-2/>.

See “Introverts Unite” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/03/introverts-unite.html>. More on how the BS event might affect you.

See “Productivity: 5 Tips For Effectively Working From Home” at <https://www.thecreativepenn.com/2020/03/15/working-from-home/>.

See “How To Self-Publish A Book...” at <https://www.thecreativepenn.com/2020/03/13/how-to-self-publish-a-book/>. A valuable podcast with time markers for specific subjects.

See “Tax for Unruly Writers” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/tax-for-unruly-writers>.

See “Scholastic is offering free online courses...” at <https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/15/us/scholastic-coronavirus-students-trnd/index.html>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 2961
Nonfiction words today..... 1160 (Journal)

Writing of “A Long Way Down” (short story)

Day 1..... 2961 words. Total words to date..... 2961 (done)

Writing of The Othgygnrkthers (tentative title, novel)

Day 1..... 3863 words. Total words to date..... 3863
Day 2..... 2408 words. Total words to date..... 6261
Day 3..... 3116 words. Total words to date..... 9377
Day 4..... 3051 words. Total words to date..... 12428
Day 5..... 3285 words. Total words to date..... 15713
Day 6..... 2486 words. Total words to date..... 18199
Day 7..... 2365 words. Total words to date..... 20564
Day 8..... 3053 words. Total words to date..... 23617
Day 9..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 32518
Total fiction words for the year..... 169213
Total nonfiction words for the month... 15130
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 69610
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 238823

| | |
|---|-----|
| Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... | 3 |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... | X |
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... | 6 |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 48 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 202 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Anne R. Allen](#), [Creative Penn](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Kristine Kathryn Rusch](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Book Designer](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: My Advice for Writers re CoVID-19

[March 17, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Topic: My Advice for Writers re CoVID-19
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“For some people, curiosity will lead to greater stress, and that stress will cripple their creativity. Instead of focusing on their novels, they’ll be focusing on the spectacle.” David Farland

Topic: My Advice for Writers re CoVID-19

Since everyone else seems to be handing out advice, I thought I’d take a shot at it too. This advice, naturally, is for writers.

First, here’s the all-but-mandatory disclaimer: I am not, have never been, and will never be a medical professional. This advice is offered for entertainment only. Take it at your own risk.

1. Wash your hands thoroughly, and use common sense (e.g., if you wash your hands after using the bathroom, wash or sanitize them again after handling the bathroom doorknob on your way out).

2. Turn off the television. Avoid social media and the newspaper. Cancel any “newsletters” that purport to “report” the “news” to which you’re currently subscribed. The CoVID-19 virus spreads via contact with infected people or surfaces (according to every reputable source out there), but the insanity and the ensuing stress over it spreads via electronic means.

3. *If you don't already, avoid people* who sneeze or spit on their hands and then offer to shake yours. I also recommend avoiding people who slice their palm open with a knife and then offer to enter into a partnership with you as a “blood brother” (or sister). Just say no. Saying “Ewwwww” is optional.

4. *Write.* That's what you do, right? So write. If you've already succumbed mentally and/or emotionally to the frenzy, sanitize your hands before and after each session on the keyboard.

That's pretty much it, really.

And because you're a writer, keep at least part of one eye peeled in the aftermath for what the US government slipped past us while we were all mindlessly focused on the spectacle.

Or better yet, hold hands with your creative subconscious and descend a mental stairwell into a room full of What Ifs. When you get there, speculate on best-, medium-, and worst-case scenarios. Then write the utopian or dystopian stories that emerge.

That's my advice.

Today, having written yesterday the short story that was due last Saturday, I'm going back to the novel. I expect to write the short story that's due this coming Saturday sometime this week.

Frankly, I'm looking forward to getting back to the world of an alien invasion force taking over Earth. I don't have to suspect the aliens' intentions. And I'm guarding closely against allowing my conscious mind to dictate that I have to backtrack and add-in that they brought a virus with them and are working in cahoots with a flawed world government to bring Earth to her knees. (grin) Maybe that'll be the next book.

Still reeling a bit from my New Mexico trip. I didn't quite hit my word-count goal again today, but it's all good. I stopped in a good place.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Emotional Distancing” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/emotional-distancing/>.

See “Timing” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/timing/>.

See “First Page Critique – Closure” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/03/first-page-critique-closure.html>.

See “Homicide Investigations: Dos and Don'ts” at <https://leelofland.com/homicide-investigations-dos-and-donts/>.

See “Writing Unlikeable Characters Readers Will Root For” at <https://www.janefriedman.com/writing-unlikeable-characters/>.

See “Soviet Space Graphics” at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/soviet-space-graphics>. Maybe some story ideas.

If you have time, see “A Cautionary Tale” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/a-cautionary-tale-2/>. FWIW.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 2889
Nonfiction words today..... 560 (Journal)

Writing of *The Othgygnrkthers* (tentative title, novel)

Day 1..... 3863 words. Total words to date..... 3863
Day 2..... 2408 words. Total words to date..... 6261
Day 3..... 3116 words. Total words to date..... 9377
Day 4..... 3051 words. Total words to date..... 12428
Day 5..... 3285 words. Total words to date..... 15713
Day 6..... 2486 words. Total words to date..... 18199
Day 7..... 2365 words. Total words to date..... 20564
Day 8..... 3053 words. Total words to date..... 23617
Day 9..... 2889 words. Total words to date..... 26506

Total fiction words for the month..... 35407
Total fiction words for the year..... 172102
Total nonfiction words for the month... 15690
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 70170
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 242272

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 6
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 48
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 202
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Atlas Obscura](#), [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Book Designer](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: An Incredibly Generous Offer

[March 18, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * An Incredibly Generous Offer
- * Topic:
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

An Incredibly Generous Offer

As we all struggle to get through the pandemic and the government and public reaction to it...

Dean Wesley Smith and Kris Rusch are offering an incredible FIFTY PERCENT off everything on Teachable (see <https://wmg-publishing-workshops-and-lectures.teachable.com/>), but only for the next 48 hours. For details, including the special code, see "March Sadness Special" at <https://kriswrites.com/2020/03/17/march-sadness-special/>.

I urge you to find a way to take advantage of this while you can, partly for yourself and partly to thank Dean and Kris for their kindness.

And yes, I'm taking my own advice. There's one course I've been wanting for awhile, and I just enrolled.

This could be the offer that jumpstarts your career as a writer or enables you to advance to a new plateau with your writing.

I'm sending this out early. Today I'll write on the novel and report those numbers in Day 10 tomorrow.

Be safe, be well, and try not to go stir crazy.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Publisher's Note: An Alternate Reality" at <https://www.wmgpublishinginc.com/2020/03/16/publishers-note-an-alternate-reality/>.

See "Stay Inside and Chill weekly newsletter" at <https://mailchi.mp/11cd861962a9/stay-inside-and-chill>.

To see just one person’s experiences with the current quarantine, see “Drastic Measures” at <http://ronnyhermandejong.com/a-new-life-retirement-at-its-best-2020-13/>.

See “Romantic Suspense – An Overview” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/03/romantic-suspense-an-overview.html>.

See “Remote, home-based publishing” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/remote-home-based-publishing/>.

See “What Story Should You Write?” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/what-story-should-you-write/>.

See “My Covid 19 Fog” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/the-covid-19-fog>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 240 (Journal)

Writing of The Othgygnrkthers (tentative title, novel)

Day 1..... 3863 words. Total words to date..... 3863
Day 2..... 2408 words. Total words to date..... 6261
Day 3..... 3116 words. Total words to date..... 9377
Day 4..... 3051 words. Total words to date..... 12428
Day 5..... 3285 words. Total words to date..... 15713
Day 6..... 2486 words. Total words to date..... 18199
Day 7..... 2365 words. Total words to date..... 20564
Day 8..... 3053 words. Total words to date..... 23617
Day 9..... 2889 words. Total words to date..... 26506

Total fiction words for the month..... 35407
Total fiction words for the year..... 172102
Total nonfiction words for the month... 15930
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 70410
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 242512

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 6
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 48
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 202
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Kristine Kathryn Rusch](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [WMG Publishing](#)

The Journal: Special Limited Time Discount

[March 19, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Special Limited Time Discount
- * In the spirit
- * Writing with Depth and Advanced Depth
- * Yesterday and Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Literature is a textually transmitted disease, normally contracted in childhood.” Jane Yolen (via The Passive Voice)

Special Limited Time Discount

In the spirit of helping readers pass the time and helping writers learn something new, I've just discounted all of my titles—nonfiction books, novels, novellas, short stories, and short story collections—by 50% at Smashwords. This sale ends on March 31, 2020.

To take advantage of this deal, go to <https://www.smashwords.com/profile/view/HEStanbrough> and make your selections. At checkout, use the coupon code **TK47M**. Your entire purchase price will be discounted by 50%.

Note: This discount is currently available only at Smashwords, but you can download any eformat there.

Writing with Depth and Advanced Depth

A few years ago (June 2016) I took Dean's Writing with Depth workshop. I'm not exaggerating when I say my writing took a massive leap forward as a result. It was a real eye-opener re writing openings and immediately pulling the reader into the story.

But it was so amazing that afterward I wondered how much more I could learn—how much more I could improve my work—by taking the Advanced Depth workshop.

Yesterday, prodded by his 50% off sale, I made the leap and signed up for Advanced Depth. Honestly, I expected to find that I already knew most of what he would teach in the workshop.

Without going into any proprietary detail, let me just say this: I was wrong.

The Advanced Depth workshop is by far the best, most in-depth workshop I've ever taken from Dean. It is nothing short of incredible.

As he often does, Dean drops dozens of gems along the way, and that's only in the first two weeks worth of videos. (I was so excited about it, I actually set my novel to the side and watched the first three weeks' videos, which caught me up with the rest of the class.)

I can't recommend this workshop strongly enough.

Of course, Writing with Depth is a prerequisite for this one. In fact, if you read and enjoy my stories or novels and feel you're pulled into the story, that's a direct result of my having taken Writing with Depth.

So if you have the funds available (or can make them available), and if you want your writing to take a HUGE leap forward, at present you can sign up for both workshops for a total of \$300 (meaning both for half price, meaning you're basically getting one workshop free).

And again, I can't recommend it strongly enough. And no, I don't get any kind of affiliate fee or kickback.

It's up to you, of course, and I'll say no more about it. But trust me, folks, if becoming a professional fiction writer is important to you, this is a truly safe bet.

Yesterday I listened to the first three weeks of the workshop and got myself caught up. Then I wrote, but only a little. A late winter storm moved in and brought strong, distracting winds and nasty, cold, wet weather. After a while, I decided to call it a day early. So no words to report from yesterday.

This morning I wrote the short story that's due this Saturday. Taking a break. I expect to write more on the novel later today.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "March Sadness Special Last Day!" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/march-sadness-special-last-day/>. Which is why I'm posting this early again today. (grin)

See "Business Musings: The Waiting Game (A Process Blog)" at <https://kriswrites.com/2020/03/18/business-musings-the-worry-game-a-process-blog/>.

See “Duty To Publish – Someday Maybe” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/duty-to-publish-someday-maybe/>.

See “How to Write Perfect Twist Endings...” at <https://crimereads.com/how-to-write-perfect-twist-endings/>.

See “3 Unique Research Methods for Identifying Small Publishers” at <https://www.janefriedman.com/3-unique-research-methods-for-identifying-small-publishers/>.

See “The Importance of Trope Awareness” at <https://www.authorspublish.com/the-importance-of-trope-awareness/>.

See “Temporarily Disabling Shipment Creation” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/temporarily-disabling-shipment-creation/>.

See “A Writer’s Guide to Surviving Social Distancing & Quarantine” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/03/a-writers-guide-to-surviving-social-distancing-quarantine.html>.
FWIW.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 3420
Nonfiction words today..... 660 (Journal)

Writing of “This One Thing” (short story)

Day 1..... 3420 words. Total words to date..... 3420 (done)

Writing of The Othgygnrkthers (tentative title, novel)

Day 1..... 3863 words. Total words to date..... 3863
Day 2..... 2408 words. Total words to date..... 6261
Day 3..... 3116 words. Total words to date..... 9377
Day 4..... 3051 words. Total words to date..... 12428
Day 5..... 3285 words. Total words to date..... 15713
Day 6..... 2486 words. Total words to date..... 18199
Day 7..... 2365 words. Total words to date..... 20564
Day 8..... 3053 words. Total words to date..... 23617
Day 9..... 2889 words. Total words to date..... 26506
Day 10... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 38827
Total fiction words for the year..... 175532
Total nonfiction words for the month... 16590
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 71070
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 246592

| | |
|---|-----|
| Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... | 3 |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... | X |
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... | 6 |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 48 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 202 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [CrimeReads](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Kristine Kathryn Rusch](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Standing Up a Street Team

[March 20, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Yesterday
- * Just a reminder
- * The 50%-off sale continues
- * Topic: Want to be part of my street team?
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“The art of medicine consists in amusing the patient while nature cures the disease.” Voltaire
(via The Passive Voice)

When the day was over yesterday I'd added around 1600 words to the novel and ended the day with a little over 5,000 words of fiction. So a good day. And I actually remembered to switch the posting time from noon back to 5 p.m. (grin)

Just a reminder, WMG Publishing is offering a free course on Kickstarter Best Practices. To sign up, visit <https://wmg-publishing-workshops-and-lectures.teachable.com/p/kickstarter>.

The 50%-off sale continues on my books [over at Smashwords](#). At checkout, just enter coupon code TK47M.

Several short stories are free over there, and at least a few people have used this opportunity to “test” several of my novel series in different genres at one time. Jump aboard! It costs you little or nothing. And for another great opportunity, read on. (grin)

Topic: Want To Be Part Of My New Street Team?

For some time now, I've offered short stories and novels as rewards to those who support me as a first reader or [as a patron](#). Now I'm taking it to the next level. Six years into my journey as a professional fiction writer, I'm finally starting a street team.

If you'd like to read every short story and/or every novel I publish at your leisure, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com. Please put STREET TEAM in the subject line so your email will get through my spam filters. In the body of your email, please tell me whether you'd rather read novels, short stories, or both and your preferred format (Kindle, Nook/Apple, or PDF).

Here's how it works:

1. A week or longer before each new release, I will send everyone on my street team a free advanced reader copy (ARC) of my new story or book.
2. In return, members of my street team promise to post a review on release day, especially on Amazon, but some also post their review elsewhere.
3. Reviews don't have to be complicated. A simple star rating with "Loved it!" (if you do) works just fine.

This will be a massive help to me, and you'll get to read every new release before anyone (other than my first readers) even have a chance to see it.

So email me if you're interested. And thanks in advance!

Today was a very slow writing day. I started early on the novel and added around 1200 words in the first session, and then was distracted by other things.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Be Resilient and Responsible" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/be-resilient-and-responsible/>.
And think Licensing.

See "What Story Should You Write?" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/what-story-should-you-write/>.

See "Card Sharp Silver... Day 1" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/card-sharp-silver-day-1/>.

See "NEWS FLASH — HOT AIR EXPANDS!" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/news-flash-hot-air-expands>.

See “Supporting the creative community” at <https://affinity.serif.com/en-us/supporting-the-creative-community/>. An exciting offer!

See “Hotel Horror” at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/providence-biltmore-graduate>. Maybe a story idea or two.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 1263
Nonfiction words today..... 510 (Journal)

Writing of *The Othgynrkthers* (tentative title, novel)

Day 10... 1622 words. Total words to date..... 28128
Day 11... 1263 words. Total words to date..... 29391

Total fiction words for the month..... 41712
Total fiction words for the year..... 178407
Total nonfiction words for the month... 17100
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 71580
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 249987

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 6
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 48
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 202
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Atlas Obscura](#), [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: A Hodgepodge

[March 21, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * I’m gonna harrass you a little
- * Dean’s writing in public again
- * Update on the Street Team
- * The 50%-off sale continues
- * Smashwords Presents

- * If you enjoy podcasts
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“There is always something, and something else, to discuss.” Joe Hartlaub

Hey folks, I’m gonna harrass you a little bit here. Please bear with me. As I write this, I have in mind a few specific friends of mine whom I know would benefit greatly.

In fact, I started to put this in a group email yesterday only to those few friends, but I realized there’s no reason the rest of you shouldn’t benefit too. So I decided (as I do all too often), why not take a chance? So here goes...

First, if you’re already enrolled in the year-long Licensing Transition class, you can skip this and go on down to the next bold type heading. BUT...

1. If you are NOT enrolled in the Licensing Transition class, and if you have or can come up with the money (\$500), you might want to go ahead and buy-in.

As part of the LT class, you get (free) the Licensing 101 class (a \$300 value) as well as some other stuff that I don’t remember right now. In my opinion, this is the best value, hands-down, that Dean has ever offered.

2. If you’re not in the LT class and just don’t want to spend the money to buy-in (again, \$500), I **STRONGLY** recommend you at least buy-in to the Licensing 101 class when Dean offers it again coming up in April. Licensing 101 costs only \$300, and it will be worth every penny and a lot more.

I got Licensing 101 free because I’m in the LT class, but I only got around to listening to it today. It is nothing short of remarkable, and I know each of you would benefit SO much from it. This will open up a whole new world you didn’t even realize existed. It’s like opening a portal to a whole new dimension.

That being said, if you can’t do it or decide you just don’t want to or whatever, that’s perfectly fine too. But you really don’t know what you’re missing.

By the way, the specific friends I have in mind are all within a few years of my age. If you’re in your 30s or 40s or 50s, everything I wrote above goes double or triple for you. I’m not joking.

Dean’s writing in public again in much the same way I’m doing here as he writes the genesis novel for his Cave Creek, Nevada shared world. I encourage you to stop by his site every day, either directly or as a click-through on the “Of Interest” item in this Journal.

I also learned from one of the comments on a previous post that his Writing Romance workshop is going to classic in a few weeks. So if you've been waiting to take it, wait a little longer and get it for half-price (\$150).

Update on the Street Team—Well, just wow. Licking my wounds. Thus far I've had one taker from here, and that was only for short stories. And none thus far from the announcement on Facebook. So apparently I'm going about something all wrong. Or I had the interest pegged wrong. Or something. Frankly, I was a little surprised.

But the announcement hits my "big" (audience-wise) blog over on HarveyStanbrough.com today. So we'll see how that pans out. I'm not holding my breath, and that's fine too. I see this as another step in my education and a pretty blatant lesson from the universe: that I should remain unattached from outcome, shut up and just keep writing. (grin)

The 50%-off sale continues on all of my 280-some titles over at <https://www.smashwords.com/profile/view/HEStanbrough>. (Yawn.) At checkout, just enter coupon code **TK47M**.

Smashwords Presents

So right after I started my own sale (go figure), Smashwords is launching the Authors Give Back sale. If you have books distributed through Smashwords, you can join in. For details, see <https://blog.smashwords.com/2020/03/smashwords-launches-initiatives-to-help.html>.

Smashwords is also presenting the Smashwords Author Education Day, free to all writers and publishers even if they don't use Smashwords for distribution. I will attend because I can never learn enough. For details, see <https://www.smashwords.com/authorday>.

If you enjoy podcasts, these are the few I visit with some regularity. I suggest you check them out:

<https://6figureauthors.com/>

<http://selfpublishstrong.com/podcast/>

<https://www.thecreativepenn.com/blog/>

Today I started with some learning in the Licensing 101 class and a few other workshops. In addition to being informative, it was enjoyable and comforting, in a way, to see and listen to Dean for awhile.

Then I put all the stuff above together and did a few other things. Now I'm going up to the house to eat breakfast. Afterward I'll come back here to cycle back through my current novel to see why it feels stalled. (Probably I just need to knock down some fear or other and get back to trusting what I'm doing.)

And that will be the day. For some reason I want to go ahead and post this, put it behind me. I'll report fiction numbers later.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Sounds of Silence – When writer's block strikes" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/sounds-of-silence-when-writers-block-strikes/>. This is what can happen when you place too much importance on a novel, when you labor over every word instead of Just Writing the Story.

See "Card Sharp Silver... Day 2" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/card-sharp-silver-day-2/>.

See "On the Beach" (a rare post from Neil Gaiman) at <http://journal.neilgaiman.com/2020/03/on-beach.html>.

See "'Knock knock.' 'Who's there?' 'You are.'" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/03/knock-knock-whos-there-you-are.html>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 1030 (Journal)

Writing of *The Othgygnrkthers* (tentative title, novel)

Day 10... 1622 words. Total words to date..... 28128
Day 11... 1263 words. Total words to date..... 29391
Day 12... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 41712
Total fiction words for the year..... 178407
Total nonfiction words for the month... 18130
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 72610
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 251017

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 6
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 48
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 202
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [6FigureAuthors.com](#), [Creative Penn](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Neil Gaiman](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Self-Publish Strong](#), [Smashwords](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: When a Novel Becomes Work

[March 22, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * A Note to New Subscribers
- * Topic: When a Novel Becomes Work
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

A Note to New Subscribers

First, welcome. I'm glad you're here. Second, a bit about what you can expect from the Journal.

I'm an open book, and a blunt, straightforward one. As most of my long-time subscribers know and have somehow survived, I don't have (or employ) many filters when it comes to talking about writing. To me, storytelling is too important—THAT you write, not WHAT you write—to pull many punches.

And I post here almost every day. That plus my candor means occasionally I'm going to say something you don't like, either about writing or, occasionally, about other topics.

I like to think writers find my Journal as refreshing a source of information as I found Dean Wesley Smith's blog several years ago. Like he did back then, I try to share the ups and downs of my own writing journey "in public" in the hope that it might help some of you cut the learning curve.

That's it. Enjoy, and know I'm always open to comments and questions, either in the comments section on the website or via email at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

Topic: When a Novel Becomes Work (a process post)

Yesterday, my novel became work, a little.

Every novel writes differently. If you don't know that, it's because you haven't written enough of them to notice yet.

In fact, many beginning writers get addled and stop writing because of the fear of it presenting differently. Their second or third or eighth novel writes differently, and they see that as being “stuck.”

And instead of figuring out how to get through it and move ahead, many of them set the novel aside permanently and start something new or give up writing altogether.

If you do either of those or if you have a similar reaction that stops you from writing, your critical mind has won.

This is where you need to fall back on the solid ground of Heinlein’s Rules, especially rules 1–3: You must write, you must finish what you write, and you must not rewrite. Those “rules” (really, business habits for writers) have gotten me through almost 6 years as a professional writer. I swear by them.

But to the current conundrum—

I’ve mentioned before that I believe my current novel will be the genesis of a major new series. That thought plus my end of the month self-imposed deadline caused me to assign undue importance to it. And any time you make what you’re writing “important,” the story will grind to a halt.

I was both rushing to get through the story the characters were giving me AND being excited about the coming new series, which levied even more importance on this story.

All of that put my subconscious on high alert and maybe made me more highly susceptible to my critical voice, and eventually the story ground to a halt.

When my subconscious occasionally tugged at my sleeve to point out something that might be a little off while I was writing, I ignored it and pressed forward. And I took the story (notice “**I**” took the story) in a direction the characters didn’t want it to go.

And eventually, my subconscious storyteller shut down, its little arms crossed over its chest, and refused to give me anymore of the story. Hey, it happens. But fortunately, because I’ve written so many novellas and novels, I recognized it for what it was.

So yesterday, after I posted my semi-grouchy Journal post (grin), I opened the novel, scrolled all the way to the front, and started reading it (for pleasure, as a reader). The whole 29,000 words. As I read, I allowed my fingers to rest on the keyboard so my characters could jump in anytime they liked (this is called “cycling”).

Note that I didn’t consciously “look for” things to “fix,” etc. That would be conscious, critical-mind input, and that would truly make writing the novel work. I just read the story and gave my characters free rein.

And wow, did they ever get busy!

I added nearly a thousand words by the time I was only about 10,000 words into the story (see Day 12 below).

I'm pacing myself so that when I reach the place where the story went off the tracks, I will have built up a head of steam. So I'll do more of the same today and probably tomorrow, getting back into the flow and excitement of the story, and then it will take off again.

How do I know it will take off again? Because I've been through this process before. Not on every novel (thank God), but on a few. So I'm firmly on track to doing what I know will work for this particular story.

And that's the secret: Every novel writes differently, so trust the process, trust what you know and your own ability as a storyteller, and get on with it.

Note: As always, there's no rewriting going on. Everything I'm doing is from the creative subconscious. Every word on the page is coming through the POV character and is accompanied by his opinions.

And I am loving the process.

Today I'm posting this early again, mostly to get it out there and because I told a couple of folks I would. I hope it helps.

So again, I'll report fiction numbers tomorrow.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Just How Deadly are Novel Coronavirus and COVID-19 Disease?" at <http://dyingwords.net/just-how-deadly-is-novel-coronavirus-and-covid-19/>.

See "Card Sharp Silver... Day 3" at <https://www.deanwesleymith.com/card-sharp-silver-day-3/>.

See "Write Tight" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/03/write-tight-2.html>. A very good primer. Usually everything he talks about here is avoidable if every word you write comes through your POV character.

See "You can only write NOW" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/you-can-only-write-now/>.

See "This Daring Brit's Long-Lost WWII Diary..." at <https://getpocket.com/explore/item/this-daring-brit-s-long-lost-wwii-diary-chronicles-london-s-darkest-days>. Research and story ideas.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 970 (Journal)

Writing of The Othgynrkthers (tentative title, novel)

Day 10... 1622 words. Total words to date..... 28128
Day 11... 1263 words. Total words to date..... 29391
Day 12... 0992 words. Total words to date..... 30383
Day 13... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 42704
Total fiction words for the year..... 179339
Total nonfiction words for the month... 19100
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 73580
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 252979

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 6
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 48
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 202
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [DyingWords.net](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Cave Creek and Update on Cycling

[March 23, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Cave Creek Kickstarter
- * Street Team update
- * Kevin Tumlinson
- * Topic: Update on Cycling
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“‘No one will like this.’ ‘It’s not funny enough.’ ‘It’s too short.’ ‘It’s too long.’ [These] are projections into the future, which don’t actually exist because no one has read your book yet. Write your book, put it out there, and then don’t dwell in the past worrying about whether the book is good enough. Keep in the present and write that next sentence.” Alison Naomi Holt in a comment on Karen Riggs’ post at Pro Writers Writing

“I’m not psychic, as some would like to believe. I’m simply in tune with my intuition.” Sue Coletta

Dean’s calling for more help on the Cave Creek Kickstarter. It’s in its final three days and very near the second stretch goal, where all contributors will get another free book plus a lecture worth \$50.

If you haven’t supported it yet, toss \$5 his way for a 10-fold plus return. You can find the kickstarter at <http://kck.st/3czEcG1>.

My street team has started to build, but I’m still looking for more people to read free books and help with honest reviews. Many of you have said you enjoy reading the freebies I pass out, so why not sign up? If you’re interested, visit <https://stonethreadpublishing.com>, select the book(s) you’d like to read, then email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

If you’re familiar at all with Kevin Tumlinson (a key mover over at Draft2Digital), all of his Dan Kotler books are now on sale for \$2.99. Read the info at <https://www.kevintumlinson.com/dankotler>.

Kevin also hosts the WordSlinger Podcast. If you’re a podcast-listening kind of person, you can learn a lot here. See/browse at <https://www.kevintumlinson.com/podcast>.

Topic: Update on Cycling

Remember a day or two ago I said my characters had been trying to give me things that I ignored and skipped over as I was writing?

Yesterday during cycling I encountered one of those places and wrote an entirely new chapter that hadn’t been there before. That was a major necessary addition to the story, and there had already been several smaller necessary additions.

So overall I added almost 2000 words yesterday (see Day 13 below). My average has dropped to 2483 words per day, but I’ll take it. (grin)

All of this has reminded me (as I tell others constantly) to slow down, take my time, and listen to the characters. (grin)

Even with a deadline like mine, there’s no rush. After all, the characters know the deadline as well as I do. The secret, really, is to Just Write. But take your time.

Today the Journal contains a lot of links in “Of Interest.” Get your favorite beverage, settle in and learn for awhile. (grin)

I’ll continue cycling through my novel today. That will bring me close to the glitch I encountered a few days ago.

If I feel up to it (if I feel I can write at least one new session beyond the glitch), I’ll keep writing. If not, when I get near the glitch I’ll stop. Then when I come back to the novel tomorrow, I’ll cycle briefly up to that point and then continue with the story.

So either way, the story will be back on track and I’ll be running through it with the characters again. Woohoo!

As I did yesterday, I’ll post this early and add the fiction numbers in later.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Card Sharp Silver... Day 4” at <https://www.deanwesleymith.com/card-sharp-silver-day-4/>.

See “The World Needs Creatives More Than Ever” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/03/the-world-needs-creatives-more-than-ever.html>.

See “Arrows at the Moon, A Guide for Unruly Writers” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/arrows-at-the-moon-a-guide-for-unruly-writers>.

See “Indie Author Blueprint” at <https://indieauthorblueprint.com/>.

See “Amazon’s Review Rules Have Become Even Stricter in 2020” at <https://annerallen.com/2020/03/amazons-review-rules/>. Perfect. Just as I’ve started building my street team.

See “Planning to Go to Your First Book Fair...” at <https://annerallen.com/2020/03/first-book-fair-13-tips/>.

See “How To Be Creative For The Long-Term” at <https://www.thecreativepenn.com/2020/03/23/keep-going-austin-kleon/>. FWIW.

See “What’s Your Author Brand?” at <https://www.thebookdesigner.com/2020/03/whats-your-author-brand/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 660 (Journal)

Writing of *The Othgygnrkthers* (tentative title, novel)

Day 10... 1622 words. Total words to date..... 28128
Day 11... 1263 words. Total words to date..... 29391
Day 12... 0992 words. Total words to date..... 30383
Day 13... 1897 words. Total words to date..... 32280
Day 14... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 44601
Total fiction words for the year..... 181296
Total nonfiction words for the month... 19760
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 74240
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 255536

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 6
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 48
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 202
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Alison Holt](#), [Anne R. Allen](#), [Cave Creek](#), [Creative Penn](#), [Cycling](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Karen Riggs](#), [Kevin Tumlinson](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Street Team](#), [Sue Coletta](#), [The Book Designer](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Dave Farland and Poetics

[March 24, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Dave Farland and Poetics
- * Everything I've ever written
- * Topic: Sometimes Comparisons Are Useful
- * Yesterday and Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“The most durable thing in writing is style, and style is the single most valuable investment a writer can make with his time.”

Raymond Chandler

“Scarcely anything in literature is worth a damn except what is written between the lines.”
Raymond Chandler

In his post today, Dave Farland talks about the importance of eloquence and originality in writing in “Poetics” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/poetics-2/>.

I couldn't agree more.

Which I precisely why I, a Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award nominated poet, teach an audio course on Writing Poetry (Course 9) and another one on Poetry Techniques for the Fictionist (Course 10) at <https://stonethreadpublishing.com/audio-lecture-series/>. (grin) And nobody ever takes them.

Everything I've ever written and published is still on sale either free or at 50% off [over at Smashwords](#). The sale is valid only at Smashwords and only through 31 March.

Topic: Sometimes Comparisons Are Useful (an opinion piece)

Most or all of us are under “lockdown.” But not really.

Almost every post I see about our current national (and world) situation on Facebook or the Kill Zone blog or DWS or other places lament the lockdown and “cabin fever” etc.

Then they go on to talk about eating lunch or breakfast or supper, or the great walk they had that day (and how great it was to see neighbors out and about) or visiting a restaurant to pick up a to-go order, etc.

I'm not griping here. I'm glad folks are doing various things to cope. In fact, I talked yesterday with my wife about taking a day trip (something we haven't done in a long time) just to see new scenery. Most gas stations are open, and prices are low.

I'm just saying, things could be a lot worse.

We're able to go out and walk. It isn't like we have to huddle under a real lockdown in a bunker somewhere trembling with fear while bombs are falling outside.

We're able to order pretty much anything we want online. (I'm old enough to consider that a miracle and a wonder.) The UPS guy just brought me a new shipment of cigars yesterday. My wife will drive into a nearby town today to see a visiting doctor's staff and pick up her meds.

We aren't putting up with widespread power outages (my writing computer still works). We aren't shivering from a lack of heat, and later we won't be burning up from a lack of AC or a swamp cooler.

At most, from what I'm seeing, we're a little inconvenienced, and not even by the virus really. We're inconvenienced by the societal reaction to the constant, panic-inducing news reports about the virus.

We're inconvenienced by the selfish "me first" crowd who rushed out to the stores and bought up all the toilet paper (???), hand sanitizer, and certain food items.

For a personal example, I enjoy eggs (brain food) every morning with breakfast. I typically eat two or three every morning. But for whatever brilliant reason, apparently people are hoarding eggs too. So I'm down to two eggs (I usually have at least a dozen in the fridge).

But again, it's only an inconvenience. Only a slight disruption of my routine. I can always eat something else for breakfast.

We need to take a collective breath and count our blessings. Change really is always a good thing, even though it seldom looks good as it's approaching.

At times like this, I like to remember that the necessities—water, food, and shelter—have never changed. Everything else is a luxury. And we still have a lot of luxuries left.

If you're a writer, this is a great time to be alive. You can write about the current mess (a vast exaggeration) in that dystopian novel you've always wanted to write. Or you can escape in the other direction and extrapolate a utopian future.

You can write a great action-adventure or thriller story based on what's going on right now. You can write a romance, the basis for which is a meet-cute that happens while two lonely people are escaping the "lockdown" on a walk. The possibilities are endless.

I personally enjoy the solitude. With my personality, what I hate is that the solitude is forced. Isn't that silly? Honestly, we've never had a better excuse to lock ourselves away and write.

And frankly, based on my own study of human nature, I expect to see Release from Lockdown parties popping up all over the place in a month or two.

I also expect to write quite a lot today, even not counting this ridiculous essay. So regarding the lockdown, I'll just say stay safe and enjoy. (grin)

Yesterday, I got up through Chapter 17 but I added only about 1200 words (see Day 14 below).

Today I'll finish cycling and everything should break loose. Man, am I ever looking forward to that!

As has become my habit lately, I'll post this early and post my fiction numbers for today later.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Card Sharp Silver... Day 5” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/card-sharp-silver-day-5/>.

See “A New Book Publishing News Feed for Authors” at <https://www.janefriedman.com/book-publishing-newsfeed/>.

See “Teach Yourself to Echolocate” at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/how-to-echolocate>.

See “Search the Smithsonian...” at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/help-atlas-find-smithsonian-weird-items>.

See “Let’s All Take A Quiz” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/03/what-book-wasted-your-time-what-book-moved-you-lets-all-take-a-quiz.html>.

See “The Ornerly Little Comma” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/the-ornery-little-comma>. My swan song, sort of.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 940 (Journal)

Writing of *The Othgygnrkthers* (tentative title, novel)

Day 10... 1622 words. Total words to date..... 28128
Day 11... 1263 words. Total words to date..... 29391
Day 12... 0992 words. Total words to date..... 30383
Day 13... 1897 words. Total words to date..... 32280
Day 14... 1199 words. Total words to date..... 33479

Total fiction words for the month..... 45800
Total fiction words for the year..... 182495
Total nonfiction words for the month... 20700
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 75180
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 257675

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 6
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 48
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 202
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Atlas Obscura](#), [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Smashwords](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: On Having “Enough” Inventory, Supporting Readers, and Other Things

[March 25, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Yesterday
- * Topic: On Having “Enough” Inventory, Supporting Readers, and Other Things
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“But the truth is, that pushing yourself often yields great results. If you push yourself and fail, at the very least you’ve exercised your writing muscles.” David Farland

I expected yesterday to be a really big day, but it wasn’t. I diverted my efforts to helping my wife clear the yard of piles and piles of saltbush and mesquite tree trimmings.

We transported four pickup-bed loads to a future burn pile. Of course, all of that wore out this old man. (grin) So when the day was over I’d written a little over 1400 words (see Day 15 below).

Yesterday I also forgot to attend the new vids on the Advanced Depth course AND the Licensing 101 course, so I’ll do that first this morning.

Topic: On Having “Enough” Inventory, Supporting Readers, and Other Things

A mentoring student brought up an interesting topic in an email. Frankly, it was something I’ve thought about recently myself.

With almost 60 novels and novellas, over 200 short stories (and a bunch of collections), a couple dozen nonfiction books and courses, and hundreds of poems (in several collections), maybe I have enough inventory. Maybe I should stop or at least slow my writing and creating and focus on marketing what I have.

Really, that isn’t a bad idea. But I can’t do that. I’m talking about me, personally.

As I wrote to my student, I'm a child of the 60s, which is both a good and a bad thing. It's good because money has never meant much to me. I've seldom had savings (though I readily admit to the wisdom of having savings) and I've never cared much for money beyond having enough to provide myself and my family with the basics: water, food, shelter (including clothing) and my writing computer. Everything else (to me) is luxury.

Would I like to earn a bunch of smackers each month on my writing? Of course. In fact, if all of my books sold only one copy per month (say \$5) in every venue around the world (about 450) where they're available, that would net me a cool \$2250 per month.

I figure \$5 is a good, realistic average. My blog posts are free, my short stories are \$3 each, my novellas and novels range from \$4 to \$7, my nonfictions and audios and collections range from \$10 to \$60 or so, and so on.

Only it doesn't work that way. What I do is make everything in my inventory available to as many readers as I can around the world in as many forms as possible, then stop worrying about it and write the next thing.

My only failures in that regard to this point has been

1. Not having all my longer works available in paper (which I hope to resolve soon), and
2. Not having my audio courses and other fictions and nonfictions available in audio (which I hope to begin resolving soon, but more slowly than getting them into paper).

But I can't base all of that on "supporting readers." That way leads to madness.

I DO support readers, and I hope my giveaways and sales make that apparent.

But if I *base my business decisions* on supporting readers, that ties me directly to the outcome, and that's unrealistic. Here's how it works in the real world:

1. I offer freebies or sales, complete with direct links so readers don't even have to type in or copy/paste the URL.
2. I expect readers (whom I'm supporting with those freebies and sales) to actually take advantage of the free offer or sales.
3. Most readers don't. They just don't.

And I'm not talking about writers who are also readers. Writers very seldom buy books from other writers. My best guess is that familiarity breeds contempt, and I'm one of the most open, familiar guys out there.

But I'm talking about the millions of readers who don't know me from the original Adam and who browse my freebies and sales every single day and never click the Download link.

I can't tie my sanity to such inexplicable silliness as that. (grin) All I can do is write the best story I can at my current level, design the best, most genre-specific book covers I can, and write the best sales copy I can.

Then I can either sit back and wait for the dollars to roll in or I can forget it and write the next story. They say, as a point of trust, if you build it, they will come.

Well, I did my part. I built it. I followed Heinlein's Rules. I wrote. I finished. I did not drain all originality out of it by rewriting. I put it on the market. The rest is up to the readers.

Okay, so with all the inventory I already have, why can't I just slow production or stop altogether and focus on marketing?

The short answer is because I'm a writer. And really, I don't write "lightning fast," as some have said. I write a paltry 1000 words per hour (about 17 words per minute). I just prioritize writing and spend more hours in the chair. (shrug)

The longer answer is what I told my mentoring student: For me the writing really *does* come first. Not to build more inventory, but to be entertained, to find out what happens next, and in the next story and the next world with the next cast of characters.

So with my wife's help, I'll do the marketing stuff as I get to it, including moving things to paper and audio.

But I have to keep writing. As my buddy Dan says, when I'm writing I'm truly "in Hebben."

I know me. If I stopped writing today, chances are I'd leave everything up and continue collecting \$\$s from it, but I wouldn't spend my time marketing. I'd find something to do that I actually enjoy. Like fishing. (grin)

But like Bradbury and countless others, I hope to kick off while I'm sitting at my writing 'puter, my fingers on the keyboard. And I really, really hope whoever finds me will be a reader. And I hope they'll shove me aside (after all, at that point I'm the coroner's problem), look at the screen, and mutter, "Damn! I wonder what happens next?"

And I hope I'll somehow be able to see that happen. That would really be Hebben.

Late start today considering I have vids to watch and listen to in catchup mode and given that I lost a lot of time on the novel yesterday. So writing today will be my reward for doing other things I have to do first, like write all of this stuff.

I got through the vids, and I learned a ton. (I recommend both of them and the Depth class, which is a prerequisite for Advanced Depth.)

I checked email and received a great email from a mentoring student (Thanks, Rob!) wondering why I didn't take my audio lectures "public" to Audible or one of the other big services. Great question, and one I'd never considered. Now I will.

I finally checked for items for "Of Interest" and added a few. I didn't read all of them. Some by some authors I automatically add because I know they will be of value to writers.

As before, I'm posting this early and will report today's fiction numbers later.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Priorities" at <https://kriswrites.com/2020/03/24/priorities-a-coronavirus-stay-at-home-special-reprint-1/>.

See "Internet to the Rescue!" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/03/internet-to-the-rescue.html>. Contains a links to a site that generates character names, and other links to other helpful sites for writers.

See "Writers of Apocalyptic Fiction..." at <https://prowriterswriting.com/need-writing-ideas-no-time-like-the-present/>.

See "Card Sharp Silver... Day 6" at <https://www.deanwesleymith.com/card-sharp-silver-day-6/>.

See "Balancing Productivity and Art" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/balancing-productivity-and-art-3/>.

See "Peer Critique Versus Professional Editing: When, Why and How to Use Both" at <https://www.janefriedman.com/peer-critique-versus-professional-editing/>.

See "Romantic Christian Suspense: A Roundtable Discussion" at <https://crimereads.com/romantic-christian-suspense-a-roundtable-discussion/>.

Now, for a very limited time and only for subscribers to this Journal, I'm offering a special bonus to anyone who read this far. I'm giving away my audio lecture "Poetry Techniques for the Fictionist" (a \$40 value) to anyone who requests it by email (harveystanbrough@gmail.com) on or before March 31.

The course is presented in 8 audio lectures in then state-of-the-art and now-antiquated MP3 format. (grin) I'll send you the files via return email so you can download them to your computer, tablet, phone or whatever.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 1400 (Journal)

Writing of *The Othgygnrkthers* (tentative title, novel)

Day 10... 1622 words. Total words to date..... 28128
Day 11... 1263 words. Total words to date..... 29391
Day 12... 0992 words. Total words to date..... 30383
Day 13... 1897 words. Total words to date..... 32280
Day 14... 1199 words. Total words to date..... 33479
Day 15... 1444 words. Total words to date..... 34923
Day 16... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 47244
Total fiction words for the year..... 183939
Total nonfiction words for the month... 22100
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 76580
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 260519

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 6
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 48
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 202
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [CrimeReads](#), [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Kristine Kathryn Rusch](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Cave Creek and A Few Thoughts on Writing Into the Dark

[March 26, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * I seldom write from a picture
- * Cave Creek Kickstarter update
- * Yesterday
- * Topic: A Few Thoughts on Writing Into the Dark
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

I seldom write from a picture, but in case anyone wondered, I wrote my recent short story, “Silence Is Better,” based on seeing a print I found at a garage sale. (Artist: Vivian Flasch)

That’s a photo of it on the left. If you’d like to read the short story (some readers think it’s Hemingway-esque), email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com and I’ll send it to you in PDF>

If you haven’t yet backed the Cave Creek kickstarter, please consider doing so. It’s reaching for a second stretch goal. You can find the info at <http://kck.st/3czEcG1>.

Yesterday—well, we decided to make a trip to Sierra Vista for shopping. I found eggs! The limit was two dozen, but that’s all I wanted anyway. I’m not a hoarder, and frankly I don’t like those who are. We should all be in this together.

Anyway, we picked up some other necessities too. When we got back, I cycled a bit and wrote a little (see Day 16 below).

Topic: A Few Thoughts on Writing Into the Dark

We have several new subscribers to the Journal and it’s been awhile since I talked about writing into the dark. Plus, this morning I had a new thought about it. Hence this topic.

Most writers I’ve met have experienced being “in the zone.” The “zone” is a state of mind in which the words flow, seemingly unbidden and unstoppable, and it’s nothing short of wonderful.

Briefly, writing into the dark is being “in the zone,” albeit on purpose.

Writing into the dark means giving yourself over to Trusting your creative subconscious and Trusting all the knowledge you’ve gleaned over the years about writing and Story.

It means writing without knowing in advance where the story is going. It mean dropping into “the zone” at will. Intentionally.

Yes, intentionally. Yes, at will.

Once you are able to trust what you know and let go of all the silliness you learned over the years, mostly from nonwriters and beginning writers, you really can drop into the zone at will.

How? By sitting down at the keyboard, putting your fingers on the keys, and (if you’re in the midst of a work in progress) typing the next sentence. Then the next and the next.

Trusting the next sentence and the next really is like magic. Just write. Before you realize it, you’ll be in the zone, deep in the story, and burning up the keyboard.

And if you don’t have a work in progress? Same thing. Start with a character with a problem and drop him or her into a setting. Then sit down at the keyboard, put your fingers on the keys and write.

(If you find yourself arguing with this, I urge you to quiet that critical voice and just try it.)

Use whatever character name pops into your head. The initial problem doesn't have to be "the" problem of the story.

The initial problem might be only an untied shoelace or a forgotten briefcase or coffee sloshing from his or her cup onto his or her suit coat or a neighbor who loves to borrow things coming up the sidewalk or the boss coming up the hallway with a determined look on his face. Whatever. The problem matters only in that it gets you to the keyboard.

The setting might be the living room of the character's house or the stoop or porch in front of the house or the inside of the car or the character's place of business. Again, whatever.

Whoever the character is, whatever the little problem is that gets you to the keyboard, whatever the setting is, Write It.

And again, soon your fingers will be flying over the keyboard and you'll be in the zone.

In the case of a short story, trust your character(s) and they'll lead you through to the end.

In the case of a novel, trust your characters and they'll lead you to the end of the scene, then through the next one, then the next and eventually to the end of the story.

The only difference between a short story and a longer story (novella or novel) is that the short story is about One Event. The longer story is about a series of related events, each of which leads to the next until you've reached the end.

It really is that easy, folks. It really is.

The only hard part is forcing yourself to let go of all the nonsense and trust in yourself and your characters (which, um, are part of yourself).

Admittedly it's always easier to succumb to the fear of failure or rejection or of not knowing in advance where the story's going or any of a number of other unreasonable fears.

I hope for you that you won't succumb. I hope for you that you will discover the literally unbridled freedom of writing into the dark.

What Writing Into the Dark is NOT

WITD is NOT "letting your characters wander aimlessly, putting down random thoughts" as one writer who doesn't write into the dark recently described it. There's nothing "aimless" or "random" about it.

Nor is it "sloppy writing" or "stream of consciousness" (though it can be) or any of that nonsense.

WITD simply means the writer understands in a very real way that the characters, not the writer, are actually living the story. The writer trusts that the characters know where the story's going and how it will unfold.

The writer's only role is to lend the character his or her fingers on the keyboard and allow the character to tell the story.

And what about cycling? Isn't that an important part of writing into the dark?

Yes, it is. Cycling is revising, albeit without conscious thought. Cycling, like writing into the dark in the first place, is a function of the creative subconscious.

Rather than being a binding hindrance, it's freeing. Like WITD is freeing in the first place.

During cycling (reading over what you've written and allowing yourself to touch it as you read) you can add the five senses. Use all five senses at least once in every major scene. That description should be filtered through the POV character's senses and with the POV character's opinions.

During cycling you can "plant" the pistol back in Chapter 2 or 3 (or in the third or fourth paragraph of your short story) that Aunt Marge suddenly pulled out of the pocket of her housecoat in Chapter 14 (or in the fifth paragraph from the end of the short story).

Try it. Quieting the critical mind isn't easy, but if you struggle through and really learn to let go and trust yourself, I guarantee you'll like WITD. You might even thank me.

Today I was heartened to learn (through a special offer I made yesterday) that several subscribers read these silly posts in their entirety.

I was telling someone recently, back in the day I would have loved finding a blog like this. There are so few places where writers can find un-regurgitated information that doesn't tout the same old things: outlining, revising, using critique groups and rewriting.

I didn't find that until I rediscovered Dean and found his blog when I was 60-something. But here I am, doing my best to pay it forward and pass along helpful information. I hope some of you find it useful.

I need a big writing day today, so I basically just decided that's what was going to happen. I rolled out early and had 1600 words before 4 a.m. Having to do some cycling today too, but it's all good. (grin)

As is becoming my habit with this novel, I'll post this now and report fiction numbers later.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Business Musings: The Waiting Game Part Two” at <https://kriswrites.com/2020/03/25/business-musings-the-waiting-game-part-two-a-process-blog/>.

See “Card Sharp Silver... Day 7” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/card-sharp-silver-day-7/>.

See “What’s in a (Pen) Name? An Argument Against Noms de Plumes” at <https://www.thebookdesigner.com/2020/03/whats-in-a-pen-name-an-argument-against-noms-de-plumes/>.

See “Sheltering Endurance Tips, Toilet Paper Giveaway...” at <https://mailchi.mp/e260763ae138/sheltering-endurance-tips-toilet-paper-giveaway-social-distance-sale>.

See “True Crime Thursday – Shut the Door Murder Confession” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/03/true-crime-thursday-shut-the-door-murder-confession.html>.

See “Puffing the PR” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/puffing-the-pr>.

For something neat, see “The Harvest of Roses” at <https://hellopoetry.com/poem/3776379/the-harvest-of-roses/>. I edited The Raintown Review around 30 years ago. I didn’t remember this poem until it popped up this morning on a Talkwalker alert. (grin)

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 1400 (Journal)

Writing of The Othgygnrkthers (tentative title, novel)

Day 10... 1622 words. Total words to date..... 28128
Day 11... 1263 words. Total words to date..... 29391
Day 12... 0992 words. Total words to date..... 30383
Day 13... 1897 words. Total words to date..... 32280
Day 14... 1199 words. Total words to date..... 33479
Day 15... 1444 words. Total words to date..... 34923
Day 16... 1284 words. Total words to date..... 36207
Day 17... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 48528
Total fiction words for the year..... 185223
Total nonfiction words for the month... 23500
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 77980
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 263203

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

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|---|-----|
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... | 6 |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 48 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 202 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

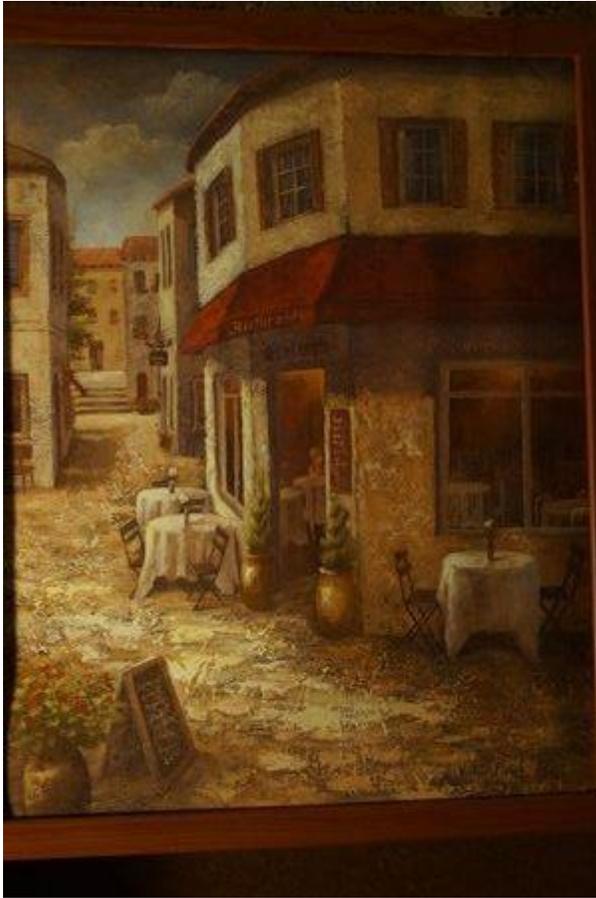
Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Kristine Kathryn Rusch](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Book Designer](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: A Very Short Post

[March 27, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * First, here's the pic
- * Quotes of the Day
- * Quotes of the Day
- * Yesterday
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers



First, here's the pic I meant to include yesterday.

This is a photograph of the print of the painting by Vivian Flasch on which I based the short story "Silence Is Better."

Quotes of the Day

"I don't mind if you don't like my manners. They're pretty bad. I grieve over them during the long winter evenings. But don't waste your time trying to cross-examine me." Raymond Chandler, *The Big Sleep*

"Overhead the rain still pounded, with a remote sound, as if it was somebody else's rain."
Raymond Chandler

"The faster I write the better my output. If I'm going slow, I'm in trouble. It means I'm pushing the words instead of being pulled by them." Raymond Chandler

Well, yesterday I had a pretty good day (see Day 17). Hopefully I'll have the same kind of day today.

Today I remembered I haven't written the story for this week yet, so (probably because I was reading Raymond Chandler quotes this morning) I wrote "The Strange Case of Marlene Stratford," a Stern Talbot PI short story.

If you'd like to read it, let me know. I'll send you a PDF copy (probably no cover).

The fiction words for the short story are reported below. I'll report any other fiction later. Told you it was a short post today. (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "It Took Me So Long to Find Out" at <https://www.suecoletta.com/it-took-me-so-long-to-find-out-by-margot-kinberg/>.

See "Card Sharp Silver... Day 8" at <https://www.deanwesleymith.com/card-sharp-silver-day-8/>.

See "Writing Tips: How To Craft A Compelling Scene" at <https://www.thecreativepenn.com/2020/03/27/writing-tips-how-to-craft-a-compelling-scene/>.

See "Workspace: (A Coronavirus Stay-At-Home Special Reprint #2)" at <https://kriswrites.com/2020/03/27/workspace/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 240 (Journal)

Writing of "The Strange Case of Marlene Stratford" (a Stern Talbot PI short story)

Day 1..... 2658 words. Total words to date..... 2658 (done)

Writing of The Othgygnrkthers (tentative title, novel)

Day 10... 1622 words. Total words to date..... 28128
Day 11... 1263 words. Total words to date..... 29391
Day 12... 0992 words. Total words to date..... 30383
Day 13... 1897 words. Total words to date..... 32280
Day 14... 1199 words. Total words to date..... 33479
Day 15... 1444 words. Total words to date..... 34923
Day 16... 1284 words. Total words to date..... 36207
Day 17... 4765 words. Total words to date..... 40972

Total fiction words for the month..... 55951
Total fiction words for the year..... 192646
Total nonfiction words for the month... 23740
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 78220
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 270866

| | |
|--|-----|
| Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... | 3 |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... | X |
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12 | |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 48 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 208 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Creative Penn](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Kristine Kathryn Rusch](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Sue Coletta](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: The Allure of Writing Short Fiction

[March 28, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Yesterday
- * Lately I've noticed a shift
- * Sales and stuff
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

"The Renaissance took place in chaos and plague." Shiva Ayyadurai via The Passive Voice

Oof. Yesterday I had a small day on the novel (see Day 18 below) and I only have four days left to finish on time. I think I'll make it, but if I don't I'll just go over by a day or two. (shrug)

Overall a good day of writing fiction yesterday with a little over 3800 words. Today it's all novel again. I'm looking forward to it.

Lately I've noticed a shift in my attitude regarding short stories. This was not a conscious shift. Just something that happened.

Early in the year, writing a short story every week felt almost like a chore. In short, I met my weekly goal only because I had a goal to meet. I enjoyed writing the stories once I got started on them, but I didn't enjoy "having" to write them. So without the goal, I wouldn't have written them at all.

Then something shifted and I began to look forward to writing short stories. I was anxious to write the last few, and I very much enjoyed writing them. Honestly, I think I could write a new

short story every day. Of course, that would vastly slow down my novel-writing process. (grin)
But what fun it is!

Now, even as I'm looking forward to getting back into the novel, I'm also looking forward to whatever I'll come up with for the next short story and writing it. If that makes sense.

I might even set aside my short story goal as unnecessary and not worry about it (as long as I still write at least one short story per week). I have a feeling after this novel's finished I might start writing a lot more short stories.

I might not even design covers and publish them or design other covers and put them in collections. I might just leave all that to my heirs. (grin)

Just a side note: If you flat love the fun and exploration and discovery and sense of accomplishment that springs from writing short fiction (not to mention the constant possibility that a short story will seed a longer one), go for it.

But if you want to write short fiction only to make money, chances are good you'll fail. Wrong motivation. Short fiction sells much worse than longer fiction. Here's the heirarchy, best sales to worst, and I'm not talking *income* here, I'm talking actual sales:

1. Novel and novella series
2. Novels
3. Novellas
4. Short story series (in collections)
5. Short story collections
6. Short story series (not in collections)
7. Individual short stories

Finally, as another side note, yes, writing short stories is a great way to build confidence in yourself as you transition to writing into the dark. I recommend writing short stories for that purpose.

But don't be surprised if what starts as a short story wants to keep going. If that happens, go with it and keep writing into the dark. If it peters out, back up a bit, wrap the short story and publish it. If it doesn't peter out, keep running with it. That's how you learn to trust yourself and your characters. At first it's a leap of faith, but it's one that will be richly rewarded.

Only four days left, counting today, to take advantage of my 50% off sale over at Smashwords (click <https://www.smashwords.com/profile/view/HEStanbrough>). I've thought about extending the sale, but frankly it's been an abysmal failure thus far.

Today I started the morning listening to new videos in the Shared Worlds class. Good stuff.

Now I'm going to post this nonsense and move over to write on the novel. I'll post today's fiction numbers later.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Card Sharp Silver... Day 9” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/card-sharp-silver-day-9/>. Among other things, Dean speaks for me on the pandemic.

For yet another (and writing-related) take, see “The Coronavirus Diaries” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/03/the-coronavirus-diaries.html>.

See “Why You’ll Never Reach Your Writing Goals in 2020 (Unless...)” at <https://smartblogger.com/writing-goals/>. FWIW.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 690 (Journal)

Writing of *The Othgygnrkthers* (tentative title, novel)

Day 10... 1622 words. Total words to date..... 28128
Day 11... 1263 words. Total words to date..... 29391
Day 12... 0992 words. Total words to date..... 30383
Day 13... 1897 words. Total words to date..... 32280
Day 14... 1199 words. Total words to date..... 33479
Day 15... 1444 words. Total words to date..... 34923
Day 16... 1284 words. Total words to date..... 36207
Day 17... 4765 words. Total words to date..... 40972
Day 18... 1151 words. Total words to date..... 42123
Day 19... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 57102
Total fiction words for the year..... 193797
Total nonfiction words for the month... 24430
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 78910
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 273397

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 48
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [SmartBlogger.com](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: One Way to Beat the Critical Mind

[March 29, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Yesterday
- * Topic: One Way to beat the critical mind
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Most critical writing is drivel and half of it is dishonest. It is a short cut to oblivion, anyway. Thinking in terms of ideas destroys the power to think in terms of emotions and sensations.”
Raymond Chandler

“Preoccupation with style will not produce it. No amount of editing and polishing will have any appreciable effect on the flavor of how a man writes. It is a product of the quality of his emotion and perception; it is the ability to transfer these to paper which makes him a writer, in contrast to the great number of people who have just as good emotions and just as keen perceptions, but cannot come within a googol of miles of putting them on paper.” Raymond Chandler

I thought yesterday was going to be another fairly slow day on the novel. But honestly, I think it's because I'm getting close to the end. It's not in sight yet, but I think that's what's going on.

Long-time readers of the Journal probably will recognize this. As I get closer to the end of a novel, my daily word count tends to drop. Even in the face of an approaching deadline. It's like pulling teeth.

I also do a lot of cycling as I get closer to the end of a novel. New things come up that I have to go back and plant earlier in the story, etc.

It's as if my creative subconscious is giving me the story in smaller bits because it doesn't want to get to the end and have the story be over. (grin) Happens often with my writing.

Then when the end actually comes into view, I race ahead to get finished and put the story behind me so I can move on to the next bright, shiny object. (grin)

So even though I can't see the ending yet, I'm already looking forward to it and plugging away. I keep coming back in sessions through the day even though in some sessions I get only a few hundred words.

Yesterday at 1 p.m. I looked up and had written only 1400 words in four sessions. How sad is that for a guy who usually gets 1000–1200 words per session?

So I took yet another short break, then came back and set down for at least one more session, and maybe two in an attempt to make my word count for the day. (I usually quit around 2 or 3 each day.)

Great last session from 1 to 2:20, and I ended the day with just under 3400 words (see Day 19 below). Good enough.

Topic: One Way to Beat the Critical Mind

In a nutshell, remember why you write stories. Really. That's all there is to it. But let me 'splain.

Recently a former mentoring student emailed to tell me his critical mind climbed up on him for awhile. This time it took the form of "...no one reads/buys my stories, so why bother?"

I'm very familiar with that feeling. You just have to push it down, as I do and as my student did.

His email continued with "Today I'm going to write because I need to." Bingo.

As I told him in my response, that is EXACTLY the reason to write. Because you want/need to and because for you, telling stories is fun.

Then he gave himself (and me, and you) a bonus: "I'll publish because Saint Heinlein says I must, but what happens after that isn't really up to me, other than to write the next story."

Exactly. Spot on. It's so good to know some are listening.

As an aside, "Saint Heinlein" says you must publish and then leave what you publish on the market (Rules 4 and 5) because you never know when a reader will be attracted to your story, pick it up, and enjoy it.

As my friend says above, whether and when that will happen isn't up to you, beyond you publishing your work in the first place.

I literally shudder to think of all the manuscripts hidden away in drawers because the writer was afraid it wasn't his or her "best work," which of course it was at that time.

Almost every day, I still get sales and kudos on stories and novels I published years ago, long before my storytelling skills were what they are now.

I just realized, although I've received all the input back from my first readers and created the cover, etc. I haven't yet published the last novel I wrote, the one for February. (grin)

So that will be first up when I get some spare time or when I finish my current novel, whichever comes first.

Today I rolled out right on time and shuffled out to the Hovel, coffee mug in one hand and my Thermos in the other.

I wrote all the stuff above (some of it I wrote yesterday), then wrote a short essay titled "Thoughts on Writing in the Time of CoVID-19" (350 words), but I took it out and saved it separately. Still, I wrote it so I'm counting it in today's nonfiction numbers. And I finally turned to the novel at 5.

I got a few hundred words, then took a break for breakfast, then back out here to post this. Then I'll head back to the novel. I hope it will be a good day, for me and for all of you. As always, I'll report today's fiction numbers tomorrow.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Discipline (A Coronavirus Stay-At-Home Special Reprint #3)" at <https://kriswrites.com/2020/03/28/discipline-a-coronavirus-stay-at-home-special-reprint-3/>.

See "Card Sharp Silver... Day 10" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/card-sharp-silver-day-10/>.

See "WWYWTR – Layers" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/wwywtr-layers/>.

See "Self-Publishing: Carnival of the Indies Issue #114" at <https://www.thebookdesigner.com/2020/03/self-publishing-carnival-of-the-indies-issue-114/>.
FWIW.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 1290 (Journal)

Writing of The Othgygnrkthers (tentative title, novel)

Day 10... 1622 words. Total words to date..... 28128
Day 11... 1263 words. Total words to date..... 29391
Day 12... 0992 words. Total words to date..... 30383
Day 13... 1897 words. Total words to date..... 32280
Day 14... 1199 words. Total words to date..... 33479

Day 15... 1444 words. Total words to date..... 34923
Day 16... 1284 words. Total words to date..... 36207
Day 17... 4765 words. Total words to date..... 40972
Day 18... 1151 words. Total words to date..... 42123
Day 19... 3399 words. Total words to date..... 45522

Total fiction words for the month..... 61191
Total fiction words for the year..... 197886
Total nonfiction words for the month... 25720
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 80200
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 278086

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 48
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Kristine Kathryn Rusch](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Book Designer](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Another Brief Lesson on Trust

[March 30, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Yesterday
- * Topic: Another Brief Lesson on Trust
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Yesterday I had a less-than-stellar day and finally stopped struggling and let myself drown at around 2700 words (see Day 20 below). As I wrote earlier, typical for me as I near the end-game of a novel.

Topic: Another Brief Lesson on Trust

Wow. A lot going on in the novel. Even as I approach the end, a little voice has been nagging me throughout about a “fatal flaw” way back in the basic premise of the story. I recognized the little voice as my creative mind (my characters) reminding me something went a little wrong early.

Of course, I knew that. But I also sensed that even though the basic premise is flawed, I didn't need to change it. I knew it needed *something*, but the flawed premise is one of the things that makes the story so unique.

So I relaxed and continued to write the story as it came, and it's been a fun ride thus far. I trusted that eventually how to render the flaw less than fatal would come to me.

Only it didn't. And it didn't. And it didn't.

And then this morning, on either the last day of this novel or the next to the last day, the solution appeared as I was heating coffee to sip with my breakfast.

I wasn't even thinking about the story. I was concentrating on not burning my eggs and sausage and buttering my marble rye toast and hoping I could cut off the microwave before it reached zero time left and made that annoying dinging sound.

The solution seeped through all that noise. And when it came, it was almost a slap-my-forehead moment. I literally laughed out loud.

It was so simple, which is probably why I overlooked it in the first place.

So now that breakfast is over and I'm back in the Hovel (having added just over 1000 words to the story in the first session earlier), I'll cycle back and allow the alien spokesman to add a few sentences to what he's saying to the assembled UN. (That starts at about 1600 words into the novel—did I say the flaw occurred early? (grin))

Then I'll go back to the blank space at the end of the manuscript and write toward the ending. Of course, like all good endings, that will also be the transition to a new stage of life, AKA Book 2. (grin)

I've mentioned many times that every book writes differently. I'm constantly amazed at all the helpful ways being able to Trust reveals itself. I Trust in the characters and I Trust in the creative subconscious and everything works out.

Even as little as six years ago, faced with the same problem, I would have either abandoned this story (yes, even 50,000 words in) or I would have "forced" a "fix" on the story with my conscious mind. And ruined it.

As Joe Kenda would say, "My my my. Look what happens when you just follow the leads."

Today, as I mentioned above, I'm closing in on the end though I still can't quite see it. Searching for a good analogy... let's see... say I've been adrift on a raft for the past 20 days. This morning I still can't see dry land, but a few doves have flown over my raft, so.... (grin)

Talk with you again soon. I'll report the fiction numbers for today later.

Of Interest

See “Time (A Coronavirus Stay-At-Home Special Reprint #4)” at <https://kriswrites.com/2020/03/29/time-a-coronavirus-stay-at-home-special-reprint-4/>.

See “Card Sharp Silver... Day 11” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/card-sharp-silver-day-11/>.

For those who haven’t seen it yet, view “Attitude of a Fiction Author” at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=71Q8aw5jzrE&feature=youtu.be>.

See “How To Write The Perfect Story, For Unruly Writers” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/how-to-write-the-perfect-story-for-unruly-writers/>.

See “How To Get Your Book Into Libraries And Bookstores With Mark Leslie Lefebvre” at <https://www.thecreativepenn.com/2020/03/30/get-your-book-into-libraries-and-bookstores/>.

See “7 reasons why ebooks are better than printed books” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/7-reasons-why-ebooks-are-better-than-printed-books/>.

See “How to Rescue an Endangered Book and Find your Author Mojo” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-to-rescue-an-endangered-book-and-find-your-author-mojo/>. FWIW.

See “The Bakers and the Pot of Gold” at <https://blog.smashwords.com/2020/03/the-bakers-and-pot-of-gold.html>.

See “Emergency Funds for Writers” at <https://www.authorspublish.com/emergency-funds-for-writers/>. FWIW.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 670 (Journal)

Writing of *The Othgygnrkthers* (tentative title, novel)

Day 19... 3399 words. Total words to date..... 45522
Day 20... 2766 words. Total words to date..... 48288
Day 21... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 63957
Total fiction words for the year..... 200652
Total nonfiction words for the month... 26390
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 80870
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 281522

| | |
|---|-----|
| Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... | 3 |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... | X |
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... | 12 |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 48 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 208 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Creative Penn](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Kristine Kathryn Rusch](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Finished the Novel

[March 31, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Yesterday
- * Last Day of the Sale
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Yesterday in several small sessions I wrote a little over 3100 words (see Day 21 below). Some of that was cycling to carry through the early few-sentence addition I made to the alien's speech. So it seemed like a slow day, but it worked out all right.

Also I'm pretty sure I'll finish the thing today, which is good since today is the deadline. (grin) But the ending is in sight now, so I only have to write to it. Probably two or three sessions will put me there.

Heads Up! Today is the last day of the sale over at clunky old Smashwords. If any of you would like to get even my nonfiction books on writing, this is a great time to do that while everything's available at 50% off. Visit <https://www.smashwords.com/profile/view/HESanbrough>.

Today I finished the novel with just over 4100 words. I haven't cycled through the last few chapters yet, but I'll do that at another time.

As so often happens, this one didn't end as I expected. It will be a stand-alone they-came-here SF instead of the genesis novel for a new series. Oh well.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Deadlines (A Coronavirus Stay-At-Home Special Reprint #5) at <https://kriswrites.com/2020/03/31/deadlines-a-coronavirus-stay-at-home-special-reprint-5/>.

“See “Card Sharp Silver... Day 12” at <https://www.deanwesleymith.com/card-sharp-silver-day-12/>.

See “Who’s Zoomin’ Who?” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/03/whos-zoomin-who.html>. Not really about writing, but if you use Zoom, a very important caution.

See “On The Wings of Eagles Do Lies Fly” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/on-the-wings-of-eagles-do-lies-fly>.

See “Developing a Writing Practice, Part 1: Stepladders by Susan DeFreitas” at <https://www.janefriedman.com/writing-practice-part-one-stepladders/>. FWIW. To me, “practice” is the key word here. If you want to write, write.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 4188
Nonfiction words today..... 280 (Journal)

Writing of *The Othgygnrkthers* (tentative title, novel)

Day 19... 3399 words. Total words to date..... 45522
Day 20... 2766 words. Total words to date..... 48288
Day 21... 3142 words. Total words to date..... 51440
Day 22... 4188 words. Total words to date..... 55628

Total fiction words for the month..... 71287
Total fiction words for the year..... 207982
Total nonfiction words for the month... 26670
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 81150
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 288852

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 4
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 49
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Kristine Kathryn Rusch](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Yes, It's April Fool's Day (Yawn)

[April 1, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Topic: Sigh... Despite the Date
- * Yesterday
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Topic: Sigh... Despite the Date

This is not an April Fool's Day joke or hoax:

As you know, this whole Journal thing is my way of "writing in public": my progress and my process, right out where everyone can see it.

I share my daily writing progress to illustrate how rapidly the numbers can grow. To that end, I encourage others to set daily, weekly, monthly and annual writing goals and then strive to reach them. Even if you fail, you will "fail to success" because you will have written a lot of words (stories and novels) you wouldn't have written if you didn't strive to reach your goals.

And I share my writing process, warts and all, my struggles as well as my successes. I've often been told it helps others to see that not everything I touch turns to gold. (grin)

Yesterday I reported having finished a novel on time. At the time, I believed that was true. But in retrospect (here comes a wart), the novel wasn't finished. For the first time since I started this challenge on 1 December 2019, I've missed my novel-writing goal.

(If you're one who enjoys seeing the numbers, this morning I adjusted "Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date" from 4 back to 3, and "Novels [since Oct 19, 2014]" from 49 back to 48.)

Here's what happened: This morning, I opened *The Othgygnrkthers* simply to run a spell check so I could send it to my first readers.

And my creative subconscious ambushed me. A thought popped into my head directly from my characters: *The aliens moved in, but they only killed and then sat near their ship, providing an easy target. They didn't go out and actually occupy the planet.*

Crap. It was a slap-my-forehead moment. And the slap hurt.

This is a fatal flaw, which I define as a flaw so large and so important to the story that the credibility of the story itself can't survive it.

So this novel is not going to my first readers, and it's definitely not going to publication. Ever.

I'm trashing it. The current story in its current form is of no use to me whatsoever.

(For those of you who just gasped thinking of the "wasted" 55000+ words, they weren't wasted. They were practice. Words to a writer are like nails to a carpenter; they're an essential but minor tool of the trade. When you find a bent one, or a box of bent ones, you throw it out and get more.)

I believe in the idea, and I still believe it will be not only a great story but a great series. Maybe even a shared world in which I'll eventually invite others to write.

So sometime later, when I'm far removed from it, I'll give my creative subconscious another crack at it and write the idea again. (Not a conscious mind rewrite, but a creative subconscious recasting from scratch.)

In the meantime, I'll dust myself off, pick the prickly pear thorns and jumping cholla pods out of my backside, and climb back up on my challenge. Because my goals remain: to write a new novel every month (due on the last day of the month) and a new short story every week (due by midnight on Saturday).

Hint—that's how my daily writing goal drives my challenge, and how my challenge drives my daily writing goal.

Make no mistake: this hurts me, so I really hope my sharing it here helps you in some way.

Today I'm posting this early. I'll probably take the day off, maybe do some physical labor around the yard or something. March was exhausting for me.

I might also get caught up on creating covers, applying first-reader comments to my previous novel, etc. If I write any fiction, I'll update you the next time I talk with you.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See the comments on "Card Sharp Silver... Day 12" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/card-sharp-silver-day-12/#comments>. See Kessie's comment and Dean's response. Seriously.

See "April Fools' Day Literary Hoaxes" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/04/april-fools-day-literary-hoaxes.html>.

See "Beat Stress Like a Navy SEAL..." at <https://getpocket.com/explore/item/beat-stress-like-a-navy-seal-with-this-ridiculously-easy-exercise>.

See “The Hypersane Are Among Us...” at <https://getpocket.com/explore/item/the-hypersane-are-among-us-if-only-we-are-prepared-to-look>.

See “The Bridge That Crossed an Ocean” at <https://getpocket.com/explore/item/the-bridge-that-crossed-an-ocean>.

See “Can you learn from reading anthologies?” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/how-can-you-learn-from-reading-anthologies>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 710 (Journal)

Writing of “” (short story)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... XXXX
Total fiction words for the year..... 207982
Total nonfiction words for the month... 710
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 81860
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 289842

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 48
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [GetPocket](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Back to The Othgygnrkthers

[April 2, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Topic: Back to The Othgygnrkthers
- * Yesterday
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“The world is visibly changing, and we have no idea what the outcome will be.” Kristine Kathryn Rusch

“So release yourself from Outcome. Be unattached to Outcome, take a calming breath and just continue on.” My corollary

Topic: Back to The Othgygnrkthers

This will be another process topic, complete with a little waffling, so skip it if you want.

Yesterday I said I was trashing the book.

This morning, I thought *Not so fast*, and I retrieved it. Not out of some silly, unreasoning fear of “wasting” words, but because the basic story is good.

You know the old saw about everything happening in due time and for a reason?

Yesterday during my day off, I watched the Week 5 vids of the Advanced Depth workshop in which I’m currently enrolled. I (happily) already know most of what I’ve heard in that workshop.

But as I listened, I realized what was wrong with the novel I just finished: It wasn’t that the aliens didn’t do anything; it’s that I didn’t allow readers to see (hear, smell, taste, touch) what the aliens did. Half of the story is missing.

I didn’t tell the aliens’ side of the story.

In the novel’s present form, the aliens might as well be inanimate, like a target on a rifle range, or a fire hydrant, or a stop sign. I described them well enough, but I didn’t allow the reader in to see what they were doing, to know their opinions or understand their motivations.

Right after they landed, they DID something, albeit off-stage. But the humans only saw the aftermath, the results of what the aliens did, not what they actually did. And what they did was horrible from the POV of the humans involved, but not from the POV of the aliens.

The problem is, I didn’t show the alien POV. At all. I didn’t even show the POV of any of the human victims. So again, basically, I wrote only half the story.

So at this point (nothing is set in concrete where the creative subconscious is involved), I have one of five options (I think this covers all the bases):

1. Up front, I can just let the story go and write something else. I've already decided I won't do this. My creative subconscious wants to tell this story, but the whole story, probably over several novels. But bearing in mind, you write a series one novel at a time, and you write a novel one scene at a time, etc. (grin) So...

2. I can start at the beginning of the current story and cycle through the whole thing, writing new scenes/chapters as I go (ala Dean Smith and what I'm most comfortable with), OR

3. I can write a new opening from the aliens' POV and just continue on with it, recasting the entire story. (This is the option I mentioned yesterday, a complete recasting, and this or option 2 are the more probable.) OR

4. I can open a new document and type the story strictly from the aliens' (and human victims') POV. I would finish that half-story, and then (ala Kris Rusch) copy/paste that story into the current story a scene/chapter at a time, OR

5. I can do a hybrid of 4. I would have both documents open, write the story from the aliens' POV, and copy/paste as I go. (But my brain doesn't work that way. All the back and forth would be too confusing, with too much chance of inviting my critical mind into my work, so probably not.)

So why are options 2 and 3 the more probable for me? Because I know the aliens intimately. I just didn't let the readers know them intimately. That's what's missing.

The one thing that's completely off the table is writing from the critical, conscious mind. I won't allow that because (at least for me) that would be work. I write to have fun, not to struggle my way through something I don't enjoy just for a paycheck.

Of course, no matter which course I take, I'll count only new words in the numbers below.

Now, the lesson—if any of the above options gives you a sense of fear (anything from “Oh crap!” to sweat breaking out on your forehead), I suggest you try it. Just to get past the fear.

After all, what will happen if you try and fail?

Nothing.

But if you succumb to the fear and don't try at all... well, that's *real* failure.

Case in point: If I go with my original decision, trash this book and move on to something else, nothing bad will happen. Shrug. I'll just be writing another story.

Likewise, if I try one of the four “solutions” above and fail, STILL nothing bad will happen. Again, I’ll just move on and write another story.

What’s important is THAT you write, not WHAT you write.

So if you’re afraid of something, try it. You can do the same thing I outlined above (for practice) with something you’ve already written just to get you past the fear. And think of the sense of accomplishment you will have gained. Plus, you might come out with an entirely different story, albeit one based on the same idea.

IF you try it (or if you want to honestly try WITD for the first time), have confidence in what you’ve learned over the years:

- * You’ve absorbed Story all your life;
- * you learned all about grammar and syntax over several years of school and while subconsciously correcting stupid mistakes you encountered in various things you’ve read; and
- * you’ve learned many specific writing techniques here (I hope) and elsewhere.

So Trust All Of That and just write.

It really is that simple.

As always, I welcome comments or questions, preferably on the site in a comment (comments help traffic), but also via email.

Today I’ll begin again on The Othgygnrkthers (The Oth-gig-nark-thers, drop some consonants and it becomes The Others) and we’ll see what happens. I’ll report numbers tomorrow.

I’m posting this early so the Journal isn’t hovering over my mind as I’m writing.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Business Musings: A Really Big Deal” at <https://kriswrites.com/2020/04/01/business-musings-a-really-big-deal/>.

See “Beware the Critical Eye” at <https://mailchi.mp/xmission/david-farlands-writing-tips-beware-the-critical-eye-dzzczrathk>.

See “Churchill’s “K.B.O.” (Or something like that.)” at <https://stevenpressfield.com/2020/04/churchills-k-b-o-or-something-like-that/>.

See “4 Elements to Craft Your Author Bio” at <https://www.thebookdesigner.com/2020/04/4-elements-to-craft-your-author-bio/>.

See “A Day of Other Work, Not Writing Fun” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/a-day-of-other-work-not-writing-fun/>.

See “The Non-Compete Clause is a Non-Starter” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/the-non-compete-clause-is-a-non-starter/>.

See The Passive Guy’s take on “UK online print at risk as Gardners and Hive suspend activity and Waterstones struggles” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/uk-online-print-at-risk-as-gardners-and-hive-suspend-activity-and-waterstones-struggles/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 1090 (Journal)

Writing of *The Othgygnrkthers 2* (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... XXXX
Total fiction words for the year..... 207982
Total nonfiction words for the month... 1800
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 82950
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 290932

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 48
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Kristine Kathryn Rusch](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Steven Pressfield](#), [The Book Designer](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: The Value of an Opening

[April 3, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Affinity

- * Yesterday
- * Today
- * Topic: The Value of an Opening
- * Today redux
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Reacher has remained a loner and a drifter, which allows Child the freedom to put his protagonist in virtually any role and in any setting and still continue the series.” Rick Pullen in an interview with Lee Child (see “Of Interest” below)

“Advice to Writers: Ignore all advice because you’ve got to imagine here’s your book and that book is going to be competing with several others. The only way it stands a chance is if it has a heartbeat of its own. Otherwise you’re writing by committee. So close your eyes and write the book you want. Then it stands a chance. There’s no guarantee.” Lee Child

This is a narrow focus, but for anyone using Serif Affinity design or publisher products for any reason (I’ve recommended them before), see “100 Days. 100 Commissions.” at <https://affinity.serif.com/en-us/100-days-100-commissions/>.

Yesterday, I did re-start the novel, but it was a very slow start as I played with several openings. I wrote probably 2000 words, but I didn’t count them as they weren’t “publishable” words. They were only me casting about for a new opening.

Today, I rolled out way late at almost 4 a.m. (very odd for me). As the coffee made, I realized I was looking forward to getting back to my very fledgling manuscript, even though I don’t really have a manuscript yet. Just some failed starts from yesterday. That was my creative subconscious wanting to go play. With what? I had no idea.

Still, once I got to the Hovel I held off. I wrote some of the stuff above and checked for items for “Of interest.”

Around an hour in, I finally turned to all the starts I’d written yesterday, and one immediately grabbed me (that’s the creative subconscious at work), though it wasn’t yet fleshed-out as an opening at all.

But I trust my subconscious completely, so I deleted everything else on those pages (around 1700 words) and read over the two or three hundred words that were left.

I was right. What was left was a really great seed. So I fleshed it out in a frenzy of writing (about 1600 more words in a little over an hour). Then, happy with the new opening, I went up to the house for breakfast.

And when I came back, I decided to turn the rest of this account into a topic:

Topic: The Value of an Opening

Common wisdom says to start a story in the middle of the action (in media res), and explain later.

Yet I'm always harping on starting any story, any length, by grounding the reader in the character and setting. You start with a character with a problem in a setting, and then you flesh that out with character description and setting description to make an opening.

So which is correct?

All readers read for Character. If the POV character isn't intriguing to them, they won't continue reading. They need to be invested in the character.

And all readers need to be able to identify with (see, hear, smell, taste, touch) the setting. In other words, they need to be grounded.

The secret (as revealed by any story from any Stage 4 or Stage 5 writer) is to let the reader FEEL as if the story begins with bang-bang action. Even though it really doesn't. How?

By making the reader first feel the setting and identify with the character. Then when the action starts, the reader will care.

But don't take my word for it. Check out any story by King or Kuntz or Grisham or Oates or Child or Jack Higgins or James Lee Burke (or others, but only masterful writers). Those stories feel like they begin with action, but in actuality, all of them begin with a good opening that pulls the reader into the story, one that invests him in the character and grounds him in the setting.

Even for novels, my openings, during which I ground the reader in the character and setting, are usually only 300-400 words.

This one is different. It's what I call a dual-summary opening, one that basically jerks the reader into two fantastic situations, one after another, that anyone in his right mind will fervently hope he will never encounter, specifically because he's experienced the emotions of the characters involved.

So this opening will be in the 1200-1400 word range (vs. 300-400 words), but I can almost guarantee the SF fan won't be able to put the book down. (If you can't tell, I'm very excited.)

So as I said above, when I returned to my chosen story-start this morning, I fleshed-out that partial opening with setting and character descriptions and pulled the reader into a second-person ("you") and present-tense opening, a very odd and very seldom used opening indeed.

Then I added a divider (a single, centered asterisk on a line by itself) and wrote the second part of the opening (also an unusual technique) albeit in third-person past tense (the natural voice of narrative).

This is a new scene in a new setting with two new characters on stage, and it will pull readers even deeper into the story. It will also focus their attention down and ground them on a planet in our galaxy but far from our solar system. A planet that is on the verge of literal destruction.

But although there's some limited action in the second part of this summary opening, the reader will FEEL that the book opens with action from the very first sentence. And that's all that's required.

The real action (plot) will begin in Chapter 2, onboard an intergalactic starship on its way to Earth. How do I know? Because *The Othgygnrkthers* takes place on Earth. So what will happen in Chapter 2? Frankly, I don't have a clue. But I'm betting it'll be a ton of fun to write. (grin)

And best of all, once the survivors of the planet Othgygnrk get to Earth (where another opening is already written from the Earth POV character's point of view), the opening I wrote this morning will feed directly into multiple new chapters that will fit nicely into the existing half-novel.

Maybe best of all, the opening I wrote this morning is the opening for a series, not only one novel.

And off I go. (grin) As Jean Luc Picard might say, "Engage!"

Note: *Don't be closed-minded.* You're a writer. Don't automatically assume you can't use the techniques I've describe above because this is an SF novel and you don't write SF. Writing techniques can be used across genres. Just sayin'.

Today, since I didn't write anything yesterday that I'm counting, I'll post this edition of the Journal a little later in the day so I can report numbers in real time. So Day 1 below is actually today, Friday, April 3.

I wrote very fast for awhile, then let myself bog down. I described a starship, then wandered off into designing the stupid thing. I might need that later (but probably not), but not right now. So after about an hour of that silliness, I set it aside and went back to writing the story.

Later, since I'll basically be integrating two novels, progress will probably slow. Then again, maybe not. After all, half the story is already told. I've never written one like this before, so I guess we'll see.

But a good-enough first day.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "My First Thriller: Lee Child" at <https://crimereads.com/my-first-thriller-lee-child/>.

See “Make Readers Happy” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/make-readers-happy/>.

See “Card Sharp Silver... Day 14” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/card-sharp-silver-day-14/>.

Via The Passive Voice, see “Murder for Profit, Mystery Story Techniques Part 1” at <https://www.writersdigest.com/online-editor/vintage-wd-murder-for-profit-mystery-story-techniques-part-1>. FWIW.

See “Writing from the Bottom Rung: How to Sustain Your Creativity During a Pandemic” at <https://www.janefriedman.com/writing-from-the-bottom-rung-how-to-sustain-your-creativity-during-a-pandemic/>. FWIW.

See “How To Plot And Outline Your Novel” at <https://www.thecreativepenn.com/2020/04/02/writing-tips-how-to-plot-and-outline-your-novel/>. FWIW. Even the person who hosted this post is not a plotter.

See “Puzzlewood” at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/puzzlewood>. Interesting and maybe inspirational.

See “NASA’s Most Incredible Images” at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/best-nasa-images-of-earth>. Maybe story/scene ideas.

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... 2645
Nonfiction words today..... 1350 (Journal)

Writing of For the Good of the Galaxy (novel)

Day 1..... 2645 words. Total words to date..... 2645

Total fiction words for the month..... 2645
Total fiction words for the year..... 210627
Total nonfiction words for the month... 3150
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 84300
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 294927

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 48
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Atlas Obscura](#), [Creative Penn](#), [CrimeReads](#), [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#), [Writers Digest](#)

The Journal: A Rare Occasion of Looking Backward

[April 4, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Koontz not Kuntz
- * Topic: A Rare Occasion of Looking Backward
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“The whole idea is to put yourself in a position to be recognized for your work so opportunities increase. False humility or even laziness could prevent that.” Actor Bryan Cranston

In yesterday's post I misspelled Dean Koontz' name as “Kuntz.” Senior moment. Mea culpa. I've corrected it. When you write as many words per day as I do, I guess you can expect to make a phonetic mistake now and then.

Topic: A Rare Occasion of Looking Backward

Interesting morning. A friend wrote to ask whether he could use a passage of one of my short stories in an upcoming novel. His character is reading the short story in question as he listens to his daughter's piano recital.

I assented, of course. It's called cross promotion. Readers of my friend's novel might check to see whether the short story (or my name, for that matter) is real. When they find it is, they might pick up a copy of my short story if for no other reason than to see the sort of thing that my friend's protagonist reads.

I talk loudly and often about always looking forward, not back. But when I read the passage my friend wanted to use, isolated and outside of the context of the story, I didn't like it. In fact, I thought it stunk. I could have written it more succinctly and therefore better.

Then again, that's only my opinion. Still, I gave in to the temptation to revise it.

I sent my friend the new passage (along with my permission to use it), then revised the basic manuscript and uploaded the new manuscript to D2D, Amazon and Bundlerabbit.

Why? Because in this new world of publishing, I can. Who knows? That one passage might make all the difference in whether someone else likes the story or doesn't.

But this is supposed to be an educational blog, at least in part. So I thought I'd share both passages, original and new, with you. Do you prefer one over the other? Which do you think reads better? Here they are:

1. When she saw him there in the alley, a smile had exploded across her face and her long black hair formed a neat triangle on her forehead. It shifted back and forth as she ran to him. Her long, dark, pleated skirt pressed back against her legs in the breeze, and her knees alternated pushing it forward as she ran. (60 words)

2. When she saw him there in the alley, a smile exploded across her face. Her long black hair formed a neat triangle on her forehead. It shifted side to side as she ran to him, and her knees alternately pressed against one side, then the other, of her long, dark, pleated skirt. (50 words)

There you go. Comments are welcome on the website or via email.

Today, I'll write. (grin) Also, I realized (three different times, all while writing on the novel) that I haven't yet written the short story for this week yet. So I have to get that done too.

So I'm going back to posting this early. At present, I've written just over 2000 words on the novel, so by the time I write a short story I'm looking at a very good writing day today. But the novel's running so well that I probably will add more to it today as well.

So I'll post this now and update the numbers tomorrow.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Card Sharp Silver... Day 15" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/card-sharp-silver-day-15/>. Great post. It could have come out of the diary of a character in a dystopian novel.

See "Salt Pork Bacon" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/04/salt-pork-bacon.html>.

See "Public Books Database" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/public-books-database/>.

See "Newsletters for Authors: Get Started Guide" at <https://www.janefriedman.com/email-newsletters-for-authors/>. I think I've ticked off all the boxes with the Journal. Where I need to concentrate is finding new subscribers. (grin)

The Numbers

Fiction words today..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 670 (Journal)

Writing of For the Good of the Galaxy (novel)

Day 1..... 2645 words. Total words to date..... 2645

Total fiction words for the month..... 2645
Total fiction words for the year..... 210627
Total nonfiction words for the month... 3820
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 84970
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 295597

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 48
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: A Rare Treat

[April 5, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * The numbers for yesterday
- * A Rare Treat
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

The numbers for yesterday are below. I missed my short story for this week and stopped short on the novel, and that's fine. I'm not worried about it. To see why, please read on. (grin)

A Rare Treat

But not rare enough. We no longer have to wonder when our first rattlesnake of the season will visit.

I was sitting in the Hovel about three feet from the door (that's significant), writing on the novel again when I decided I wanted a cigar. So I got up and walked to my left (that's also significant) and I heard an odd noise behind me. Kind of a rattling, but not the quick buzz of a snake.

Now understand, this is with two fans (my exhaust fans) blowing in the background to expel cigar smoke from the Hovel. So instead of getting a cigar out of the humidior, I turned around, took a step or two back toward the door, and looked closely to see what in the world was making that weird noise.

And there, at the base of my door, was a little rattler, about an inch and a half in diameter and maybe 3 to 3 1/2 feet long. His head was about a foot off the floor, his tail was shaking behind him, and I swear I heard a hissing sound. All of which I took to mean he was annoyed.

I have the door pulled to and latched with a rope over a flat strip of metal that sticks out of the earth wall and is bent to one side. (A couple of you have seen that and can visualize it.)

But the wind had grabbed the door, slipped the rope a little, and pulled the door open by about—you guessed it—an inch and a half. And suddenly I had more excitement in my life than I'm accustomed to. (grin)

I have a broom. If I could have unlatched the door, I could have shove him out (rude, I know) and he'd have been on his way. But I had no way of getting close enough to the door to unlatch the rope and shove the little bugger out. All this with me in a t-shirt, shorts and flip-flop sandals.

So he kept rattling and I retreated to the back of the Hovel (about 15 feet) and let him have it.

After I called my wife, she was good enough to bring me my 9mm pistol and brave her way through bushes to pass it through the easternmost window (the snake was at the west end of the building), but by then, the little guy had calmed down, curled up and looked for all the world like he was asleep.

Well, it wouldn't be sporting of me to interrupt a guy's nap with a bullet (never mind the havoc shooting in the enclosed space would wreak on my hearing), so I hefted myself up into the window, moved the screen, and lowered myself outside. Then I beat it through the bushes and went up to the house to wait for my landlord and friend, whom we occasionally and fondly call The Snake Guy.

He showed up about 5 minutes later, and he and I went back to the Hovel. He held his snake pole at the ready while I jerked the door open.

The snake was gone.

Naturally, we figured he was under one of the MANY low, dark surfaces in the room, so we both went belly down with flashlights and started looking. Yeah, you visualized it right, and it's okay to laugh. A 68 year old guy and a 53 year old guy both belly down on a dirty concrete floor peering into 2" spaces with flashlights.

But nope. He was gone.

And Richard grinned: “After you went out the window, the snake probably figured since you were leaving, he might as well leave too.” And we laughed and laughed. Uh, no.

Over the next half-hour, we poked around in the open bay next door and the hay barn next to that, but we figured he was heading south when he took my slightly open door as an invitation, and slithered in.

Whatever. He’s slithered out again, and I hope he’s happy somewhere in the bosque to the south. Fair winds and following sands. Just stay out of my Hovel.

Today or maybe the next day, maybe I’ll play catch up and get back on the good side of my short stories. My main thrust today, though, will be writing the novel and keeping the door closed more tightly. (grin)

I actually already blew the short story challenge a few weeks ago when I wrote a story a day or two after the deadline. So no real difference there. Note that I’m still on track to write at least 78 new stories over an 18 month period, so I’m on track to meet the annual+ goal even though I slipped off the weekly goal twice already.

But frankly, my stubbornness is slipping. Can I still meet my annual+ NOVEL goal (18 novels in 18 months) even though I slipped off the monthly goal? Well, yeah, I *can*. Is it likely? I honestly don’t know.

I’ve written a novel in two weeks before, so it’s possible that I can catch up. But whereas a short story by definition can always be written in a day or two, with novels, much depends on new situations that arise in the novel, new directions the characters take, etc. So we’ll see.

Just thinking out loud (and letting you deep into my process), I’m still bugged by the way the aliens choose to kill their victims once they invade. (Note: This is my conscious, critical mind trying to horn in. In my creative subconscious, I know it’s right although at the moment and on the surface it doesn’t make sense.)

These aliens have been a peaceful people without ‘ray guns’ and other destructive technologies for centuries. I can’t change that, because that’s what it is. They’re invading solely for the survival of their species. As far as I know, this has never been done before (my critical mind says, “Because it doesn’t make sense.”)

But nothing in WITD “make sense.” “Making sense” is a function of the critical mind. It’s why our conscious mind warns us against leaning our palm on the burner of a hot stove while we’re trying to look casual.

So writing the novel is a struggle right now. I suspect when I come out the other side, I will have developed new skills and will feel a massive sense of accomplishment. Not that feeling a sense of accomplishment is a bad thing, but I have to guard against thinking there’s nothing more to learn. That way lies the atrophy of a writing career.

So as I wrote way up above, the fiction numbers below are from yesterday. I'll post today's number tomorrow. I hope they're significant.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Cruising and Camping" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/cruising-and-camping>.

See "The Rise of Australian True Crime Podcasts" at <https://crimereads.com/the-rise-of-australian-true-crime-podcasts/>. A list of ten podcasts you might want to visit.

Via The Book Designer, see "Interview with Mike Shatzkin on how coronavirus will change the publishing industry" at <https://blog.nathanbransford.com/2020/04/interview-with-mike-shatzkin-on-how-coronavirus-will-change-the-publishing-industry>. For anyone still interested in traditional publishing.

See "How Will Our Fiction Change Post Pandemic?" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/04/how-will-our-fiction-change-post-pandemic.html>. Caution: If I ended up having to 'think' this much about what's going into a FICTIONAL story, I would stop writing. Period.

See "Licensing... Oh, My..." at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/licensing-oh-my/>.

See "Who Was The Real Skyjacker D. B. Cooper?" at <http://dyingwords.net/who-was-the-real-skyjacker-d-b-cooper/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... 2573
Nonfiction words today..... 1280 (Journal)

Writing of For the Good of the Galaxy (novel)

Day 1..... 2645 words. Total words to date..... 2645
Day 2..... 2573 words. Total words to date..... 5218

Total fiction words for the month..... 5218
Total fiction words for the year..... 213200
Total nonfiction words for the month... 5100
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 86250
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 299450

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 48

| | |
|---|-----|
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 208 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [CrimeReads](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [DyingWords.net](#), [Mike Shatzkin](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Book Designer](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Probably a Full 99%

[April 6, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Probably a full 99%
- * Yesterday
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Probably a full 99% of the writers on Planet Earth right now are considering writing a novel about a plague or a pandemic. Unless you have a truly unique twist on it, I advise you to forget it. With all that's going on, it's too easy to involve the critical mind right now.

If you're determined to go ahead anyway, at least consider applying Kate Wilhelm's Law. (See a great description of Wilhelm's Law in the second paragraph at <https://www.kboards.com/index.php?topic=220083.msg3074229#msg3074229>.)

Yesterday I rolled out a little late (my new norm recently) and got to the Hovel by around 3:30. I spent a couple of hours on the Journal and items for "Of Interest" and wandered back to the house for breakfast at around 5:30.

I came back and tackled the novel again at 6:30. By 7:30 I'd finished Chapter 4. From that point forward, I began integrating the chapters from the half-book I wrote last month.

To keep the word count pure, I'm keeping the original novel in its separate document and inserting only placeholders into the new document.

For example, after I reach the end of the story, Chapter 1 in the original novel will be inserted into the new novel as Chapter 5. But for now, in the new novel manuscript, I have only a note: Insert Chapter 5. (And I go back to the original novel and change chapter numbers to match what they will be in the new book.)

I wrote quite a bit yesterday (see Day 3 below), made a note to insert more chapters from the original novel, wrote a little on the next new chapter and then stopped for the day.

Then I moved over to some admin stuff. I applied my first readers' suggestions and published The Storm to D2D, Amazon and BundleRabbit.

Today I'll use at least part of the day for some major admin tasks. I'm not in a good mood for whatever reason, and with a good writing day yesterday, today I'm struggling a little in the novel. I'm sure that's partly because I'm juggling so much. But the story will break loose again soon.

So later today I might write more on the novel. If I gain any significant ground, I'll post numbers tomorrow. If not, today will be a nonwriting day.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Imagination – Everyone Has It" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/imagination-everyone-has-it>.

See "Finding the Right Door to Enter Your Story" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2015/07/finding-right-doorbrto-enter-your-story.html>.

See "30 Themed Calls for Submissions" at <https://www.authorspublish.com/30-themed-submissions-calls-for-april-2020/>.

See "Living and Writing and Faith: Dispatch from Self-Isolation, Day 30" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/living-and-writing-and-faith-dispatch-from-self-isolation-day-30/>.

See "A Look Back at Franklin, America's Lost State" at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/americas-lost-state-franklin>.

See "Do This Not That: Book Promotion During a Pandemic" at <https://www.thebookdesigner.com/2020/04/do-this-not-that-book-promotion-during-a-pandemic/>. I had to note, not one place did the author say "Write the next book," yet that's the number one thing you can do to market yourself.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... 3604
Nonfiction words today..... 480 (Journal)

Writing of For the Good of the Galaxy (novel)

Day 1..... 2645 words. Total words to date..... 2645
Day 2..... 2573 words. Total words to date..... 5218

Day 3..... 3604 words. Total words to date..... 8822
Day 4..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 8822
Total fiction words for the year..... 216804
Total nonfiction words for the month... 5580
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 86730
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 303534

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 48
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Atlas Obscura](#), [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Book Designer](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Stores, Distributors and Aggregators

[April 7, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Here Be Brave New Worlds
- * Topic: Stores, Distributors and Aggregators
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Fiction is a lie, and good fiction is the truth inside the lie.” Stephen King in On Writing

A new bundle just released: the Here Be Brave New Worlds bundle is now available at your favorite store. To read about it, visit <https://bundlerabbit.com/b/here-be-brave-new-worlds>. Thirteen novels by thirteen very good writers for only \$4.99, including my SF novel [The Consensus](#).

To see all eight bundles my work is current in, visit <https://harveystanbrough.com/bundles/>.

Topic: Stores, Distributors and Aggregators

Yesterday I wrote no fiction. Besides doing a lot of other non-writing things, I spent some time looking for ebook aggregators. Primarily, I wanted to expand the reach of my ebooks to India, China, Africa and Australia. I learned a great deal in only a few hours.

People around the world are hungry for fiction and nonfiction in the English language. This is especially true in the huge populations of China and India. Amazon has a store in India, but they sell only to those who buy through Amazon. They do not have a store in China at all. Just sayin'.

But I wanted to see where my books are available for sale (license) at present. So I started my search by going to my primary aggregator, D2D, at <https://draft2digital.com/partners/>. There, I clicked on the individual store links to see what they offered in the way of distribution.

First, for my use in this discussion, there are three levels: stores, distributors, and aggregators. A store is exactly what it sounds like. An individual place where your ebook is “shelved” for licensing to those who decide they want to read it.

Amazon is a store. Apple is a store. Barnes & Noble is a store (for now). Rakuten Kobo is a store too, but it's also a distributor.

In fact, all of those are also distributors to dozens of their own stores.

For just one example, Amazon automatically “stocks” your ebook in 13 distribution centers. Those are distinguished by the final two letters of the URL (Amazon.US or Amazon.UK, for example). Through those distribution centers, your ebook is offered to readers in 31 countries, but always through an Amazon store. (For example, Amazon.FR distributes to stores in France, Monaco, Belgium, Switzerland, and Luxembourg.)

So really, Amazon is only a store, albeit one with a global (but not all-encompassing) reach.

Rakuten Kobo, on the other hand, sells through their own stores as well as partner stores. On their site, they brag of distribution to 190 countries, but they list only 33 (including several that Amazon did not list).

Interestingly, I also learned if your book is priced at below \$2.99, you make a slightly better profit if you upload directly to Kobo instead of going through D2D or Smashwords to reach them.

But I found the difference is negligible, and you actually make a BETTER percentage on books priced \$2.99 or higher if you distribute to Kobo through D2D than you would if you uploaded to Kobo directly. So just food for thought.

Apple says they sell through 51 countries around the world, but they don't offer a list that I could find.

Not surprisingly, B&N avoided the topic altogether or buried the information so deep that I couldn't find it.

The best-known aggregators are Draft2Digital and Smashwords. Aggregators distribute your book to stores and to other distributors.

D2D is my go-to for the major markets. They have a clean, user-friendly interface.

For many years (since 2011) I've also used Smashwords. Even after I found D2D, I continued to use Smashwords to get into some UK markets that D2D doesn't reach. But beginning with the novel I just published ([The Storm](#)), I no longer use or recommend Smashwords. The interface is too clunky (Mark Coker refuses to update it), the markets are too small, and I only record "sales" through them when I give away a book through their tiny store, and not even many of those. So no more.

Enter two more international aggregators: PublishDrive and StreetLib.

Both of them reach the same markets Smashwords goes to (plus many, MANY more), and they do so more actively, with marketing tools for authors. They also both reach many more markets and countries than D2D or even than Amazon, Kobo, et al.

So which to choose?

Well, PublishDrive works on a subscription model. You pay a set fee every month based on how many books you want to distribute through them. (In all fairness, I should add that you can distribute one title through them free.)

But I currently have around 300 pieces of IP in my inventory, including novels, novellas, and short story collections; nonfiction books; individual short stories; and poetry collections.

So I would have to pay \$599.99 PER MONTH to distribute through PublishDrive. If I wanted to distribute only my 87 major fiction works (novels, novellas, short story collection) or even only my 56 novels and novellas, I'd still have to pay \$199.99 per month. Way out of my league.

But to check out PublishDrive for yourself, visit <https://publishdrive.com/>.

On the other hand, I can distribute through StreetLib for a 10% (standard) royalty split. If my books sell, StreetLib gets a cut. To investigate StreetLib, visit <https://streetlib.com/>.

At this point, it's all math. If I were selling dozens of copies of every book in every country every month, I would use PublishDrive.

Unfortunately, at present that isn't the case. So I'll continue to publish every work through D2D, Amazon, and BundleRabbit (a book bundling service), and very soon I'll do a batch upload of ALL my titles to StreetLib and make my work available to new worldwide markets.

This is far from a comprehensive look at stores, distributors and aggregators, but maybe it will at least give you a head start in your own search.

Today I'll write, and I'll report any fiction numbers the next time the Journal appears.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

Listen to DWS being interviewed by D2D's Mark Leslie Lefebvre at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f0v54-nApB>. (It's supposed to be "live" at 10 a.m. Pacific time. I'm hoping they'll leave it up afterward.)

See "How To Sell Your Books In Bulk..." at <https://www.thecreativepenn.com/2020/04/06/sell-your-books-in-bulk-david-chilton/>.

See "Play The Cards You Are Dealt" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/play-the-cards-you-are-dealt>.

See "Spider Bites And Randy Monkeys: Time For The Bad Sex Awards" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/04/spider-bites-and-randy-monkeystime-for-the-bad-sex-awards.html>.

See "Developing a Writing Practice, Part 2: Community" at <https://www.janefriedman.com/developing-a-writing-practice-part-2-community/>. I list this only to show how deeply ingrained are some of the myths. But each to his own (sigh). If you want to write by committee, by all means, read it FWIW.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 1080 (Journal)

Writing of For the Good of the Galaxy (novel)

Day 1..... 2645 words. Total words to date..... 2645
Day 2..... 2573 words. Total words to date..... 5218
Day 3..... 3604 words. Total words to date..... 8822
Day 4..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 8822
Total fiction words for the year..... 216804
Total nonfiction words for the month... 6660
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 87810
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 304614

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12

| | |
|---|-----|
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 48 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 208 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Creative Penn](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Wilhelm’s Law and Other Misunderstandings

[April 8, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * WMG Publishing Offer
- * Topic: Wilhelm’s Law and Other Misunderstandings
- * Yesterday
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

WMG Publishing Offer

WMG Publishing has decided to repeat their 50% off sale on everything they have on Teachable for 48 hours beginning last night at midnight. Everything. Lectures, workshops, pop-ups, lifetime subscriptions... everything.

I can’t urge you strongly enough to take advantage of this offer. To do so, visit <https://wmg-publishing-workshops-and-lectures.teachable.com/>, click “See All Courses,” and use the code SpringTraining2020 at checkout. You can buy more than one, but you have to get them one at a time because Teachable has no shopping cart.

Topic: Wilhelm’s Law and Other Misunderstandings

Part I

A couple of days ago (April 6), I wrote a post in which I mentioned Kate Wilhelm’s Law. You can find that post at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-journal-probably-a-full-99/>.

Some took that to mean I was advocating applying Wilhelm’s Law to writing into the dark. I wasn’t. No writer who’s writing into the dark should apply Wilhelm’s Law. In fact, if you’re WITD, you CAN’T apply Wilhelm’s Law.

But here’s what I wrote in that post (see the link above):

“With all that’s going on, it’s too easy to involve the critical mind right now. If you’re determined to go ahead anyway [implying going ahead with writing from the critical mind], at least consider applying Kate Wilhelm’s Law.”

A writer who’s writing into the dark doesn’t make choices about what his characters do or don’t do. Part of the fun of WITD is that the character, not the writer, decides what to do and say and when. Thus the writer is surprised. And when the writer is surprised, the reader will be surprised also. That negates the need to apply Wilhelm’s law.

Cycling

So how does jotting down ideas and keeping or discarding them (Wilhelm’s Law) differ from cycling back and deleting or replacing words if a writer thinks of a better word or phrase?

This question reveals a misunderstanding of “cycling.”

When a writer cycles back, he stays in the creative mind by Just Reading for Pleasure (not reading critically). As he reads, he allows the characters, not the critical mind, to “touch” the story as he goes. He doesn’t “think of” better words or phrases. As he cycles, he just allows his fingers to move at the behest of the characters.

So my advice remains to write into the dark and to stay in the creative mind and cycle back periodically.

If that doesn’t work for you as a writer—and if you WANT it to work for you, that’s key—the reason is probably one of these:

1. You aren’t yet able to differentiate between your always-negative critical mind (“this needs to be fixed”) and your just-want-to-play-and-have-fun creative mind. If you think you have a handle on that and cycling still doesn’t work for you,
2. You either haven’t come to the place yet where you trust your creative mind (that’s natural when you’re first starting out) or you simply don’t understand yet what cycling is (see the fourth paragraph above), or
3. You really don’t WANT to write into the dark. Which is perfectly fine. Every writer is different.

Not everyone can bring themselves to trust what they know and just write off into the dark. In fact, the vast majority of would-be writers and beginning writers either can’t or won’t WITD and never will. And again, that’s fine.

I wrote a whole topic about Trust or faith when I wrote about my own initial experience with WITD. You can find that post at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-journal-you-want-to-read-this/>. Scroll down to “Topic: How to Write Into the Dark.”

Here's the thing: When I talk about WITD and cycling, I'm only paying forward a writing process that is incredibly simple and freeing. But I'm not trying to convince anyone of anything. Whether and how you write is strictly up to you.

Part II

Several days ago (April 1), I wrote another post in which I openly shared an embarrassment: that the novel I'd just finished on March 31 wasn't ready to publish. You can find that post at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-journal-yes-its-april-fools-day-yawn/>. In retrospect, I should have just said the novel was finished, I'd met my monthly goal, and moved on.

Some folks misunderstood that post. To some, it seemed hypocritical, like I was caving to my critical-mind fears that maybe readers wouldn't like what I'd written. After all, I've said many times the writer's job is to write; The Reader's job is to judge what's written.

I've also made some derogatory comments about those who read their own work and then decide it isn't "good enough" to publish, so they stick it in a drawer somewhere. Often, they make that decision about their very first novel, and the assumption often is, "It's my first novel, so it's CAN'T be any good." Myth, anyone? I also wondered aloud how many readers might have enjoyed the story if they'd had the chance to read it. I stand by that comment.

The embarrassment I shared with you was different. It was my 49th novel, not my first, and I didn't read it and arbitrarily decide it was "bad" or "not good enough." My choosing not to publish it was based strictly on input from my characters, my creative mind.

Here's the gist of that post, quoted directly:

"I opened *The Othgygnrkthers* simply to run a spell check so I could send it to my first readers.

"And my creative subconscious ambushed me. A thought popped into my head directly from my characters: The aliens moved in, but they only killed and then sat near their ship, providing an easy target. They didn't go out and actually occupy the planet.

"Crap. It was a slap-my-forehead moment. And the slap hurt.

"This is a fatal flaw, which I define as a flaw so large and so important to the story that the credibility of the story itself can't survive it."

Do you see the difference between this and the first-time author who finishes a novel, then consciously decides not to publish it because literally EVERYONE has told him or her over the years that a first novel can't possibly be any good?

I hope so.

Yesterday, I was planning to get back to the novel, but the topic above came up and I decided it was more important than writing fiction. So I wrote (and rewrote and rewrote—it’s nonfiction) all of the above yesterday. That took me up to noon), and then I took the rest of the day off.

Today I rewrote and drastically trimmed the topic above again just to be sure it says exactly what I want it to say. Now I’ll post this early, then head to the house for breakfast, and then get back to the novel.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Spring Training Half Price Workshop Special” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/spring-training-half-price-workshop-special/>.

See “Myth Buster” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/myth-buster/>.

See “Movie Deals” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/04/movie-deals.html>.

See “Honestly, Writing a Recurring Character is a Lot Like Having an Imaginary Friend” at <https://crimereads.com/honestly-writing-is-a-lot-like-having-an-imaginary-friend/>.

See “Ambrose Bierce” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/ambrose-bierce/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 1180 (Journal)

Writing of For the Good of the Galaxy (novel)

Day 1..... 2645 words. Total words to date..... 2645
Day 2..... 2573 words. Total words to date..... 5218
Day 3..... 3604 words. Total words to date..... 8822
Day 4..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 8822
Total fiction words for the year..... 216804
Total nonfiction words for the month... 7840
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 88990
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 305794

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 48

| | |
|---|-----|
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 208 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [CrimeReads](#), [Cycling](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Major Change in the Journal

[April 9, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * For those who missed it, all of Dean's lectures
- * Yesterday
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

All of Dean's lectures, workshops, pop-ups, and even lifetime subscriptions are on sale for 50% off right now. But hurry. The sale ends on Friday (tomorrow) at 5 P.M. Pacific Daylight Time.

Go to <https://wmg-publishing-workshops-and-lectures.teachable.com/>, click "See All Courses," and use the code SpringTraining2020 at checkout. You can buy more than one, but you have to get them one at a time because Teachable has no shopping cart.

Yesterday, I did a lot of non-writing stuff, including moving my new writing computer into the Hovel. But I also wrote just under 3000 words on the novel (see Day 4 below).

Back in the day, I had a dedicated writing computer. It had no games, internet, or any other distractions. When I sat at that computer, my creative subconscious knew it was time to play. It was wonderful. During that time, I often exceeded 100,000 words of fiction per month. I miss that. So now I'll have a dedicated writing computer again (same old model as my current computer—HP ProBook 6460B—because I like the keyboard).

Writing on the new dedicated writing computer yesterday, without the distractions, the words came more quickly and easily than they have for a long time. I'd forgotten how good that feels.

One result of this change is that I'll be more involved with my writing and therefore answering emails less often. Nature of the beast. I'm a writer first, a teacher and correspondent second.

I'll still respond to emails within hours, not days, but I'll be checking only a few times per day instead of every time a new email notice pops up on my computer. (grin)

* * *

Update—With my wife’s help, I made the necessary changes to the Hovel yesterday after I was through writing. (Thanks, Mona.) So this morning I was able to walk into the new Hovel and go straight to work.

The changes included switching my current writing desk with the slightly taller table on the opposite side of the room. I’ll do business stuff (like the Journal) at the table on this computer, and I’ll write at my writing desk on my new dedicated writing computer.

Today, and probably for the foreseeable future, I’ll be taking care of admin stuff in the early morning (as I have been for awhile). That means answering emails, checking for items for “Of Interest,” and posting the Journal.

In fact, I’ve even set the Journal to be sent out by MailChimp 10 hours earlier, at 7 a.m. instead of 5 p.m. I’ll continue to report nonfiction numbers in real time, and fiction numbers in the following post.

I’ll post this now, then move over to the novel.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Got Some Question On The Half Price Workshop Sale” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/got-some-question-on-the-half-price-workshop-sale/>.

See “Support Authors and Indies” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/support-authors-and-indies/>.

See “Hypnosis at Home: Learn How To Heal Your Soul” at <https://www.suecoletta.com/hypnosis-how-to-heal/>.

See “Don’t Poop on Your Own Ghostwriting Parade” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/dont-poop-on-your-own-ghostwriting-parade>.

See “New Evidence for the Strange Idea that the Universe Is a Hologram” at <https://getpocket.com/explore/item/new-evidence-for-the-strange-idea-that-the-universe-is-a-hologram>.

See “The Sound So Loud That It Circled the Earth Four Times” at <https://getpocket.com/explore/item/the-sound-so-loud-that-it-circled-the-earth-four-times>.

See “Business Musings: A Crisis Like No Other (A Process Blog)” at <https://kriswrites.com/2020/04/08/business-musings-a-crisis-like-no-other-a-process-blog/>.

See “How to Make an Awesome Book Trailer (and Why!)” at <https://www.thebookdesigner.com/2020/04/how-to-make-an-awesome-book-trailer-and-why/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... 2958
Nonfiction words today..... 560 (Journal)

Writing of For the Good of the Galaxy (novel)

Day 1..... 2645 words. Total words to date..... 2645
Day 2..... 2573 words. Total words to date..... 5218
Day 3..... 3604 words. Total words to date..... 8822
Day 4..... 2958 words. Total words to date..... 11780

Total fiction words for the month..... 11780
Total fiction words for the year..... 219762
Total nonfiction words for the month... 8400
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 80550
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 309312

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 48
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Kristine Kathryn Rusch](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Sue Coletta](#), [The Book Designer](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: A Mishmash of Info

[April 10, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Final day to get
- * As I browse the internet
- * Yesterday
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Final day to get ANYTHING on WMG Publishing's (Dean Wesley Smith's) Teachable account at 50% off. The sale closes at 5 p.m. today.

For my money, there is no better, more knowledgeable, or more honest writing instructor than Dean Wesley Smith. Some have said I clarify things that Dean muddles. That's simply because different instructors can get through in different ways to different students.

But if it weren't for Dean, I literally wouldn't be where I am today. I probably wouldn't even be writing fiction, much less writing this Journal or mentoring others.

If you haven't looked at the WMG Publishing offering yet, I strongly recommend you do. Visit <https://wmg-publishing-workshops-and-lectures.teachable.com/> and browse all the stuff there, then make your selection and use code **SpringTraining2020** at checkout.

As I browse the internet each day looking for items for "Of Interest," I am shocked and dismayed (and confused, frankly), that I constantly find writers bemoaning the fact that they're "suffering" under "stay at home [*um, and write?*]" orders. Seriously? I swear, if I hear one more writer gripe about having to stay at home, I'm pretty sure my head will explode.

Yes, I am personally annoyed that there's no place to go if I DO choose to go somewhere, but to continually gripe about suddenly being gifted with Time, the most precious commodity any of us have, is just insane. But then, like so many other things, maybe that's just me.

Yesterday. Sigh. Nothing is truly plug 'n play.

The new computer came with the free WPS Writer installed. What I wrote on Wednesday on the novel was on WPS Writer. I liked the program, and I had high hopes. I should've known better. You get what you pay for.

When I transferred the novel file back to the other computer, all the formatting was screwed up, and the free version of WPS Writer doesn't offer a paragraph formatting tool. (And I don't know whether the paid version does.) So I finally broke down and installed Office 365 on my writing 'puter.

Then, of course, I had to set up Word all over again. The whole process, from downloading Office to setting it up so it was minimally useful, sucked away three and a half hours of my time. I started right after I posted yesterday's Journal at around 5:30 a.m. and finally finished (I hoped) at 9 a.m.

But at least now I can write on the novel in a document that looks at least reasonably like the original. We'll see. Now for a short break, then to the novel to see what I can accomplish today.

So yesterday, I ended up writing just over 3000 words (see Day 5 below).

Today, now that this edition of the Journal is in the electronic pipeline, I'll write some more. Now that my office and my Office are in place, I expect this will be my first big day in a while.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “A Guest Blog from Stephen King—Yes, that Stephen King” at <https://jerryjenkins.com/stephen-king-writing-advice/>.

See “Instead of Setting a Goal, Try a Writing Dare” at <https://www.janefriedman.com/stop-setting-goals-dare-to-make-the-most-of-your-writing-time/>.

See “The Importance of Research: Post-Mortem Publishing Rights” at <https://www.authorspublish.com/the-importance-of-research-post-mortem-publishing-rights/>.

See “Bookshop, Hummingbird Sales Skyrocket” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/bookshop-hummingbird-sales-skyrocket/>.

See “Sell e-books and audiobooks from your own storefront!” at <https://hummingbirddm.com/>.
Something I’m looking into, especially after reading the previous article. Be Sure to read the terms of service, etc!

See Sam Turner’s “See “Memoirs—Why Write a Memoir?”” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/memoirs-why-write-a-memoir>.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... 3241
Nonfiction words today..... 580 (Journal)

Writing of For the Good of the Galaxy (novel)

Day 1..... 2645 words. Total words to date..... 2645
Day 2..... 2573 words. Total words to date..... 5218
Day 3..... 3604 words. Total words to date..... 8822
Day 4..... 2958 words. Total words to date..... 11780
Day 5..... 3241 words. Total words to date..... 15021

Total fiction words for the month..... 15021
Total fiction words for the year..... 223003
Total nonfiction words for the month... 8980
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 90130
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 313133

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 48

| | |
|---|-----|
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 208 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [hummingbirddm.com](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [Jerry Jenkins](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Sam Turner](#), [Stephen King](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Negativity, Go Away!

[April 11, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Yesterday
- * Topic: Negativity, Go Away!
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Why would I want to take a day off from doing something I love?” Dean Wesley Smith

Yesterday I realized I wasn't quite up to “big day” status yet. I wrote some, but not enough to talk about and only as I was cycling through. I sidetracked myself with merging and updating my reverse outlines for the two novels into one.

When that was caught up, I also opened a new Word document and started merging parts of the novel I wrote in March with the one I'm writing now. Slow going back and forth, but it's still fun.

I suspect when I'm finished I'll have to read over the whole thing and add a transition here and there (to be clear, my characters will provide the transitions) so the alternating two parts fit snugly together.

I'm enjoying the process (especially writing the new parts) but I also hope I never again have to write another one like this. (grin) The closest I've come before was writing the third prequel to my first-ever novel and having to merge the events at the end of that prequel with the “present day” beginning of what became Book 4 of the Wes Crowley saga. But that was easy compared to this.

I just keep reminding myself this is the genesis novel for a series (so it's worth the extra effort), and that every succeeding book in the series will be new words and stories that will move forward through the overall story, flowing off of this one.

Then somewhere around 11:30, I realized I hadn't watched and listened to the new Advanced Depth videos for this week yet (they came out on Tuesday). So I took an hour or so to do that.

Then I went up to the house for lunch, ate a little too much and got sleepy.

But the reverse outline is caught up and the overall novel is caught up and today is a new day.

Topic: Negativity, Go Away!

I'm gonna sound like a grouchy old man here, so skip this short topic if you want.

Today started badly. I might have to give up Facebook completely. Someone sent me a link to a "writer" who wrote, "I'm having all manner of trouble working while sheltering in place, (and good f***ing LUCK keeping 'productive' while in a quarantine)..."

Yeah. That figures. Head-shakingly stupid.

I wanted to say (but it would have been a waste of time and effort), "Writing ANYtime has nothing to do with luck." It has to do with what Robert Heinlein wrote way back in 1947: If you want to be a writer,

1. You must write.
2. You must finish what you write.
3. You must not rewrite.
4. You must put your work on the market.
5. You must keep your work on the market.

It really is just that simple.

Then I followed one of that so-called "writer's" posts to his or her blog, a Blogger site that's titled "Writing About Writing (And Occasionally Some Writing)." That alone should have warned me away, but the tag line for the site reads, "Failing better and failing with style." Not kidding.

And the first post there was "The 17 Rules of Writing." Again, not kidding. And the very first "rule" was "Great writing involves great risk."

Seriously? If you believe that, you're already lost.

So I finally kicked out of the stirrups in that BS "writing is an elevated calling" bizarro world and got back to reality.

But out of curiosity, I *did* look up the “author” on Amazon. As I expected, there was Not One Book. Not one novel, not one short story. So why is this person handing out advice about writing?

Here’s the truth: All the stay-at-home, shelter-in-place stuff gives people like me (actual writers) the perfect excuse to be who we are. Apparently it’s also a perfect opportunity for would-be writers to call attention to their own personal dilemma and spread negative nonsense about what it takes to be a writer.

That’s fine. I just wish they’d keep it to themselves.

Today, I’ll write some on the novel. Because, you know, I’m a writer. I wish the same for all of you.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest (a very slow day)

See “One More Day Off” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/one-more-day-off/>. (When I saw this, an earlier quote from Dean popped into my head: “Why would I want to take a day off from doing something I love?” Of course, he doesn’t “want” to take a day off from his novel. But he also has a business to run and other irons in the fire.)

See “Six Things Writers Need To Stop Worrying About” (repeat) at <https://jakonrath.blogspot.com/2019/07/five-things-writers-need-to-stop.html>.

By the way, if you read the Stephen King post in yesterday’s “Of Interest,” don’t take it as gospel. Remember that like most professional writers, he tells the public what they want to hear. In other accounts, he talks about writing one clean draft and “revising” as he goes (so cycling), where he freely admits there are only two kinds of writers: he calls them “putter-inners” and “taker-outers.” He also admits he is torn between the two in his own writing. Just sayin’.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 800 (Journal)

Writing of For the Good of the Galaxy (novel)

Day 1..... 2645 words. Total words to date..... 2645
Day 2..... 2573 words. Total words to date..... 5218
Day 3..... 3604 words. Total words to date..... 8822
Day 4..... 2958 words. Total words to date..... 11780
Day 5..... 3241 words. Total words to date..... 15021

| | |
|---|--------|
| Total fiction words for the month..... | 15021 |
| Total fiction words for the year..... | 223003 |
| Total nonfiction words for the month... 9780 | |
| Total nonfiction words for the year..... | 90930 |
| Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... | 313933 |
| | |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... | 3 |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... | X |
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12 | |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 48 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 208 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [J. A. Konrath](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Good Stuff and Bad Stuff

[April 12, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * First, Happy Easter
- * Yesterday
- * Today
- * If you want to learn
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

First, Happy Easter. Whatever it means to you, I hope it's an enjoyable day.



Yesterday, again I wrote only a little over 1000 words (see Day 6 below). We took an early drive to Sierra Vista mostly to get out of the house. We also had an enjoyable walk down along the San Pedro River. The pic is a selfie Mona took with her phone. That part of the day was wonderful.

Then things went wrong. Almost immediately upon our return my cat caused irreversible harm to a hummingbird. Of course, the little hummer didn't understand.

I won't describe the injury for you (and didn't even tell my wife about it) because I don't want to put the picture in your mind. Suffice it to say it's the stuff horror novels are made of. It was bad enough that despite King's advice to write what horrifies you I will never write it even in a fiction.

I'll just say that on a scale of 1–10, this was an 11. By comparison, a deranged person with a set of lopping shears standing over a crib in which a baby is wailing and kicking her arms and legs is maybe a 4.

I put the little bird out of its misery, an emotionally traumatic experience, and didn't write for the rest of the day. I've been through this sort of thing enough to know I needed to sit, do nothing, and let the image seep out of my mind. Not a good day.

Today, however, is a new day. The image is still in my mind (will be for a few more days), but it's faded enough to let me focus on other things. So I will escape into my novel.

If you want to learn to write openings, either take Dean's Writing with Depth online workshop or just check out my book, *Writing the Character Driven Story*. You can find it in any e-format at <https://www.books2read.com/u/bQLXP4>. Chances are it will save you a lot of money.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Card Sharp Silver... Day 16” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/card-sharp-silver-day-16/>. I can relate.

See “Thanks to Bookshop, There Is No Reason to Buy Books on Amazon Anymore” at <https://www.insidehook.com/article/bookshop-independent-bookstores-amazon>. What’s this unreasoning hatred of Amazon? And Bookshop won’t allow indie authors to upload books to them, so why should I support them?

See “Almost Everything About Goodreads Is Broken” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/almost-everything-about-goodreads-is-broken-2/>.

See “US Senate IP Chief Questions Internet Archive’s ‘National Emergency Library’” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/us-senate-ip-chief-questions-internet-archives-national-emergency-library/>.

See “A Story in One Sentence” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/a-story-in-one-sentence/>.

See “This Week in the Blogs, April 3 – 9, 2020” at <https://www.thebookdesigner.com/2020/04/this-week-in-the-blogs-april-3-9-2020/>. Several good, worthwhile articles. Take from them what you need.

See “Storytelling Lessons in 60 Seconds or Less” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/04/storytelling-lessons-in-60-seconds-or-less-2.html>.

See “Adding Texture to Your Stories” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/adding-texture-to-your-stories/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... 1248
Nonfiction words today..... 470 (Journal)

Writing of For the Good of the Galaxy (novel)

Day 1..... 2645 words. Total words to date..... 2645
Day 2..... 2573 words. Total words to date..... 5218
Day 3..... 3604 words. Total words to date..... 8822
Day 4..... 2958 words. Total words to date..... 11780
Day 5..... 3241 words. Total words to date..... 15021
Day 6..... 1248 words. Total words to date..... 16269

Total fiction words for the month..... 16269
Total fiction words for the year..... 224251
Total nonfiction words for the month... 10250
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 91400
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 315651

| | |
|---|-----|
| Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... | 3 |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... | X |
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... | 12 |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 48 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 208 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Book Designer](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Yesterday and an Offer

[April 13, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Yesterday
- * A lot of people
- * If you would like to taste-test
- * Finally, if any of my patrons
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Yesterday was a much better day of writing with well over 4000 words (see Day 7). The only thing that slows the process is stopping now and then to integrate the March novel with the current one.

More than once I've felt like it would have been wiser (and easier and a lot more fun) to just trash the whole thing and start over like I was going to do in the first place. But I have so much of it done now, that's no longer an option.

A lot of people don't have money to spend right now but still want to learn about writing.

To help a little, I've decided to open up my original posts on Writing the Character Driven Story.

If you want to learn about writing openings, setting, scenes, hooks, endings, etc. visit "Writing the Character Driven Story" at <https://harveystanbrough.com/writing-the-character-driven-story/> and click on the links. You can read each post there instead of buying the book.

If you would like to taste-test some of my novels, novellas or short story collections, you can get any of them at a discount by ordering through StoneThread Publishing. For details, see <https://StoneThreadPublishing.com>.

Finally, if any of my patrons are feeling the pinch of the current mess and need to cancel their recurring payments (and don't know how), email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com and I'll cancel them for you.

Today I hope to have another great day on the novel. Believe it or not, the big overall novel (For the Good of the Galaxy) feels like it's approaching the end at around 80,000 words. I hope so.

Once I feel this one is over, I'll probably take a day off, then cycle through the whole thing to be sure the timeline is consistent and to let my characters add any minor but necessary transitions. Then it will go out to my first readers for their valued opinion.

There's still time to sign up as a first reader, too. Just email me.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Apostrophe Police" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/apostrophe-police>.

See PG's blunt take on "Will We Forgive Amazon When This Is Over?" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/will-we-forgive-amazon-when-this-is-over/>.

See "Card Sharp Silver... Day 17" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/card-sharp-silver-day-17/>.

See "It's a Wide WIDE Virtual World!" at <https://www.thebookdesigner.com/2020/04/its-a-wide-wide-virtual-world/>.

See "Appoint a Social Media Executor" at <https://annerallen.com/2020/04/social-media-executor/>.

Want some holocaust-ian story ideas? View the video at <https://www.facebook.com/dan.garceau/videos/10104216354573725/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... 4428
Nonfiction words today..... 410 (Journal)

Writing of The Orthgygnrkers 2 (novel, leading to For the Good of the Galaxy)

Day 1..... 2645 words. Total words to date..... 2645
Day 2..... 2573 words. Total words to date..... 5218
Day 3..... 3604 words. Total words to date..... 8822
Day 4..... 2958 words. Total words to date..... 11780

Day 5..... 3241 words. Total words to date..... 15021
Day 6..... 1248 words. Total words to date..... 16269
Day 7..... 4428 words. Total words to date..... 20697

Total fiction words for the month..... 20697
Total fiction words for the year..... 228679
Total nonfiction words for the month... 10660
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 91810
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 320489

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 48
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Anne R. Allen](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#),
[Professional Writer Series](#), [The Book Designer](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Learn Copyright

[April 14, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Yesterday
- * Topic: Learn Copyright
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Yesterday. Just wow. This is basically an update of Monday's Journal entry.

Literally within minutes of posting that entry, I turned to the writing computer and realized I was actually finished with The Othgygnrks 2, which is mostly the alien viewpoint that was missing back in March. (If you're curious, it's pronounced Oth-gig-nurks.) The total word count for that one is on yesterday's post (20697 words).

From here on out, you'll see only the numbers for the compiled novel, For the Good of the Galaxy, the genesis novel for what I suspect can easily become a series.

You'll see that I brought the word count forward. The compilation includes the novel I wrote in March and what I've written so far this month. I was compiling as I went.

The new words beginning with Day 1 below are additions to For the Good of the Galaxy. Those will be the result of both cycling and writing new chapters where necessary. I didn't get quite as many new words as I wanted to (see Day 1 below), but not bad given all the other stuff I did.

I have to say, it will be nothing short of wonderful to no longer have to switch back and forth among three Word documents. (grin)

So the process—Yesterday, first, I went through my reverse outline (another compilation) and brought it up to date to help set the timeline in my subconscious. After that, I planned to turn to the beginning of For the Good of the Galaxy and read, allowing myself (my characters) to touch it as I went.

But as I was updating the reverse outline, a character and a partial scene popped into my head, so I wrote the first “new” thousand words or so, then took a break. And so I suspect it will go for the rest of today. I'll start the cycle-through from the beginning tomorrow.

I'm giving myself until April 30 to finish this one, but I will be astounded if it takes that long.

Sorry to rattle on, but I'm sure you can understand my excitement at finally being able to tell the whole story of For the Good of the Galaxy. (grin)

Topic: Learn Copyright

Finger-wagging time. This is one of the most important things I can ever tell you: learn copyright.

That being said, you can never learn it all. But you can spend \$35 or so and get the paperback editions of **The Copyright Handbook: What Every Writer Needs to Know** by Steven Fishman from NOLO Press, 13th Edition. I think it's \$31 at Amazon right now.

In the meantime, here are some bare-bones basics in no particular order:

* **TITLES** are not protected under copyright. No titles—fiction of any length, blogs or blog posts, websites, songs, essays, etc.—no titles are protected under copyright. Period. (*Note that some very famous titles, e.g. Star Wars, are protected by trademark.*)

* **IDEAS** are not protected under copyright. Neither are the names of characters, places, etc. What is protected is the “fixed form” (the story, novel, poem, etc.) as a whole work.

* You do not have to register your work with the copyright office in order for it to be protected by copyright.

* Your work does not have to be registered, ever, with the Library of Congress.

* ISBNs, LCCNs, and any other numbers have nothing to do with copyright.

* Your work is ©*YEAR Your Name* the instant it's in "fixed form," meaning when your poem or short story or essay or blog post is finished. Even before it's published.

* You do not have to display the copyright symbol © on your work to show that it's copyrighted. In fact, doing so readily identifies you as a beginner. The copyright notice goes on the copyright page. (For reference, see any novels or stories you've read and enjoyed.)

* In the US, copyright protection extends from the moment a work is set in "fixed form" (story, poem, novel, etc.) until 70 years after your death.

* When you create a work of fiction, poetry, blog post, etc. you have created Intellectual PROPERTY. Just as when you build a house, you have created Real Property ("Real" meaning "Physical").

* The only difference between physical property and intellectual property is that your intellectual property is probably worth a great deal more money than your physical property. (Yes, you read that right.)

* And THAT, my friends, is why you should learn and understand copyright. Because it protects your ownership of the intellectual PROPERTY that belongs to you until 70 years after your death.

As a final note, consider, would you allow anyone, at their whim, to take over your home or your vehicle or your clothing or your other real property?

Learn copyright. Learn to value what you own.

Today, not much to add, really. I'll begin cycling through the novel and I'll write.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Why Do You Write What You Write?" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/why-do-you-write-what-you-write>.

See "The Coronavirus Could Put an End to Handshakes" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-coronavirus-could-put-an-end-to-handshakes/>. Possible story ideas.

See "25 Poetry Markets Seeking Submissions" at <https://www.authorspublish.com/25-poetry-markets-seeking-submissions-april-2020/>. And not just poetry.

See "Developing a Writing Practice, Part 3: Important" at <https://www.janefriedman.com/developing-a-writing-practice-important/>. FWIW.

See “Writing Under Duress” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/writing-under-duress-2/>.

See “Controlling the Weather” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/controlling-the-weather/>.
Not about writing but interesting.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... 2437
Nonfiction words today..... 890 (Journal)

Writing of For the Good of the Galaxy (novel)

Words brought forward..... 72304

Day 1..... 2437 words. Total words to date..... 74741
Day 2..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 23134
Total fiction words for the year..... 231116
Total nonfiction words for the month... 11550
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 92700
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 323816

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 48
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: A Very Short Post

[April 15, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * You can join Kevin Tumlinson
- * Yesterday
- * Today

- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Play around. Dive into absurdity and write. Take chances. You will succeed if you are fearless of failure.” Natalie Goldberg

“Can I be blunt on this subject? If you don’t have the time to read, you don’t have the time (or the tools) to write. Simple as that.” Stephen King

I learned in an email, you can join Kevin Tumlinson and Michael Bunker LIVE for Episode 3 of The Kevin Show, coming up on Wednesday, 15 April at 2 PM Central at either Facebook at <https://bit.ly/kevshow3FB> or on YouTube at <https://bit.ly/kevshow3YT>.

From the email: “Again, these aren’t anything serious. They aren’t even directly related to my books (or Michaels). They’re just a way for all of us to spend a little time together doing something other than fretting about the pandemic or whatever else may be troubling us.”

Yesterday was a good day of writing (see Day 2 below), but I still haven’t started cycling through the whole novel yet. I did write a few new chapters though. (grin)

Today, I expect to write the final chapter of the novel. That isn’t to say I won’t write more new chapters that will fill in the other perspective (human or alien) between current chapters. But soon the thing will be finished and I’ll begin cycling through the entire story.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “The Danger of Intimate Algorithms” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-danger-of-intimate-algorithms/>. Maybe story ideas.

See “Don’t let your characters get out of whack” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/dont-let-your-characters-get-out-of-whack>.

See “What Is an Epilogue? 3 Steps to Writing a Good One” at <https://jerryjenkins.com/what-is-an-epilogue/>.

See “Book Writing Software...” at <https://jerryjenkins.com/book-writing-software/>.

See “7 Daily Writing Exercises...” at <https://jerryjenkins.com/writing-exercises/>.

See “7 Story Structures Any Writer Can Use” at <https://jerryjenkins.com/story-structures/>. Read and learn with the conscious mind; apply with the subconscious mind.

See “WRITING BUNDLES Kickstarter” at <https://www.deanwesleymith.com/writing-bundles-kickstarter/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... 3948
Nonfiction words today..... 320 (Journal)

Writing of For the Good of the Galaxy (novel)

Words brought forward..... 72304

Day 1..... 2437 words. Total words to date..... 74741
Day 2..... 3948 words. Total words to date..... 78689

Total fiction words for the month..... 27082
Total fiction words for the year..... 235064
Total nonfiction words for the month... 11870
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 93020
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 328084

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 48
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Jerry Jenkins](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: The Reverse Outline (RO) Revisited and Shared Worlds

[April 16, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * From James Scott Bell
- * Yesterday
- * Topic: The Reverse Outline (RO) Revisited
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Writing a novel is like driving a car at night. You can see only as far as your headlights, but you can make the whole trip that way.” E. L. Doctorow

From James Scott Bell’s newsletter, ” how about some old-school pulp fiction... free! My favorite genre is crime/detective fiction from the golden era, 1920-1950. Here’s a treasure trove, including issues of the most famous pulp of all, Black Mask (I download the PDFs and read them on my phone): <https://archive.org/details/pulpmagazinearchive>.

If you like classic science fiction, stroll through complete copies of the famous pulp magazine, Amazing Stories: <https://archive.org/details/amazingstoriesmagazine>.

Topic: The Reverse Outline (RO) Revisited

It’s been awhile since I talked about this. Because the RO for my current work is much more complex and *important than for other works, I thought a discussion was in order.

As some of you know from previous posts, I keep the RO on a Notepad (.txt) document, which I keep open while I’m writing.

Note that I do not work FROM this outline. I work TO the outline (hence, reverse outline).

You can put anything you want in the RO. Its purpose is to serve as a reminder and quick reference as you write the novel. For example, it’s easier to glance over at the RO than to scroll back through dozens of pages of a novel to find the color of a character’s eyes.

But at a minimum, the RO contains the title, followed by a list of character names and attributes (eyes, hair, occupation, etc.), followed by a list of important place/street names. This might be towns, buildings, etc. Anything that might recur as you’re writing.

And all of that is followed by the chapter numbers listed down the left side of the page. As I finish a chapter, I skip over to the RO and write a sentence or two describing what happened in that chapter. Again, things I might need to remember later.

My current RO is incredibly detailed. The book has a cast of thousands. Initially it spans the galaxy, though the focus soon slips past “worldwide” and narrows to one small city somewhere in the Midwest, where the bulk of the story takes place.

Just to give you an idea, this story has 15 named human characters (3 or 4 are POV characters) and 12 named alien characters (4 are POV characters).

It also has around a dozen place and street names, plus a note that avenues run east and west and streets run north and south.

It has around 30 names and calibers of firearms, types of knives, names of alien techniques and creatures, foodstuffs and other “titles” I might have to refresh my memory on at different places in the book. And a lot more. Even the chapter summaries are a bit more detailed than usual.

Why is this RO so detailed? Primarily, as I said at the beginning, as a quick reference so I don’t have to scan through (or search) pages of the novel to find something I need in the moment.

****But I also mentioned at the top, this RO is “important.”*** That’s because I’m considering opening this up as a shared world. So this novel, along with the detailed RO, will become the genesis bible for that shared world.

As an aside, how weird is it that of all the genres I write, the two I’m considering opening as shared worlds are both “they came here” SF? (grin)

So if you’re interested in writing the HUMAN or ALIEN stories based in this new world, let me know. You can email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com. (Remember, ALL good fiction is based on characters and their reactions to what’s going on around them.)

Any resulting books or stories, whether written by me or by you, will add to and expand the bible, of course.

So that’s what I’m thinking at the moment. Let me know if you’re interested and I’ll start a list of possible authors.

Yesterday once the Journal was gone, I went to the writing computer and wrote the end of the book in a little over 2100 words. And I still have to cycle through it. And I’m what Stephen King calls a putter-inner. (grin)

Then I lived in fear until I saved it to a thumb drive so I could transfer it to the business computer, which is hooked up to the internet. Now I have it on my writing ‘puter, the thumb drive, my business computer and in my Dropbox. Ahh! That’s better.

Then at 8 a.m. I took a break. When I came back at 9, I updated my reverse outline and as I went back and forth, updated the novel a bit too.

Took another break for lunch, then came back at noon and started cycling through from the beginning. Flipping back and forth between cycling and keeping the reverse outline updated, I got through Chapter 5. You’ll see the results in Day 3 below.

Today, just more of the same. As soon as I post this, I’m heading back to continue cycling through the novel.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “One Word and Done” at <https://stevenpressfield.com/2020/04/one-word-and-done/>.

See “Storytelling Lessons in 60 Seconds or Less” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/04/storytelling-lessons-in-60-seconds-or-less-2.html>. A fun post about classic commercials.

See “Authors Need Attorneys” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/authors-need-attorneys>.

For a good and short interview with author Jeff Shaara, see <https://www.c-span.org/video/?c4753426/jeff-shaara-writing-process>. (Thanks, Phillip!)

See “Doing a Class On Writing Creative Nonfiction” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/creative-nonfiction/>.

See “How to Put Together an Indie Author Anthology” at <https://www.janefriedman.com/indie-author-anthology/>.

See “Business Musings: My Travels This Week (A Process Blog)” at <https://kriswrites.com/2020/04/15/business-musings-my-travels-this-week-a-process-blog/>. Meh. FWIW.

See “Amazon is a Data Gathering and Filtering Tool” at <https://www.thebookdesigner.com/2020/04/amazon-is-a-data-gathering-and-filtering-tool/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... 3275
Nonfiction words today..... 960 (Journal)

Writing of For the Good of the Galaxy (novel)

Words brought forward..... 72304

Day 1..... 2437 words. Total words to date..... 74741
Day 2..... 3948 words. Total words to date..... 78689
Day 3..... 3275 words. Total words to date..... 81964

Total fiction words for the month..... 30357
Total fiction words for the year..... 238339
Total nonfiction words for the month... 12830
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 93980
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 332319

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 48
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Kristine Kathryn Rusch](#), [Phillip McCollum](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Steven Pressfield](#), [The Book Designer](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: A Short, Early Post

[April 17, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Dean Wesley Smith
- * Yesterday
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Get it down. Take chances. It may be bad, but it’s the only way you can do anything really good.” William Faulkner

So yesterday, in addition to writing and posting the Journal, I dropped a note to my friend Dean Wesley Smith. It isn’t like he and I hang out. I consider him a friend because without all I’ve learned from him, I wouldn’t be even a shadow of what I am today as a writer. And I can Trust him, and to me, that’s the very definition of friendship.

Yes, he’s charged me money for about half of what I’ve learned from him. But so what? He has to make a living too, right? And his knowledge and experience are worth something, right? I’m just glad the guy’s so willing to share, unlike a dozen or so big-deal writers I could easily name.

And Dean shares directly, by which I mean when he offers a class or lecture or workshop, he himself, not some low-rent substitute, delivers it. Again, unlike several big-name authors out there. Plus he’s wide open for questions via email at pretty much any time and on any topic about writing. How many other “names” can we say that about?

Yeah. Pretty much zero.

So I dropped him a line, letting him know what I’m doing and why I’m behind in following his Kickstarter Best Practices Workshop, which, to be honest, I haven’t even opened yet.

I did that because in a recent email that he sent to all those enrolled in the workshop, he expressed concern that none of us have started a Kickstarter project yet. That's how much the guy cares. He took the time to compose that email. And it isn't like he's getting money for it. Even the Kickstarter workshop is free.

See why I constantly praise the guy? Anyway, back to the Journal.

Yesterday, I started cycling at Chapter 6 and worked my way through Chapter 10. In that first long session (5 chapters), I added only 570 words. Then I took a break. I had to. This thing is intense. (grin)

Second session (Chapter 11–15, so 5 more chapters), I added another 494 words, then another break. I did one more session through Chapters 16-17 and caught and corrected a major timeline error. In that I added 743 more words. For the total, see Day 4 below.

Today, just more of the same. In fact, I rolled out way early (1 a.m.) to get more hours on the book today. Looks like I'll finish it tomorrow or the next day.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “The Easy-to-Fix Tense Problem...” at <https://www.janefriedman.com/the-easy-to-fix-tense-problem-that-might-be-tripping-your-readers-up/>. FWIW.

Also FWIW, to me, in the author's example, “I left my list behind” would be the character's thought, which occurred just after she slapped her forehead. And no, I wouldn't put it in italics. I believe the reader would immediately know subliminally, as I did when I read the example, that line was the character's thought. What are your thoughts on the article?

See “A Day To Rest” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/a-day-to-rest/>.

See “The Pandemic Invades Fiction...” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/04/the-pandemic-invades-fiction-is-it-a-game-changer.html>.

See “Down but not out” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/down-but-not-out/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... 1807
Nonfiction words today..... 540 (Journal)

Writing of For the Good of the Galaxy (novel)
Words brought forward..... 72304

Day 1..... 2437 words. Total words to date..... 74741
Day 2..... 3948 words. Total words to date..... 78689
Day 3..... 3275 words. Total words to date..... 81964
Day 4..... 1807 words. Total words to date..... 83771

Total fiction words for the month..... 32164
Total fiction words for the year..... 240416
Total nonfiction words for the month... 13370
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 94520
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 334666

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 48
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Coherence

[April 18, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Writers' Conferences
- * Discoverability, how it happens
- * Yesterday
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Reading at meals is considered rude in polite society, but if you expect to succeed as a writer, rudeness should be the second-to-least of your concerns. The least of all should be polite society and what it expects. If you intend to write as truthfully as you can, your days as a member of polite society are numbered anyway.” Stephen King

“When an author discovers coherence for the first time, they will experience a place where words melt away, and the only thing that remains is a deep knowing and trust in how the story will take shape.” Hunter Liguore, SFWA

Note: As DWS has said many times, Stage 1 and 2 writers worry about words. More advanced writers know that Story, not words, is what matters.

See **Nate Hoffelder's newsletter**. **Two free writers' conferences** are online TODAY. For details, click <https://preview.mailerlite.com/t3h6d7/1401451759636845917/j8u7/>. If it can happen for them, it can happen for you. Just keep putting your work out there.

For an interesting article on Discoverability, see “They Started a Ned Flanders Metal Band. Then ‘The Simpsons’ Called” at <https://getpocket.com/explore/item/they-started-a-ned-flanders-metal-band-then-the-simpsons-called>.

Yesterday, because I rolled out early, I got to the novel at 2:30 a.m. Amazing. I hoped to get a lot done, but after the first several hours I took a break and did some things around the yard. Which is fine. No reason to rush.

I wound up getting about halfway through Chapter 29 for the day and added only the net numbers shown in Day 5 below.

Not sure why I broke down the numbers by session yesterday. Maybe because I'm cycling through the whole book. (grin)

Today, I rolled out at the more reasonable hour of 2 a.m. and finally got back to the story at 3:30.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “When Words Melt Away” at <https://www.sfw.org/2020/04/17/when-words-melt-away/> (via The Passive Voice).

See “15 Obscure Words for Everyday Feelings and Emotions” at <https://getpocket.com/explore/item/15-obscure-words-for-everyday-feelings-and-emotions>. I personally like “crapulence,” though I have a different definition.

See “Chatting with Retired Cop/Coroner Buddy, Garry Rodgers” at <https://www.suecoletta.com/from-the-shadows-garry-rodgers/>.

See “Fallout” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/04/fallout.html>.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... 630
Nonfiction words today..... 340 (Journal)

Writing of For the Good of the Galaxy (novel)

Words brought forward..... 72304

Day 1..... 2437 words. Total words to date..... 74741

Day 2..... 3948 words. Total words to date..... 78689

Day 3..... 3275 words. Total words to date..... 81964

Day 4..... 1807 words. Total words to date..... 83771

Day 5..... 0630 words. Total words to date..... 84401

Total fiction words for the month..... 32794

Total fiction words for the year..... 240776

Total nonfiction words for the month... 13710

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 94860

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 335636

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 3

Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 48

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Discoverability](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Nate Hoffelder](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [SFWS.org](#), [Sue Coletta](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Today I'll Finish

[April 19, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Yesterday
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“People on the outside think there’s something magical about writing, that you go up in the attic at midnight and cast the bones and come down in the morning with a story. But it isn’t like that. You work, and that’s all there is to it.” Harlan Ellison

“Talent is cheaper than table salt. What separates the talented from the successful is a lot of hard work.” Steven King

Yesterday, I rolled out around 2, and by 10 I’d cycled up through Chapter 36 and added two new chapters from the alien POV. So my word count at 10 a.m. was already pretty good at over 2900 words. Amazing how much of the alien stuff I left out of the novel back in March.

But I don’t think I need anymore new chapters. And I’ve taken care of timeline issues as I went through. So I just need to finish cycling through the remaining 10 chapters and I’ll be finished.

I got up through the middle of Chapter 44 and added the words you see in Day 6 below. I should be through with it tomorrow.

If you’d like to be a first reader for this one, be sure to email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com. Otherwise I’ll just send it to the first readers I already have.

And if you’re at all interested in writing in this as a shared world, let me know that too.

Frankly, I was a little surprised I wasn’t flooded with emails when I mentioned this the other day. Your story doesn’t have to be SF to fit in this world. It can be romance, action-adventure, or almost any other genre.

Today I’ll finish the novel. Not a lot more to say about that. Shrug. Hope you have a good writing day today.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Almost Hitting A Second Stretch Goal” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/almost-hitting-a-second-stretch-goal/>. You want to read this. And you probably want to invest \$5.

See “Chatting with Garry, Part II: How He Almost Killed Neil Young and Other Shenanigans” at <https://www.suecoletta.com/chatting-with-garry/>.

See “The Decency Factor” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/04/the-decency-factor.html>.

See “Keeping It Simple” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/keeping-it-simple>.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... 3394
Nonfiction words today..... 360 (Journal)

Writing of For the Good of the Galaxy (novel)
Words brought forward..... 72304

Day 1..... 2437 words. Total words to date..... 74741
Day 2..... 3948 words. Total words to date..... 78689
Day 3..... 3275 words. Total words to date..... 81964
Day 4..... 1807 words. Total words to date..... 83771
Day 5..... 0630 words. Total words to date..... 84401
Day 6..... 3394 words. Total words to date..... 87795

Total fiction words for the month..... 36188
Total fiction words for the year..... 244170
Total nonfiction words for the month... 14070
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 95220
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 339390

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 3
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 48
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#),
[Professional Writer Series](#), [Sue Coletta](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Writing in a Shared World

[April 20, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- Topic: Writing in a Shared World
- * Yesterday
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“No, it’s not a very good story – its author was too busy listening to other voices to listen as closely as he should have to the one coming from inside.” Stephen King

Topic: Writing in a Shared World

One writer asked about the limitations of writing in a shared world. Specifically, the writer wondered how a proponent of writing into the dark could write in a shared world.

So I thought I'd share here how ANYONE can write in a shared world regardless of the process they use. If you're fortunate enough to practice WITD, you just write, as you would when writing anything else. If you use some other process, that's fine too. I really don't care.

Note: For purposes of this topic, anytime the word "story" appears below, that means any story of any length: flash fiction, short story, novelette, novella, novel or series. Okay? So let's get started.

First, just by way of an example, if you've ever written a holiday story, you've written in a shared world. (Likewise if you've ever written fan fiction, but you can actually sell these.)

Have you written a story that centers around Christmas? Did it include Santa or a Christmas tree?

Have you written a story that centers around Thanksgiving? Did it include a big meal (probably of turkey or ham) and maybe football?

Have you written a story that centers around Easter? Did it include either references to children coloring eggs and/or partaking in an Easter egg hunt? Or if the focus was religion, did it include references to the risen Christ?

If you've done any of the above, you wrote in a shared world.

When you were writing those, did you feel terribly limited because you couldn't significantly change the Santa character or the big meal or watching football or boiling eggs and coloring them?

Probably not. When you write in a shared world, you must adhere to the traits or characteristics of certain characters and events.

But by the same token, your story itself will be different.

You will almost certainly introduce new characters: a dad and or mom, different children and other characters and their antics. You might alter Santa, have him appear thin and disheveled or drunk. (It's been done.)

And not all holiday stories are goodness and light and butterflies. If it's a horror story, you might have the children find something unexpected in their Easter eggs. If it's a fantasy, you might have them find a Golden Ticket to something. You're still writing a "Christmas story" or an "Easter story" because the basic conventions are there.

In a Thanksgiving story, you might introduce a different, futuristic game on TV (something other than football) the family gathers around to watch. Or maybe it's a virtual reality (VR) game in

which the family actually participates. Again, this could go to different genres, yet it will also remain a “Thanksgiving story” because you stick to certain conventions.

Writing in any other shared world is the same. The only real consideration is whether writing a Christmas or Thanksgiving or Easter story appeals to you.

Now let’s focus down.

If you choose to write in the Good of the Galaxy shared world, you’ll do so because writing in an SF environment on a future Earth that’s been invaded by aliens from another planet in the Milky Way galaxy appeals to you.

Say you choose to write about one of the established characters. You can’t change his basic traits and characteristics *without reason and without explanation*. That’s one of the parameters. Like putting Santa in a red suit trimmed with white fur and a black belt is a parameter.

Say the character who interests you is 42 years old, 6’2”, has blue eyes and a thick mane of medium-brown hair. Before the alien invasion, he was a reporter at a local modern (online-only) newspaper, and in the past he’s been imbedded with American combat forces. (So he picked up certain knowledge from that experience.) He’s also very recently widowed. (Say the aliens took his wife and she was killed later by friendly fire in a human attack on the aliens’ encampment.)

If you choose to write in the POV of that particular character, you need to know who he is. You get that by reading the bible: the origin or genesis novel and the reverse outline. And again, you can’t significantly change him *without reason and explanation*. For example, he’ll still have all his physical attributes (unless in your story he gets brown contact lenses for some reason or shaves his head or whatever else).

If you choose to write a story from the POV of an alien, you also can’t change his physical characteristics. The aliens in the story look and smell a particular way and have a particular skin coloring and texture, so you can’t change any of that.

But different aliens have different attitudes. Some are extremely hostile to humans; others, not so much. The average aliens couldn’t care less; they’re just doing their job.

But you can have one of those “average” aliens become something he isn’t. He can rise to a position of authority, for example. Or he can choose to side with the humans.

You can also introduce new human or alien characters to the series, meaning whole new story lines.

And the situation—if you want to write in this shared world, you can’t change the basic events that have already taken place. For example, you can’t go back to the aliens’ home world and have them decide not to invade and colonize Earth. But you can write other stories about things that go on before they leave the planet. Lots of room there.

You can't change the speech the alien king delivers to the United Nations. But you can write how humans who have yet to appear in the original story are affected by the speech. Again, lots of room there.

You can't change the fact that most of the gun stores have been looted only a day after the invasion. But you can write the stories of some of those stores being looted and who the looters were and what they did with what they took. And where the hell they are. (The current main human character wonders about this a lot.)

So there are literally hundreds of stories to be written in this world, and in literally all genres (though the primary genre, because of the overall setting, will remain SF). In other words, you could write stories that are

*SF romance

*SF action-adventure

*SF mystery

*SF political intrigue

*SF horror

*SF thriller

*and any that I omitted, except maybe historical western, but all of those will be SF stories at their core because of the setting

As an aside, only three genres are DEFINED by setting, meaning Setting is the dominant story component: SF, Western, and War. All others are defined variously by Character or Problem.

And in genres, SF trumps everything else. By that I mean if you write a book in ANY genre and it has even one SF element (a space ship or a ray gun or whatever), it's automatically an SF story.

A Few Facts—Please read these carefully:

*I won't fully open up this world to other writers until I publish the genesis novel.

*I won't charge a fee (to at least the first several writers) to allow other writers to write in this shared world. However, I WILL require in the front matter of your story that you note "Based on the novel For the Good of the Galaxy by Harvey Stanbrough" with a link to the original work at StoneThread Publishing.

*I will ASK that the resulting work is published wide (at least through D2D and Amazon).

*You own the copyright to your story in perpetuity. You can license and distribute it as you wish, including magazines, anthologies, etc.

*I do not own the copyright to your story, but only to the genesis novel (For the Good of the Galaxy) and any other works I personally write in that world.

*Any new characters or situations or physical locations you come up with in your story(ies) will become part of and expand the bible for the overall shared world.

*I WILL REQUIRE that you send me, free of charge, any story (again, of any length) and any reverse outline or notes you write within this shared world. This is strictly so I can add your new components to the overall bible of the shared world.

*Others can write other stories based on characters or other components you introduce to the shared world as long as they follow the basic precepts and parameters outlined in the shared world bible.

*I do NOT anticipate publishing an anthology or omnibus of stories that are based on this shared world. That said, should I decide to do so in the future, I'll email you to ask whether I can include your story. But I'll include it ONLY with your permission and only after I've paid you pro rates for that permission.

*Should I do any promotion of this shared world (for example, a Kickstarter), you DO grant me permission to use the title of any works you write for the shared world and, of course, your author name.

* All of the above will be in an agreed-upon and signed contract between us before you write in this shared world.

Folks, this is a prime opportunity to leap into a shared world with zero risk to yourself. At worst, you'll have more stories (again, any length) to put on the market in your name and build discoverability.

So there it is. If you are interested and have any other questions, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

Yesterday, I lied a little in a comment I left on [John Williams' PWW post](#).

I wrote "in my novels and stories, the first word is usually from me. Everything else is from the POV character(s)...."

That's a falsehood, though not a major one. In actuality, the first word in my novels and stories is usually from the POV character too.

I finished the novel yesterday with a little over 500 words. It's already out to my first readers.

Today, I started the day with catching up on a few workshops in which I was behind. Then I wrote the topic above.

More than likely, I'll spend some time today with the reverse outline I just created for my last novel. That, along with the novel itself, will serve as the "bible" for the Good of the Galaxy shared world in case anyone wants to jump into it.

And if not, that's fine too. It will still serve as my series bible for one or both of the series that will come from this novel. (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Creating Characters for Unruly Writers" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/creating-characters-for-unruly-writers>.

See "The Art of Condensing an Entire Book into a Brief Sales Pitch" at <https://www.thebookdesigner.com/2020/04/the-art-of-condensing-an-entire-book-into-a-brief-sales-pitch/>.

See "Word Porn" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/04/word-porn.html>.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... 582
Nonfiction words today..... 1860 (Journal)

Writing of For the Good of the Galaxy (novel)

Words brought forward..... 72304

Day 1..... 2437 words. Total words to date..... 74741
Day 2..... 3948 words. Total words to date..... 78689
Day 3..... 3275 words. Total words to date..... 81964
Day 4..... 1807 words. Total words to date..... 83771
Day 5..... 0630 words. Total words to date..... 84401
Day 6..... 3394 words. Total words to date..... 87795
Day 7..... 0582 words. Total words to date..... 88377 (done)

Total fiction words for the month..... 36778
Total fiction words for the year..... 244750
Total nonfiction words for the month... 15930
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 97080
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 341832

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 4
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 49
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [SF](#), [Shared World](#), [The Book Designer](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: A Little More on Shared Worlds

[April 21, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Yesterday
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Start writing, no matter what. The water does not flow until the faucet is turned on.” Louis L'Amour

“If you want to be a writer, you must do two things above all others: read a lot and write a lot.” Stephen King

Wow. Yesterday I did no writing to speak of, but I did develop a cover for the novel, which is now titled **For the Good of the Galaxy | The First Nine Days**. I also put it up on D2D and Amazon as a preorder to publish on June 1.

I also was very pleased to get two positive responses from three writers who said they're interested in writing in the shared world. Way cool!

But one asked a couple of questions.

The first was when I plan to publish the book. As I said above, it will go live on June 1. However, I'll send it (free) to any writers who plan to write in the shared world along with the reverse outline (character names, etc.) as soon as I submit the “clean” version to D2D and Amazon. I'm hoping that will be by mid-May.

The other question was whether I have a “timeline” for authors who are interested in writing in the shared world. In other words, will I expect your story/novella/novel by a particular time.

No, I don't. It's none of my business what (or how) you write or when you publish it. My only requirement is that you list in the front matter “Based on the novel **For the Good of the Galaxy | The First Nine Days** by Harvey Stanbrough” and a link back to the book page at StoneThread Publishing.

So yes, writers who write in the shared world will help market the genesis novel, but I don't think that's too much to ask. (grin)

For other details on shared world stuff, please see yesterday's Journal post at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-journal-writing-in-a-shared-world/>.

Today I've already received feedback from one first reader, and I only sent him the manuscript yesterday!

He explained, "I thoroughly enjoyed both your story and the way you've written it. I couldn't put it down, which is no doubt why I'm still up long past the point when I should have gone to bed." All wonderful to hear, of course.

I'll write something today. Meh. Losing yesterday to nonwriting things bugs me. At present I'm wondering whether to dive into the next part of the story I started in that novel or write something completely unrelated.

But I love the characters and the situation, so I'll probably go with the former. We'll see.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "23 Publishers that Accept Science Fiction or Fantasy Novels (No Agent Required)" at <https://www.authorspublish.com/23-publishers-that-accept-science-fiction-or-fantasy-novels/>.

See "Making Mistakes: It's a Mistake Not To Make Them" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/04/making-mistakes-its-amistake-not-to-make-them.html>. Or as Dean Wesley Smith put it, "Dare to be bad."

See "Becoming A NYT Bestselling Author" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/becoming-a-nyt-bestselling-author>.

See "Developing a Writing Practice, Part 4: Easy" at <https://www.janefriedman.com/developing-a-writing-practice-part-4-easy/>.

See "Paradoxes of Probability and Other Statistical Strangeness" at <https://getpocket.com/explore/item/paradoxes-of-probability-and-other-statistical-strangeness>. Possible story ideas.

See "Locked Out" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/locked-out/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 520 (Journal)

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 36778
Total fiction words for the year..... 244750
Total nonfiction words for the month... 16450
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 97600
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 342352

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 4
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 49
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: On Goals

[April 22, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Topic: On Goals
- * Yesterday
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Everybody walks past a thousand story ideas every day. The good writers are the ones who see five or six of them. Most people don’t see any.” Orson Scott Card

Topic: On Goals

Yesterday after I posted the Journal, I hazarded a look at my short story goal spreadsheet. Since I started on January 1, I’ve written 12 short stories. Great fun.

Then I missed. So I was thinking I was probably behind by two or three stories.

Nope. I haven't written a short story in April at all. So I'm four behind on my original goal to write one per week and to write 78 short stories in 78 weeks.

I could easily catch up at a rate of one short story per day for a week, but I don't know that I want to. Meh. I just don't really care because at the moment I'm not in the mood to write short stories. And I've already blown the "one a week" goal, so no pressure there.

That leaves my desire to write 78 in 78 overall. I might well still pull that off, but I'm thinking I probably won't. Too much depends on what I want to write, and the driving urge to write short stories comes and goes. Oh, I could easily pull a chapter or two from a novel, wrap the ending and call it a short story, but that wouldn't be in the spirit of the challenge, so I won't.

I feel okay about my novel goal (one new novel per month and 18 novels in 18 months). Yes, I took it on myself to not count the one I wrote in March, but I did write a novel in that month. But then I added to it in April, so I'm only counting it as the one novel.

But as I said, I feel all right about that, so no big deal. And I have zero doubt I'll reach or exceed my goal to write 18 novels in 18 months.

At the moment that's made a little easier by my desire to add to the saga I started with The Good of the Galaxy. I already know the older characters, the first major situation has wrapped nicely, and I'm excited with the anticipation of adding new characters and new situations and storylines.

So if you get depressed about your goals, remember that the goals exist to serve you, not the other way around.

Yesterday, I started Book 2 of the Othgygnrk Invasion Series. I started with the alien POV. We'll see what happens. Just over 1300 words in the first session.

Maybe interesting to some of you, I learned the structure of this particular novel and series (the structure for me, not for those writing in the shared world) with the last one I wrote. So this time there will be no back and forth, no unwieldy omissions that I have to put together later. Just writing.

I'm excited about this. It should be fun to see how "fast" this novel writes compared to the previous one.

For future comparison, the previous novel came to life in 36 writing days (88,379 words), with an average of 2455 words per day. I should easily shoot past that average today and (I hope) on successive days.

If I can finish this one by early May, I should be caught up with my novel goal by the end of May, just in time for the launch of Book 1 of this series.

By 3:15 I spent about 5 hours of the day in the chair actually writing. I wrote a little over 6000 words on the day. A great start.

Today I'll write. (shrug) Here's hoping I have another day like yesterday.

And this morning while reading for "Of Interest," an idea popped into my mind. What happens post-CoVID-19? Will society return to the pre-plague normal or will everyone realize even with that one virus under control, we Still Don't Know what disease the other guy is carrying? Will we continue to practice "social distancing" on into the future? Will supply chains be forever disrupted by the mistrust and fear that was fostered during this era? And what are the ramifications of all that?

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "If it's not on the page, your reader doesn't know it" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/if-its-not-on-the-page-your-reader-doesnt-know-it/>. Some of the best writing advice I've ever read.

See "What Might Happen" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/what-might-happen/>.

See "The Hardest Writing I've Ever Done" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/04/25238.html>.

See "Rebuilding the Porterville Library" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/rebuilding-the-porterville-library/>.

See "What Is Emotional Context And..." at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/what-is-emotional-context-and-why-does-your-story-need-it/>.

See "Adding Je ne sais quoi to your stories" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/adding-je-ne-sais-quoi-to-your-stories>.

See "Army Ranger School Is a Laboratory of Human Endurance" at <https://www.outsideonline.com/2411895/army-ranger-school>. In case you've ever wondered. As for "toughest training challenge," I think I'd have to wonder how it stacks up against Navy SEAL training.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... 6138
Nonfiction words today..... 820 (Journal)

Writing of The Good of the Galaxy 2 (novel)

Day 1..... 6138 words. Total words to date..... 6138

Total fiction words for the month..... 42908
Total fiction words for the year..... 250890
Total nonfiction words for the month... 17270

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 98420
 Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 349310

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 4
 Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
 Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
 Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 49
 Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
 Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
 Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Short Post Today

[April 23, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Authors Give Back Sale
- * Yesterday
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Creativity is intelligence having fun.” Albert Einstein (via The Passive Voice)

For anyone who's interested, I've just enrolled all my books at Smashwords in the Authors Give Back Sale. All my books are marked at 60% off through May 31.

That means, again, that many of my short stories there are free. But all of my books there are at least 60% off. Great time to jump into a series or sample some of my other works.

To see MY books, visit <https://www.smashwords.com/profile/view/HStanbrough>.

But it isn't all about me. To see ALL books entered in the Authors Give Back sale, visit <https://www.smashwords.com/> and browse your search options. I apologize in advance for the embarrassingly clunky user interface.

Yesterday I only hit a little over 4500 words (see Day 2). Still not a bad day, but not as good as I hoped either. I got stuck on some math for awhile.

Want to play along? How many humans can aliens confine in a 250-by-250 foot cage given 36 square feet of personal space (the standard used for maximum occupancy)? But aliens aren't concerned with comfort, so drop that to 12 square feet. Now multiply by 18 cages.

Note: These are not necessarily the numbers that will end up in the novel. Remember, unlike real life, fiction has to be believable.

Also, in hectic times, not all cages hold exactly the same number. But even when writing into the dark, your approximations have to be accurate. (grin)

Today, I rolled out early, anxious to get back to the story. With this much shorter than usual Journal post, I'm getting an early start.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "9 Tips for Creating Amazon Ads that Convert" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/9-tips-for-creating-amazon-ads-that-convert/>. Amazon is the biggest bookstore out there. Just sayin'.

See "Business Musings: The Trainwreck" at <https://kriswrites.com/2020/04/22/business-musings-the-trainwreck/>.

See "Sweden's BookBeat Rides High on the Pandemic's Audiobook Boom" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/swedens-bookbeat-rides-high-on-the-pandemics-audiobook-boom/>. Interesting in light of assertions made in Kris Rusch's post above.

See "Ghost Writing Cover Credit – As Told To Dan Baldwin" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/ghost-writing-cover-credit-as-told-to-dan-baldwin>.

See "True Crime Thursday – Crazy but True Laws" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/04/true-crime-thursday-crazy-but-true-laws.html>.

See "Barnes & Noble is having cash flow issues" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/barnes-noble-is-having-cash-flow-issues/>. Duh. But I listed this because it links to Smashwords Site Updates.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... 4514
Nonfiction words today..... 390 (Journal)

Writing of The Good of the Galaxy 2 (novel)

Day 1..... 6138 words. Total words to date..... 6138
Day 2..... 4514 words. Total words to date..... 10652

| | |
|---|--------|
| Total fiction words for the month..... | 47422 |
| Total fiction words for the year..... | 255404 |
| Total nonfiction words for the month... | 17660 |
| Total nonfiction words for the year..... | 98810 |
| Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... | 354212 |
| | |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... | 4 |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... | X |
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... | 12 |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 49 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 208 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [KillZone Blog](#), [Kristine Kathryn Rusch](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Think

[April 24, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Yesterday
- * Topic: Think
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Nothing will stop you from being creative so effectively as the fear of making a mistake.” John Cleese (from KillZone blog a day or two ago)

Yesterday, I got up early to give myself more time on the novel, but that didn't really work out. I was tired much of the day, and I wasn't thinking quite right. Lesson learned. Maybe. I got just over 3600 words (see Day 3).

At the end of the day yesterday I was going to write a topic for today, but my my brain felt cloudy, so I waited until this morning. Sure enough, a topic reared its head as I was researching items for “Of Interest.”

Topic: Think

I almost titled this “Harvey Calls Bullsh*t.”

I’m constantly annoyed at all the harmful advice out there. And most of it doesn’t come stomping through the front door of reason. Most of it slips in through a side window. It seems friendly and innocuous. And it will destroy you.

That’s why for years, I’ve advised others to Question Everything. We should all strive to use our brain housing group for something other than a hat rack or to showcase a new hairstyle.

That’s just good general advice for living an authentic life. But this is a writing blog. So specifically, when you read or hear writing advice FROM ANYONE (yes, even me), question it.

Break it down to its most basic form and then try to respond to it, at least in your own mind. Does it still make sense? Then give it a try. Is it silly? Then discard it.

For example, I recently saw this quote as a “hook” for a blog post in a major venue: “If you don’t have a solid grasp on whether or not readers are picking up the next book in your series, you don’t know if it’s worth carrying on with it.”

Seriously?

The truth is, you can’t have “a solid grasp” on what readers are doing at any point in time. And even if you think you do, that doesn’t mean they’ll be doing the same thing tomorrow or next week or next month.

You have ZERO CONTROL over who picks up the next book in your series. Yes, you can frantically follow the numbers at Amazon or wherever, but that won’t tell you who MIGHT pick up your book tomorrow or the next day or a week, month or year from now.

Sadly, I know too many “writers” who write one book, then literally spend the rest of their time watching numbers.

So what to do?

Write the best story you can, design the best cover you can, write the best sales copy you can, publish it, and move on to the next book.

***Because here’s the thing: Books aren’t produce.
Books don’t spoil or “go bad” in a month or a year or ten years.***

Even if nobody’s interested in your series right now, that doesn’t mean nobody will be interested a month or a year from now. Write what you want to write, publish it, and then leave it up so readers can find it.

So the writing advice posed in the quote above is just ridiculously easy to answer:

1. Do you ENJOY writing the series?

A. Yes. (Then it's worth carrying on.)

B. No. (Then it's NOT worth carrying on. And why in the world are you writing it in the first place?)

I can almost hear a ton of people out there screaming, "But it isn't that easy!"

Well, that's up to you, isn't it? It's as easy as you want it to be. And your writing is one of the few areas where you really do have control.

Life is already filled with things we have to do whether or not we enjoy them.

Sitting alone in a room making sh*t up should be fun and enjoyable. It should be an escape. Don't let anyone make your writing just one more stressor.

Today, I'll continue writing my current WIP, the second book in what I expect will be a series. Why? Because it's the most fun I can have with my clothes on.

And I'm not writing it because of some silly, high-handed notion that some imaginary reader will enjoy it. Some will, some won't. Shrug.

I'm writing it because it's a ton of fun and I want to find out what happens next.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "14 Myths About Writers" at <https://www.authorspublish.com/14-myths-about-writers-2/>. Cute. And mostly true.

See "The Science Behind the Meet-Cute" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-science-behind-the-meet-cute/>.

See "Vegas Workshops Postponed" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/vegas-workshops-postponed/>.

See "Plague Writing" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/plague-writing/>.

See "A Pleasure-oriented Society Full of 'Wholesome Degeneracy'" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/a-pleasure-oriented-society-full-of-wholesome-degeneracy/>.

See "The Hunter, The Hunted, and "The Most Dangerous Game" at <https://crimereads.com/the-hunter-the-hunted-and-the-most-dangerous-game/>.

See “Why True Stories Don’t Always Make Good Fiction” at <https://crimereads.com/why-true-stories-dont-always-make-good-fiction/>. On the limits of turning to reality for inspiration when writing a compelling novel.

See “Little Ammunition Plant on the Prairie” at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/joliet-army-ammunition-plant>. Maybe a story idea.

See “How to Make Pizza Like a Neopolitan Master” at <http://www.bbc.com/travel/story/20200415-how-to-make-pizza-like-a-neapolitan-master>. The recipe is at the end.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... 3633
Nonfiction words today..... 860 (Journal)

Writing of *The Good of the Galaxy 2* (novel)

Day 1..... 6138 words. Total words to date..... 6138
Day 2..... 4514 words. Total words to date..... 10652
Day 3..... 3633 words. Total words to date..... 14285

Total fiction words for the month..... 51055
Total fiction words for the year..... 259037
Total nonfiction words for the month... 18520
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 99670
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 358707

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 4
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 49
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Atlas Obscura](#), [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [BBC](#), [CrimeReads](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Why I Don’t Talk Much About CoVID-19

[April 25, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Yesterday
- * Topic: Why I Don't Talk Much About CoVID-19
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“If it’s not on the page, your reader doesn’t know it.” Nathan Bransford

Yesterday, I got sidetracked for awhile by a new (to me) source for royalty free photos. See Visual Hunt at <https://visualhunt.com/> (via Jane Friedman).

The daily word count continues to decrease (see Day 4, sigh). I’ll have to see whether I can do something about that. (grin) It has nothing to do with the novel. The novel is running along fine.

Topic: Why I Don't Talk Much About CoVID-19

The short answer is because I’m a writer and this is a blog about writing. And frankly, there’s more than enough information and misinformation out there about the virus without me adding to it.

I have my own thoughts on both the virus and the generally panicky reaction to it, but I’ll keep those to myself. I take responsibility for my own life (yes, that’s legal) and strive to control only my own actions and reactions. What others do is up to them.

That being said, yesterday a subscriber and patron sent me a link to a blog post on reader behavior per CoVID-19. I appreciate that (and the link is included in “Of Interest” below), but please realize this is only one of many, many takes by experts on reader behavior.

The ones I’ve read, all from reputable sources, range from “not buying/reading at all” to “reading a great deal more.” And that goes for print books, ebooks and audiobooks. So I’m just saying, take any such posts with a grain of salt.

I’m not saying I don’t believe the sources are sincere. I’m sure they are. I’m just saying there’s a lot of conflicting information out there, so I recommend you don’t hang your hat on it.

As always, just write the best story you can write at your current skill level, put the best cover on it you can, write the best sales copy possible, then publish it and forget it.

The virus will continue until it doesn’t. The societal effects, both reactions and overreactions among readers and in all other walks of life, will continue until they are no longer seen as necessary.

Today, as always, back to the novel, and what a wonderful escape it is! I love that world. (grin)
It contains monsters and dangers you can actually see and feel.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Refusing to Go to Bed Before Midnight” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/refusing-to-go-to-bed-before-midnight/>. About halfway down, a wise take on B&N.

See “How to Start Blogging: A Definitive Guide for Authors” at <https://www.janefriedman.com/bloggng-for-writers/>.

See “How Long Is a Moment?” at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/moment-time-physics-philosophy-linguistics-neuroscience>.

See “Are Actual Love Letters Better Than ‘Love Texts’?” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/are-actual-love-letters-better-than-love-texts/>.

See “Sincerity and Song” at <https://hughhowey.com/sincerity-and-song/>. Thanks to Scott for the tip.

See “How Reader Behavior Is Changing During the COVID-19 Crisis” at <https://insights.bookbub.com/reader-behavior-changing-covid19-crisis/>. Thanks to Bob C. for the tip.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... 3181
Nonfiction words today..... 500 (Journal)

Writing of *The Good of the Galaxy 2* (novel)

Day 1..... 6138 words. Total words to date..... 6138
Day 2..... 4514 words. Total words to date..... 10652
Day 3..... 3633 words. Total words to date..... 14285
Day 4..... 3181 words. Total words to date..... 17466

Total fiction words for the month..... 54236
Total fiction words for the year..... 262218
Total nonfiction words for the month... 19020
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 10070
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 362388

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 4
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

| | |
|---|-----|
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... | 12 |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 49 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 208 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Hugh Howey](#), [Atlas Obscura](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Apropos of Nothing

[April 26, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Apropos of nothing
- * Yesterday
- * Topic:
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

"I Love to write. It's all I do." Ray Bradbury



Apropos of nothing, I thought I'd share this little bit of wisdom from a friend's post on Facebook from a week or so ago.

One more glaring example of why natural selection is a thing.

Yesterday, after I posted the Journal (that's always the first hour or two of the day) I was about to start on the novel.

Then I decided to apply the fixes recommended by two of my first-readers to my previous novel.

I usually wait until I have all the input back, but I made an exception since my previous novel leads directly into the one I'm writing now.

Fortunately, there were no glaring errors. Several wrong-word typos and one major overusage of a favorite word. (grin) All fixed now.

Then I got into a chat with one of those first-readers. That was enjoyable. Although we've never met, as it turns out we have mutual friends. Thanks, Russ J. I enjoyed it.

After all of that and two or three breaks, I almost decided to make yesterday a nonwriting day. I didn't, but early in the day writing was like pulling teeth. (Yes, we all have those days.) Fortunately, I kept coming back and the story broke loose again. The results are in Day 5 below.

Today I'll write. Slim (but good) pickings in "Of Interest" today. Here at the Hovel, I'm turning to the novel. Have a safe (and sane) day.

Just a thought—if this story keeps running, I might well finish it before the end of this month. If I do, I’ll be back on track with my novel goal.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Losing a Storyteller” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/losing-a-storyteller>.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... 3224
Nonfiction words today..... 310 (Journal)

Writing of *The Good of the Galaxy 2* (novel)

Day 1..... 6138 words. Total words to date..... 6138
Day 2..... 4514 words. Total words to date..... 10652
Day 3..... 3633 words. Total words to date..... 14285
Day 4..... 3181 words. Total words to date..... 17466
Day 5..... 3224 words. Total words to date..... 20690

Total fiction words for the month..... 57460
Total fiction words for the year..... 265442
Total nonfiction words for the month... 19330
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 100480
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 365922

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 4
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 49
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: “Can’t” vs. Critical Mind Excuses

[April 27, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Topic: Can't vs. Critical Mind Excuses (in which Harvey gets mouthy)
- * Welcome
- * Yesterday
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Can't never did anything.” Shirley Stanbrough (my mom)

Topic: “Can't” vs. Critical Mind Excuses

In “Of Interest” today is an article titled “10 Ways to Feel Like a Real Writer When You Can't Write Thanks to Coronavirus.”

Normally I wouldn't even link to this silly article, but some of the 10 activities on their list are still things writers need to do, so I let it through.

As to the premise of the article itself, see the Quote of the Day above.

If you “can't write thanks to coronavirus” (or whatever else you're saying thanks to) you're making an excuse. Your conscious, critical mind is giving you a reason not to write, and you're taking it. And chances are, deep down inside, you know it. That little voice is your creative subconscious struggling to get out.

If you're sitting at your writing computer with your fingers on the keyboard and you can *literally* hear the coronavirus brownshirts banging on the doors of apartments along your same hallway as they draw closer and closer to *your* apartment door, then yes, maybe you have a problem. (But the problem isn't an inability to write.)

But if you're stuck at home, given more time to write than you've ever had before, and you aren't writing, that's “thanks to” your own critical voice, not the coronavirus.

Here are some tips:

1. Wash your hands thoroughly and often.
2. Turn off the coronavirus-soaked TV news.
3. Write.

Because if you “can't write thanks to” whatever the problem is today, a new problem will take its place tomorrow. Just sayin'.

Welcome to all recent new subscribers. I hope you find the Journal worthwhile. Frankly, I wish there had been a site like this one back when I first started writing.

I practice a writing technique called “writing into the dark” (WITD) right here in public for anyone to see. And I’m an adherent of Heinlein’s Rules, a free copy of which you can download in PDF [RIGHT HERE](#). My monthly and annual number below are evidence that WITD and following Heinlein’s Rules works, at least for me.

In this Journal, which I post almost every day, I share my daily life as a prolific professional fiction writer, warts and all. Occasionally I also give away freebies.

Finally, I usually include a topic of interest to fiction writers in the Journal, and I’ll almost always point you to other articles below in the “Of Interest” section.

I write fiction pretty much across the genres. You can find my author website at HarveyStanbrough.com and my publisher website at StoneThreadPublishing.com. Everything at either site was written in the past six years.

I also teach others the freedom of the writing into the dark technique as well as many writing other aspects of writing. Soon, I plan to release a new round of mentoring topics for everyone to browse.

Perhaps most importantly, I teach other writers and would-be writers to go against conventional “wisdom.” Be sure something makes sense before you dive in and embrace it. Question Everything. So again, welcome.

Yesterday was a pretty good day on my WIP. The word count is on the way back up, at least right now. See Day 6.

Today I’ll write.

I also plan to take a walk sometime this morning. At least 2 miles. I’ll take my stupid seat-stick cane with me so I can sit and rest my back for a few seconds at a time along the way.

Old age sucks. In actuality, I’m only 26. Problem is, I have almost 42 years’ experience at being 26. (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Plotting for Unruly Writers” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/plotting-for-unruly-writers>.

See “How to End a Story: Top Tips to Nail the Perfect Ending” at <https://blog.reedsy.com/how-to-end-a-story/>.

See “Card Sharp Silver” at <https://www.deanwesleymith.com/card-sharp-silver/>. I’ve been stuck in a novel before and allowed other things to intervene as an excuse to keep me from writing. In fact, it happened a little with For the Good of the Galaxy, my previous novel. In that case it was

because I allowed the novel to become too “important.” Because Card Sharp Silver is the genesis novel for a shared world, I suspect that might be the case here. If it is, Dean will eventually tell us.

See “10 Ways to Feel Like a Real Writer When You Can’t Write Thanks to Coronavirus” at <https://annerallen.com/2020/04/10-ways-to-feel-like-a-real-writer-when-you-cant-write-thanks-to-coronavirus/>. If you want to see someone steeped in the myths and perpetuating them, read this article.

I take exception to numbers 5, 8, and 10. If the author could accomplish number 5 on her list, she would be writing. Despite conventional wisdom, why would ANYONE EVER write a “crappy” first draft? And the only way to “feel like a real writer” (or at least to “be” a “real” writer is to write.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... 3954
Nonfiction words today..... 820 (Journal)

Writing of The Good of the Galaxy 2 (novel)

Day 1..... 6138 words. Total words to date..... 6138
Day 2..... 4514 words. Total words to date..... 10652
Day 3..... 3633 words. Total words to date..... 14285
Day 4..... 3181 words. Total words to date..... 17466
Day 5..... 3224 words. Total words to date..... 20690
Day 6..... 3954 words. Total words to date..... 24644

Total fiction words for the month..... 61414
Total fiction words for the year..... 269396
Total nonfiction words for the month... 20150
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 101300
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 370696

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 4
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 49
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Anne R. Allen](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Reedsy](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: A Bit of Silliness

[April 28, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * The Writing Bundles Kickstarter
- * A Bit of Silliness
- * Yesterday
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Plot is no more than footprints left in the snow after your characters have run by on their way to incredible destinations.” Ray Bradbury

According to Dean Wesley Smith, the Writing Bundles Kickstarter has hit the third stretch goal and is closing in on the fourth.

As a result, everyone who backs the Kickstarter with at least a \$5 donation will get

- * the First Quarter of Tips of the Week lecture, a \$50 value
- * an electronic copy of Kristine Kathryn Rusch's THE FREELANCER'S SURVIVAL GUIDE
- * an electronic copy of THE FIRST TEE PANIC, a great example of creative nonfiction, PLUS
- * the REFRESH AND RENEW workshop, a \$300 value about helping your writing move into the future and making more money with your writing.

If you haven't supported the Kickstarter yet (or even if you have) I hope you'll consider pitching in a little (or a little more) to help them reach the next goal.

To see the Kickstarter, click <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/403649867/writing-bundles>. Thanks!

A Bit of Silliness

I'm not a big fan of the term “pantser.” To me it is derogatory, and it's at least an exercise in misunderstanding. Oddly, those who use it most often are native English speakers, though I suspect they're only feigning fluency in the language.

pantser, n. **1.** A bully. **2.** Specifically, one who removes the pants of another, usually with a swift, downward jerking motion, without permission or warning and usually in public.

But I digress. Let's look at an equally silly term, although one that is at least actually descriptive.

plodder, n. (in fiction writing) 1. One who meticulously plods through a manuscript, having first plodded through an outline, presumably to exert absolute control over every aspect of something as unimportant as a fiction (something that has not yet happened and will never happen except, maybe, by sheer coincidence).

While I'm playing, another term I find ridiculous is "organic writer." I assume some writer came up with the term, probably to deflect being called a "pantser," but I wonder whether he or she really thought it through.

organic writer, n. 1. presumably, a writer created without the use of pesticides. **2.** a writer who subsists purely on bovine excrement or other forms of manure.

Okay, that last one might actually be appropriate for some of us.

In case you're wondering, I prefer the term "writer."

Yesterday, I wrote for three sessions and got just over 3600 words (see Day 7). I was going to come back for a fourth session, but I got sidetracked and called it a day.

The novel's running along fine. It practically writes itself. The only "problem" I've noticed with this one is that I have so many POV characters I have to remember to switch among them relatively frequently.

But really, that's a nice problem to have. Earlier yesterday, I remembered one of those and went back to insert a new Chapter 12 (I was on Chapter 16 when I remembered). As I said, the book's writing itself. All I really have to remember is who gets to be the center of the next scene. (grin)

Today, per usual, I'll write. Frankly, I can hardly wait to get back to it.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See PG's take on "The supply chain for book publishing is being changed by Coronavirus too" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-supply-chain-for-book-publishing-is-being-changed-by-coronavirus-too/>. The title of this one should actually read "big publishing" rather than "book publishing."

See "got imagination?" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/got-imagination>.

See "The Decade Ahead: Second Quarter" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/the-decade-ahead-second-quarter/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... 3606
Nonfiction words today..... 600 (Journal)

Writing of The Good of the Galaxy 2 (novel)

Day 1..... 6138 words. Total words to date..... 6138
Day 2..... 4514 words. Total words to date..... 10652
Day 3..... 3633 words. Total words to date..... 14285
Day 4..... 3181 words. Total words to date..... 17466
Day 5..... 3224 words. Total words to date..... 20690
Day 6..... 3954 words. Total words to date..... 24644
Day 7..... 3606 words. Total words to date..... 28250

Total fiction words for the month..... 65020
Total fiction words for the year..... 273002
Total nonfiction words for the month... 20750
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 101900
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 374902

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 4
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 49
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Definitions](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: A Very Short Topic

[April 29, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Yesterday
- * Today
- * Topic: A Very Short Topic
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Learning to let go should be learned before learning to get. Life should be touched, not strangled. You’ve got to relax, let it happen at times, and at others move forward with it.”
Ray Bradbury

“Eventually, everyone will be quarantined to their houses with no sports to watch... and in nine months a boom of babies will be born... and we will call them Coronials.”
Creative Talent Agency (via The Passive Voice)

Yeserday was a slow day, but at least I cleared 3000 words (see Day 8). I’m still thinking this one will be finished on or about the end of this month. Getting into some heavy action and waiting for the end to slap me.

It’s difficult to describe how great it is to write a novel when almost every sentence is a surprise. A lot of big-deal writers have said some version of “No surprise for the writer, no surprise for the reader,” and I believe that’s true.

The surprises are what keep me, the writer, engaged and wanting to keep coming back to the story. I have to believe they will have the same effect on the reader.

Today, I rolled out very late at almost 5 a.m. after a rough night. Hence the very thin Journal today.

Topic: A Very Short Topic (and one I probably shouldn’t post)

I still plan to make my daily word count goal today, despite my entire routine being thrown off. But maybe it’s an opportunity to illustrate what I keep saying:

If you “want to” write, then you sit down, put your fingers on the keyboard, and write. And despite the common (BS) writing advice to “just get it on paper so you can fix it later,” you write the very best you can at your current skill level the first time through.

Why on Earth would *anyone* think “write sloppy” is good advice? Do you do literally *anything else* intentionally “sloppy” the first time through so you can do it over?

Keeping your dishes clean is far more important than any story you’ll ever write; do you wash them twice (or three or four times)? Planting a garden (flower or vegetable) is eminently more important than any story you’ll ever write; do you intentionally plant sloppily the first time so you can go back and fix it later? Go ahead. Apply the same thought to anything else you do. It stands up.

A story of any length isn’t important. It’s nothing more than a few minutes (short story) or hours (novel) of entertainment for someone you’ll probably never meet. It will earn you only a few dollars.

If you “can’t” write and if there’s no physical reason you can’t, chances are you’re steeped in one myth or another. (For an excellent example of being steeped in the myths, see the last listing

in “Of Interest” today or, sadly, almost any clichéd “writing advice” almost anywhere on the internet. I added the link strictly FWIW and because reading it made my blood boil.)

A disclaimer: I don’t much care how anyone else chooses to write. I really don’t. If they want to turn such a joyful experience as writing into hard labor, that’s their business. But it makes steam rise off my forehead when they actively teach other writers and would-be writers to spoil that joy for themselves too.

I understand going against the flow of conventional “wisdom” isn’t a smart thing to do, yet here it is. Let the slings and arrows begin.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Never Let a Computer Know You’re in a Hurry” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/never-let-a-computer-know-youre-in-a-hurry/>.

See “Developing a Writing Practice, Part 5: Neurohacks” at <https://www.janefriedman.com/developing-a-writing-practice-part-5-neurohacks/>.

See “Meet Nancy Wake: Socialite, Spy, and The Most Decorated Heroine of WWII” at <https://crimereads.com/meet-nancy-wake-socialite-spy-and-the-most-decorated-heroine-of-wwii/>.

See “Writing Bundles Kickstarter Almost Done” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/writing-bundles-kickstarter-almost-done/>.

For several more “quarantine” quotes, see “The Passive Voice” at <http://www.thepassivevoice.com/>.

See “Focusing on the Writing” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/04/focusing-on-the-writing.html>. Only despite the title, it doesn’t teach you how to focus on the writing. It teaches you how to AVOID writing and how to succumb to the myths about writing. So this is strictly a FWIW link.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... 3334
Nonfiction words today..... 670 (Journal)

Writing of The Good of the Galaxy 2 (novel)

Day 1..... 6138 words. Total words to date..... 6138
Day 2..... 4514 words. Total words to date..... 10652
Day 3..... 3633 words. Total words to date..... 14285

Day 4..... 3181 words. Total words to date..... 17466
Day 5..... 3224 words. Total words to date..... 20690
Day 6..... 3954 words. Total words to date..... 24644
Day 7..... 3606 words. Total words to date..... 28250
Day 8..... 3334 words. Total words to date..... 31584

Total fiction words for the month..... 68354
Total fiction words for the year..... 276336
Total nonfiction words for the month... 21420
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 102570
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 378906

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 4
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 49
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [CrimeReads](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Terrible Writing Advice](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Food for Thought

[April 30, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Food for Thought
- * Yesterday
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day (I'm gorging on Bradbury)

“The faster you blurt, the more swiftly you write, the more honest you are. In hesitation is thought. In delay comes the effort for a style, instead of leaping upon truth which is the only style worth deadfalling and tiger-trapping.”

Ray Bradbury

“Dandelion Wine, like most of my books, was a surprise... I simply got out of bed each morning, walked to my desk, and put down any word or series of words that happened along in my head.”
Ray Bradbury

Food for Thought

Food for Thought might become a new regular feature of the Journal. In it, I will offer up story ideas in various genres.

In today’s “Of Interest,” Debbie Burke of the Kill Zone blog talks about drones that can tell your local police whether you have a fever, etc. from “200 feet away without you ever knowing it.”

She then posed the question, “Does invasion of a person’s body by technology constitute unreasonable search and seizure under the Fourth Amendment?”

Unfortunately, there’s a great deal of food for thought in Debbie’s post for thriller writers.

Observing the public response to the pandemic, I no longer wonder whether a policy instituted by any level of government or the private sector violates the constitution. Some plainly do (and have done for years, even decades). And some, I believe, intentionally do.

Recently in a tiny personal blog, I witnessed a survivor of a Japanese prison camp on the (then) island of Java during World War II actually decry the lack of guards at the two perimeter gates of her retirement community to keep residents from “sneaking out” to go shopping.

To me, the question is how many violations of their constitutional rights the citizenry will accept, or even insist upon, for a modicum of perceived safety.

Yesterday, I rolled out extremely late. It was almost 5 a.m. Searched for items for “Of Interest,” wrote a short topic, and filed the Journal.

I went up to the house for a quick breakfast of poor-man’s huevos rancheros (scrambled eggs with Pace picante salsa on top). Then my wife and my cane and my camera and I went for a short walk (about a mile).

After a shower, I got back to the Hovel at around 7:30, then wrote a new blog post for [HarveyStanbrough.com](https://harveystanbrough.com) announcing the Smashwords Authors Give Back Sale (my books are 60% off there through May 31) AND my all new book giveaway. For details, see <https://harveystanbrough.com/pro-writers/book-sale-and-book-giveaway/>.

Finally moved over to the writing ‘puter and the novel at 9 a.m. In three sessions I wrote just under 3500 words (see Day 9).

Today I rolled out late again, though not as late. Today again, I will personally escape the world in my current story.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Last 18 Hours...” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/last-18-hours/>.

See “True Crime Thursday – Invasion of the Body” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/04/true-crime-thursday-invasion-of-the-body.html>.

See “How To Write A Perfect Cliff-Hanger” at <https://www.livewritethrive.com/2020/04/27/how-to-write-a-perfect-cliff-hanger/>.

See “The 3 Ms of Character Setup” (strictly FWIW) at <https://www.janefriedman.com/the-3-ms-of-character-setup/>.

See “Business Musings: The Year Ahead...Again” at <https://kriswrites.com/2020/04/29/business-musings-the-year-ahead-again/>.

See “How Do You Rate as a Ghostwriter?” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/how-do-you-rate-as-a-ghostwriter/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... 34842
Nonfiction words today..... 540 (Journal)

Writing of The Good of the Galaxy 2 (novel)

Day 1..... 6138 words. Total words to date..... 6138
Day 2..... 4514 words. Total words to date..... 10652
Day 3..... 3633 words. Total words to date..... 14285
Day 4..... 3181 words. Total words to date..... 17466
Day 5..... 3224 words. Total words to date..... 20690
Day 6..... 3954 words. Total words to date..... 24644
Day 7..... 3606 words. Total words to date..... 28250
Day 8..... 3334 words. Total words to date..... 31584
Day 9..... 3258 words. Total words to date..... 34842

Total fiction words for the month..... 71612
Total fiction words for the year..... 279594
Total nonfiction words for the month... 21960
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 103110
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 382704

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 4
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

| | |
|--|-----|
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12 | |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 49 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 208 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [CS Lakin](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Food for Thought](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Kristine Kathryn Rusch](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Bradbury, Halifax, and More Food for Thought

[May 1, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Yesterday
- * Food for Thought
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day (Still gorging on Bradbury)

“Don’t think. Thinking is the enemy of creativity. It’s self-conscious and anything self-conscious is lousy. You can’t “try” to do things. You simply “must” do things.” Ray Bradbury

“Your intuition knows what to write, so get out of the way.” Ray Bradbury

Yesterday, as it turned out, I wrote very little. Not really enough to even count, so I don’t consider it a writing day. I think I was too tired from the past couple of very long nights.

When I realized what was happening, I decided to take the rest of the day off and rest. Mostly, my wife and I watched an insanely fast-paced Brit show called *Last Tango in Halifax*.

You might be familiar with the maxim, “When a story bogs down, bring in a man with a gun.” In *Last Tango in Halifax*, there’s a new “man with a gun” popping in three or four times per episode.

It’s not only very entertaining, but an excellent show to study if you want to learn to write action scenes.

And wow, did April sneak out quietly or what? I didn’t even hear the door creak.

Food for Thought

Speaking of studying, in a comment yesterday Alison Holt wrote of Dan Baldwin's PWW post on ghostwriting, "You have such great, hard-earned insight that anyone would be a fool not not take your advice."

Frankly, I've never heard the concept stated more precisely or more clearly.

And that, my friends, is *exactly* why I listen so closely to so few professional writers and why I actively study only the likes of Stephen King, Ernest Hemingway, Jack Higgins, Ray Bradbury, Isabel Allende and other "way up there" writers.

Today I'll get back to the novel.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Catching Up and New Workshop" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/catching-up-and-new-workshop/>.

See Nate Hoffelder's newsletter on free conferences and webinars at <https://preview.mailerlite.com/f8g7h7/1411472969179338473/b4v2/>.

For you who use Scrivener, see "Scrivener Quick Tips: A Roundup of Handy Features" at <https://writerunboxed.com/2020/04/30/scrivener-quick-tips-a-roundup-of-handy-features/> via The Book Designer.

See "Four Common Submission Mistakes" at <https://www.authorspublish.com/four-common-submission-mistakes/>.

See "How to Publish an Ebook: A 9-Step Guide for Success" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-to-publish-an-ebook-a-9-step-guide-for-success/>.

See "The UK Scraps Its 20-Percent VAT on Digital Books" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-uk-scraps-its-20-percent-vat-on-digital-books/>. This is GREAT news!

See "The 7 Best Books I've Ever Read About Writing" at <https://getpocket.com/explore/item/the-7-best-books-i-ve-ever-read-about-writing> FWIW.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 400 (Journal)

Writing of The Good of the Galaxy 2 (novel)

Day 9..... 3258 words. Total words to date..... 34842

Total fiction words for the month..... 0

Total fiction words for the year..... 279594

Total nonfiction words for the month... 400

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 103110

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 383104

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 4

Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 49

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Food for Thought](#), [Nate Hoffelder](#), [The Book Designer](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Why Helping Writers is Important

[May 2, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Yesterday (and the Day Before)
- * Topic: Why Helping Writers is Important (and So Frustrating)
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day (Still bingeing on Bradbury)

“Love. Fall in love and stay in love. Write only what you love, and love what you write. The word is love. You have to get up in the morning and write something you love, something to live for.” Ray Bradbury

“The first thing a writer should be is — excited.” Ray Bradbury

On the day before yesterday, I was so zoned out I didn't even notice it was the last day of the month, so not only did I not write that day, I didn't prep my spreadsheet for May either. So I started yesterday, after I posted the Journal, by doing that.

Then I wrote. I didn't "make up" for my day off, but I did have a pretty good day (see Day 10 below).

I wish all of my novels wrote as fast as this one's writing. On the other hand, even with the fairly big numbers, I do a lot of back and forth from the genesis novel to this one to make sure things coincide and so on.

For just one example, while writing this novel I came up with an alien name for a particular device they use, so I went back and inserted it into the genesis novel too. And that's happened at least a few times each day. So you can see, the novel's actually writing even faster than it seems. (grin)

Topic: Why Helping Writers is Important (and So Frustrating)

Paying it forward, helping other writers, is important to me. But man is it frustrating. Frankly, I don't know how Dean's done it all these years.

In the past six years, I've told hundreds of writers the "secret" to becoming a successful professional writer. I think I got through to maybe 10.

This morning I received an email from a person I met back in the early 2000s, probably at the wonderful old Society of Southwestern Authors (SSA) annual conference. The conference was quite a big deal back then, drawing several hundred people each year. I was a regular presenter.

She wrote, "I've finished my second book. It's an adventure book set in Medieval times. I've been sitting on it for a month or so because I don't know what to do with it. I really don't want to go down the unknown author road again.

"The book is around 43,000 words which seems like a good length for a first time author. The people who proofed it, love it. One of them said it sniffed of Game of Thrones. I don't know about that because I didn't watch the series.

"I'm just lost about what to do about the book. It was published in 2007 by Publish America, which I know isn't around any longer. I have full rights for my book. There's less than 100 copies published.

"I've rewritten the book and it's much better than the one for Publish America. I also have 2 more books I want write for the series. I guess I was just hoping that reconnecting with you would help me along with this manuscript or maybe give me some ideas."

Can you spot some of the myths at work?

This writer attended her writing group meetings regularly for years. She heard and practiced all of the conventional wisdom (myths) that beginning writers like to toss back and forth about writing — fifteen to twenty years ago.

In my response to her, I recommended she publish her book through D2D and Amazon, and then forget it and write the next book.

I told her about writing into the dark and about Heinlein's Rules, the two concepts that changed my life forever just over 6 years ago.

And finally, I sent her four of my books:

- * Quiet the Critical Voice (and Write Fiction)
- * Writing the Character Driven Story
- * The Professional Fiction Writer: A Year in the Life, and
- * The Essentials of Digital Publishing

I also explained, briefly, how each could help her if only she'll get out of her own way.

I hope she'll listen. Sadly, statistics and long experience combined with the glut of horrible, clichéd writing advice out there tell me she probably won't. And I guess that's all right.

But it's unfortunate. And knowing first-hand what wonderful freedom awaits writers who will dare to trust themselves is just frustrating.

Today, despite what anyone else is doing, I'll write. I hope the same for you.

Today also, I included a couple of links in "Of Interest" to writing from the unconscious or subconscious, the wellspring of creativity. If you add cycling (a periodic revision, also from the creative subconscious) to what they're talking about, you can write your novel in one clean draft. If you want to.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See the comments on "True Crime Thursday – Invasion of the Body" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/04/true-crime-thursday-invasion-of-the-body.html#comments>. Some good, thought-provoking stuff there.

See "Don't Forget the Mask" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/05/dont-forget-the-mask.html>.

See "Microsoft Word now flags double spaces as errors" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/microsoft-word-now-flags-double-spaces-as-errors/>.

See "Ghost Town Quarantine" at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/ghost-town-quarantine>. Story ideas abound.

See “Obscura Academy: The Bronze Age World” at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/lists/atlas-guide-to-bronze-age>. Be sure to scroll down. Tons of story ideas.

See “Writing at the Speed of the Unconscious” at https://www.creativitypost.com/index.php?p=create/writing_at_the_speed_of_the_unconscious.

See “The Coronavirus Is Rewriting Our Imaginations” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-coronavirus-is-rewriting-our-imaginations/>.

See “Why Should You Be an Unconscious Writer?” at <https://randomwritingrants.com/2013/10/04/why-should-you-be-an-unconscious-writer-by-jim-denney/>.

See “Authors Guild Files a Friend of the Court Brief” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/authors-guild-files-a-friend-of-the-court-brief-with-the-u-s-supreme-court-in-steinbeck-case/>.

See “Letters Out For Historical Workshop and News” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/letters-out-for-historical-workshop-and-news/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... 4682
Nonfiction words today..... 930 (Journal)

Writing of *The Good of the Galaxy 2* (novel)

Day 9..... 3258 words. Total words to date..... 34842
Day 10... 4682 words. Total words to date..... 39524

Total fiction words for the month..... 4682
Total fiction words for the year..... 284276
Total nonfiction words for the month... 1330
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 104440
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 388716

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 4
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 49
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Atlas Obscura](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Frustration in the Time of Cholera

[May 3, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Yesterday
- * Topic: Frustration in the Time of Cholera
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day (Still bingeing on Bradbury)

“You must write every single day of your life... You must lurk in libraries and climb the stacks like ladders to sniff books like perfumes and wear books like hats upon your crazy heads... may you be in love every day for the next 20,000 days. And out of that love, remake a world.” Ray Bradbury

Yesterday the writing started slow, but it picked up (see Day 11). I could have written probably one more session, but I was tired and I stopped in a really good place. It should take off again this morning.

For a few days I thought this novel might be closer to my usual length at around 40,000 to 50,000 words, but it's looking like it might run longer.

Great fun, trusting myself and my characters and letting the story run to whatever length it needs to be.

Topic: Frustration in the Time of Cholera (with apologies to Gabriel García Márquez)

As I write this, my jaw is so tight I feel I could chew wheels and spit nails.

In the Kill Zone blog today, James Scott Bell posted “You Imagination Needs Regular Play Time.” The title is misleading.

His essay is an outright slander of writers who spend time, money, and many thousands of words (practice) to learn and hone the craft of writing, BUT then actually TRUST what they've learned and allow their CREATIVE (duh!) subconscious to apply it as they write.

The arrogant disdain is palpable.

He wrote,

“Flash Fiction ... is the ultimate pantsers’ paradise, for you get an idea and start writing and *go wherever you please* [emphasis mine].”

I write into the dark, which means I don’t use any kind of outline. I also don’t rewrite, and I don’t workshop my writing through critique groups. I cycle as I go, meaning I revise while in the creative frame of mind, and I write the story once, beginning to end, cleanly. Then I send what I’ve written to trusted first readers who point out any errors and are gracious and honest enough to tell me if anything in the story confused them. Then I publish and move on to the next story. I don’t “hover”; I practice.

To Mr. Bell this means I’m a “pantsers.” But I do NOT “get an idea and start writing and go wherever [I] please.” And I suspect Mr. Bell knows it. I suspect his misleading statement is intentional.

Unlike writers who are mired in the myths, I understand the story isn’t about me; it’s about the characters. It isn’t my story; it’s the characters’ story. Or if you wish, it’s the story my characters, not I, are living. So I get an idea and start writing and go wherever the *characters in the story* take me.

Then he writes,

“Will you end up with a story that works? Probably not. [There’s that arrogance again.] You’ll most likely be painted into a corner or lost in a dark forest.”

As absolutely anyone who writes into the dark knows, because he trusts himself and what he’s learned, if he simply writes the next sentence that occurs, he will write himself OUT of that corner or that melodramatic “dark forest.” Again, it’s about trusting the characters and allowing them to tell their own story.

And almost unbelievably, later in the article, he notes,

“One of the great stylists of all time was Ray Bradbury. You simply can’t go wrong copying a page from his work.” [Finally, some truth.]

Then he actually types-in a passage from Bradbury’s *Dandelion Wine*.

Yet he fails to mention (intentionally, I’m sure) that of *Dandelion Wine*, Bradbury himself wrote,

“*Dandelion Wine*, like most of my books, was a surprise. I simply got out of bed each morning, walked to my desk, and put down any word or series of words that happened along in my head.”

I don’t like arrogance, and I especially don’t like arrogance born of ignorance, intentional or otherwise. I also don’t like hypocrisy, and I don’t like people holding forth on topics they’ve never had the temerity to try themselves. It frustrates me, it makes me angry, and it torques my jaw.

So I won't risk further advancing the blatantly obvious bias of Kill Zone blog and its participants. Of course, you're free to subscribe yourself.

Here's the thing about following Heinlein's Rules AS THEY WERE WRITTEN and writing into the dark:

1, If you honestly try WITD and it doesn't work for you, you can easily revert to writing, rewriting, and workshopping your writing through critique groups. You've lost nothing but a little time.

2, But if you try it and it WORKS for you, you will have gained a whole world of confidence in yourself, belief in yourself and your work and, if you want it, a career as a professional fiction writer.

I'll say it again: I only wish I'd found Heinlein's Rules and WITD when I was in my 20s and was wise enough to trust it.

In my experience, every person who tried and failed at WITD did so because they couldn't quite bring themselves to let go of that last finger tightly clenched around a safety net.

And frankly, I feel bad for them. But as literally millions of beginning writers will tell you, whatever works for you is fine. Perfectly fine.

Today, once I've worked the tightness out of my chest, I'll write.

I find it tragic that of the thousands of professional writers out there, to my knowledge only Dean Wesley Smith and I are willing to share the truth about how very freeing it is to follow Heinlein's Rules and write off into the dark.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Goals..." at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/goals/>. Includes an exciting announcement.

See "WWYWTR- Series or Standalone" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/wwywtr-series-or-standalone>.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... 3881
Nonfiction words today..... 900 (Journal)

Writing of The Good of the Galaxy 2 (novel)

Day 9..... 3258 words. Total words to date..... 34842
Day 10... 4682 words. Total words to date..... 39524
Day 11... 3881 words. Total words to date..... 43405

Total fiction words for the month..... 8563
Total fiction words for the year..... 288157
Total nonfiction words for the month... 2420
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 105530
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 393687

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 4
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 49
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Half-Price WMG Workshop Sale

[May 4, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Dean Is Doing It One More Time
- * Yesterday
- * Clarification
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“One of the widest gaps in human experience is the gap between what we say we want to be and our willingness to discipline ourselves to get there.” Harry Emerson Fosdick

“Never attempt to teach a pig to sing; it wastes your time and annoys the pig.” Robert A. Heinlein (via his character, Lazarus Long)

“Always listen to experts. They’ll tell you what can’t be done and why. Then do it.” Robert A. Heinlein (via his character, Lazarus Long)

Dean Is Doing It One More Time

“For the next five days, until 5 pm on Friday [Pacific time] Every WMG Publishing Workshop, Lecture, Pop-Up, Class, or Subscription on Teachable will be HALF PRICE!

“Yes, you can buy more than one, but you just have to do it one at a time because Teachable has no shopping cart. And you can use Paypal or any credit card.”

There’s a code involved. For details, see the first item in “Of Interest.”

Yesterday was a pretty good day (see Day 12 below), but I have some big plans coming up.

Some of those plans are dependent on me kicking this novel into high gear. That starts tomorrow morning. As a result, the Journal will probably be short for the foreseeable future. I’ll still include “Of Interest” links, though frankly, I hope by now you’re visiting Dean’s and Kris’s sites and The Passive Voice and PWW regularly and have signed up for newsletters from Atlas Obscura and whatever else interests you.

The smallest of my big plans is to lose the cigars. I recently learned that nicotine is a vaso-constrictor. My feet and ankles have been swelling a lot recently even with increased meds from the doc. So I have to assume I’m doing it to myself. So I’m kicking cigars to the door sometime this week.

Please, no lectures pro or con. I will miss my quiet time with a good cigar; it was important to me. But that’s what old age is: giving up bits and pieces of yourself and certain small pleasures. It’s all a trade-off, I suppose, in an effort to keep the pump beating and the air-exchange working correctly. So it’s all good.

I’m not ready to announce the other plans just yet, but I will before too long.

Clarification

One PWW writer took umbrage at my comment yesterday that ‘only’ Dean Wesley Smith and I “preach Heinlein’s Rules” (and writing into the dark).

I did not mean to imply that NO other writers practice or talk-about HR or WITD. Almost all major long-term writers practice it, and a few others talk about it, but none that I know of talk about it day by day. If they did, I suspect they would save a lot of new writers years of disappointment spinning the hamster wheel driven by the myths of writing.

I was also thinking of Dean’s admonition to me years ago to NOT tell anyone about my writing process. And of my stupid decision to ignore that advice. (He was right, of course, as he is roughly 99% of the time, and if I had it to do over again blah blah blah.)

And in that frame of mind, I was thinking of King, Child, and all the myriad other major writers out there who practice WITD all-but religiously but don't talk about it very often or mention it only in snippets here and there, if at all.

And just to be clear: what bothers me is NOT how others choose to write. I really REALLY don't care how anyone else writes. Why would I?

What bothers me is anyone who uses the dishonesty of innuendo to spread half-truths and lies about a process they know absolutely nothing about.

Why? Because other writers who don't know any better read that crap and believe it. And as a result, their own possibilities are limited without them even realizing it. I've spent much of my life cleaning up the messes left by bad "instructors," from explaining what comma splices and run-on sentences actually are to teaching writers it really is all right to trust themselves.

Today, I begin ramping up the novel, which really only means spending more time in the chair actually writing. I've lived with this one for only 13 days so far, but (without going back to count days) I've lived with the overall storyline for a couple of months, and that's a very long time for me.

So I want to reach the end of this one and move on to something new. And since I don't force my will on my characters (it's their story, not mine), the only way to do that is spend more hours in the chair writing. So my new daily word-count goal is 5,000 words per day. At worst, I'll fail to success.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Summer Learning Workshop Sale" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/summer-learning-workshop-sale/>.

See "4 Newbie Writer Mistakes that can Derail a Great Book Idea" at <https://annerallen.com/2020/05/newbie-writer-mistakes-derail-book-idea/>.

See "Theme for Unruly Writers" at <http://prowriterswriting.com/theme-for-unruly-writers>.

See "Book Awards for Self-Published Authors" at <https://www.thebookdesigner.com/book-awards/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... 4361
Nonfiction words today..... 830 (Journal)

Writing of The Good of the Galaxy 2 (novel)

Day 9..... 3258 words. Total words to date..... 34842
Day 10... 4682 words. Total words to date..... 39524
Day 11... 3881 words. Total words to date..... 43405
Day 12... 4361 words. Total words to date..... 47766

Total fiction words for the month..... 12924
Total fiction words for the year..... 292518
Total nonfiction words for the month... 3250
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 106360
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 398878

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 4
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 49
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Anne R. Allen](#), [Clarification](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Book Designer](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: A Stuffed-Sausage of a Chihuahua

[May 5, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Yesterday
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Jesus, where the hell is everybody when they first deliver the typing paper? Where are all the ‘helpers’ when those boxes full of silence come in? Blank. Both sides. No clue, no instructions enclosed on how to take just twenty-six letters and endlessly rearrange them so that they can turn them into a mirror of a part of our lives. Try it sometime.” Larry Gelbart

Yesterday I fell short of my new word-count goal by around 900 words (see Day 13). In fact, I didn't get as much done as I did the day before.

I'll start this morning by reading over my reverse outline, then the last chapter I wrote to see whether maybe I took a wrong turn.

Today I rolled out early thanks to the neighbor's idiot dog, an ugly little stuffed-sausage of a chihuahua with a hyper-shrill bark. I'll never understand why, when a dog barks incessantly at night, the owner won't get up to at least see what the dog's barking at. Which 99.999% of the time is Nothing. Or a moth. Or a leaf.

Well, I have writing to do. Maybe he'll shut up soon.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "May Workshops Starting" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/may-workshops-starting/>.

See "Ebook Formatting with a Mac" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/ebook-formatting-with-a-mac/>. (Alison? Robert? Any other Mac users out there? Maybe you can help the guy out.)

See "I'd like to introduce Mr. Cliff Hanger" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/id-like-to-introduce-mr-cliff-hanger>.

See "The @PublishrsWeakly Twitter Account Is Calling Publishing to Task" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-publishrsweakly-twitter-account-is-calling-publishing-to-task/>.

See "Indie Publishing in the Time of Covid" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/indie-publishing-in-the-time-of-covid/>.

See "28 Themed Calls for Submissions" at <https://www.authorspublish.com/28-themed-submissions-calls-for-writers-may-2020/>.

Under the Sure, Why Not? department, if any of you are still chasing agents, see "5 Literary Agents Reveal the 9 Pitching Mistakes Authors Make" at <https://www.livewritethrive.com/2020/05/04/5-literary-agents-reveal-the-9-pitching-mistakes-authors-make/>.

See "Obscura Academy Challenge: Make Your Own Amazing Maps" at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/obscura-academy-map-challenge>. Some good stuff here down in the article.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... 4121
Nonfiction words today..... 330 (Journal)

Writing of *The Good of the Galaxy 2* (novel)

Day 9..... 3258 words. Total words to date..... 34842
Day 10... 4682 words. Total words to date..... 39524
Day 11... 3881 words. Total words to date..... 43405
Day 12... 4361 words. Total words to date..... 47766
Day 13... 4121 words. Total words to date..... 51887

Total fiction words for the month..... 17045
Total fiction words for the year..... 296639
Total nonfiction words for the month... 3580
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 106690
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 403329

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 4
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 49
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [LiveWriteThrive.com](#),
[Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Yet Another Use for a Reverse Outline

[May 6, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Thanks to my patrons
- * Topic: Yet Another Use for a Reverse Outline
- * Yesterday
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Conjure the nouns, alert the secret self, taste the darkness. Your own Thing stands waiting ‘way up there’ in the attic shadows. If you speak softly, and write any old word that wants to jump out of your nerves onto the page, your Thing at the top of your stairs in your own private night may well come down.” Ray Bradbury

A special thanks to my patrons, whose donations continue to come in even during this time when many are necessarily pinching pennies. I appreciate you all a great deal.

Often as not, though, patrons forget to let me know which of the rewards they would like. Depending on the level of patronage, rewards consist of everything from new fiction to back titles in both fiction and nonfiction and even audio lectures on various aspects of writing.

The fiction is an especially good reward, because I write across so many genres and in so many voices. So even if my writing is not to your taste in one genre, you might love the writing in another. And really, if you're a writer and follow my nonfiction, wouldn't you like to know that I can apply what I teach?

That's why I recently offered (to everyone, patrons and non-patrons alike), the first book of any (or all) of my series' free. An offer that, unfortunately, very few took me up on thus far. [That offer runs through May 31.](#)

Topic: Yet Another Use for a Reverse Outline

I can't say enough about the value of a good reverse outline. Yesterday, I was feeling a little depressed because I feared the novel had taken a wrong turn somewhere. (Now and again my critical voice sneaks in and before I realize it I've decided on and made a minor turn in the novel rather than leaving it to my characters.)

So I skipped back to the beginning of my reverse outline and began comparing it to the story. At least it compared well, as it should. (Okay, I admit, I also looked to make sure I had a great cliffhanger at the end of each major scene and chapter and a great opening afterward.)

And I started noticing where I originally had some breaks (indicated by a centered asterisk in a chapter) the story would be better served by beginning a new chapter in that place.

So to get into the flow of the story, I moved through the whole novel back and forth with the reverse outline, replacing most of the former breaks with chapter heads (especially where the POV character changed). Here and there I updated the reverse outline. Here and there (as directed by the characters) I added a word or sentence to the story.

And I came to realize all those breaks were probably the problem. Some of the chapters were very long and encompassed two or three loosely related major scenes instead of my usual one major scene per chapter. Mentally, that made it difficult for me to keep up with the story even though I was the one recording it for the characters.

I'm actually writing this yesterday during a brief break from the novel, while what I want to say is fresh in my mind. I have no doubt that by the time the day's over, I will have greatly improved (read simplified) the novel and enhanced the reverse outline. And once again the story will have a clear path ahead. And wow, am I ever excited about that!

I guess the lesson of this topic, other than “keep a reverse outline” is to serve as a reminder that every novel writes differently, and you sometime have to vary what YOU expect to happen to better serve the characters and the story.

Yesterday was also the lowest word count (see Day 14 below) and the most labor-intensive day I’ve had in awhile in writing. And a lot of it (and all of the writing) was still in creative voice.

As outlined above, I went through the entire novel and reverse outline, back and forth. I added 20-some chapter heads where there had been only section breaks, and I wrote over 2300 new words.

Today, I’ll write, but I might also give book 1 a final look and upload it.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Short Post Tonight” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/short-post-tonight-2/>. Instructions on how to use the code to get 50% off ANY courses, lectures, subscriptions, workshops, etc. on Teachable. This is SO worthwhile. You will never find a more valuable fount of information than Dean Wesley Smith.

See “A little editing trick” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/a-little-editing-trick/>.

See “E-book VAT: the other side of the story” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/e-book-vat-the-other-side-of-the-story/>. None of my business how much money Amazon makes as long as I get my 70%. Just my two-cents worth.

See “I’d like to introduce Mr. Cliff Hanger” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/id-like-to-introduce-mr-cliff-hanger/>. (The link is correct today. Thanks to Karen for pointing out the misdirection.)

See “Who Makes It Happen? Giving Your Characters Agency” at <https://www.janefriedman.com/who-makes-it-happen-giving-your-characters-agency/>. FWIW.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... 2338
Nonfiction words today..... 860 (Journal)

Writing of The Good of the Galaxy 2 (novel)

Day 9..... 3258 words. Total words to date..... 34842
Day 10... 4682 words. Total words to date..... 39524
Day 11... 3881 words. Total words to date..... 43405
Day 12... 4361 words. Total words to date..... 47766

Day 13... 4121 words. Total words to date..... 51887
Day 14... 2338 words. Total words to date..... 54215

Total fiction words for the month..... 19383
Total fiction words for the year..... 298977
Total nonfiction words for the month... 4440
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 107550
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 403329

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 4
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 49
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#),
[Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Yesterday and Today

[May 7, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Yesterday and Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“By living well, by observing as you live, by reading and observing as you read, you have fed your most original self. By training in writing, by repetitious exercise, imitation, good example, you have made a clean, well-lighted place to keep the Muse.” Ray Bradbury

Yeserday was a very good day (see Day 15) even though I didn't make my new word count goal. The end of the novel is in sight. In fact, I expect to finish it today.

Yesterday was also my last day on cigars, so my head is a little foggy today. I'm hoping it won't make much difference when I move over to the novel. If it does, this might be a nonwriting day. We'll see.

UPDATE: Yep. Definitely a nonwriting day. I should be able to get back to the novel tomorrow.

Regardless of when I finish this one, I'll celebrate a little. This is novel 50, which feels like a milestone to me.

After that I'll go over the first novel and get it ready to launch on June 1. Then I'll spell check this one and send it out to my first readers. Then I'll decide what to do next.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Stay Inside and Chill" at <https://www.wmgpublishinginc.com/project/stay-inside-and-chill/>.

See "Business Musings: Schrödinger's Future" at <https://kriswrites.com/2020/05/06/business-musings-schrodingers-future/>.

See "Trapped Like a Rate!" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/trapped-like-a-rate>.

See "New Pop-Up Available" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/new-pop-up-available-3/>.

See "Developing a Writing Practice, Part 6: Captivating" at <https://www.janefriedman.com/developing-a-writing-practice-part-6-captivating/>. FWIW.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... 3914
Nonfiction words today..... 240 (Journal)

Writing of The Good of the Galaxy 2 (novel)

Day 9..... 3258 words. Total words to date..... 34842
Day 10... 4682 words. Total words to date..... 39524
Day 11... 3881 words. Total words to date..... 43405
Day 12... 4361 words. Total words to date..... 47766
Day 13... 4121 words. Total words to date..... 51887
Day 14... 2338 words. Total words to date..... 54215
Day 15... 3914 words. Total words to date..... 58129

Total fiction words for the month..... 23297
Total fiction words for the year..... 302891
Total nonfiction words for the month... 4680
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 107790
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 410681

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 4
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12

| | |
|---|-----|
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 49 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 208 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [Kristine Kathryn Rusch](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Licensing Expo Moved to May 2021

[May 8, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * The Licensing Expo
- * Yesterday
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Anything you dream is fiction, and anything you accomplish is science, the whole history of mankind is nothing but science fiction.” Ray Bradbury

“It is true that liberty is precious; so precious that it must be carefully rationed.” Just a reminder. Vladimir Lenin via The Passive Voice

The Licensing Expo was moved again, this time to its original time slot in May of 2021.

So Dean Wesley Smith expanded the Licensing Transition class. It was originally intended to run through the May 2020 Licensing Expo and end in June or July. It will still do that, but now it won't end until after the Expo in May 2021.

And you can still sign up. Which means you can even sign up right now, during the half-price sale. See “Licensing Transition Class Extended One Year” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/licensing-transition-class-extended-one-year/>.

Did nothing yesterday but veg, watch TV and nap.

Today I'll try to play with the novel again. Still foggy off and on, so we'll see.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “The Ultimate Guide to Selling Books on your Author Website” at <https://selfpublishingadvice.org/selling-books-on-your-author-website/>.

See “4 Facebook features that give you more control” at <https://buildbookbuzz.com/4-facebook-features-that-give-you-more-control/>.

See “Awesome Time-Saving Tools for Authors” (if you’re into things like this) at <https://www.selfpublishingreview.com/2020/04/awesome-time-saving-tools-for-authors/>.

See “Five Cost-Free Ways to Stay Focused While Writing” at <https://fundsforwriters.com/stayfocused/>. Might want to look around the Funds for Authors website, too, as long as you’re there.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 250 (Journal)

Writing of **The Good of the Galaxy 2** (novel)

Day 9..... 3258 words. Total words to date..... 34842
Day 10... 4682 words. Total words to date..... 39524
Day 11... 3881 words. Total words to date..... 43405
Day 12... 4361 words. Total words to date..... 47766
Day 13... 4121 words. Total words to date..... 51887
Day 14... 2338 words. Total words to date..... 54215
Day 15... 3914 words. Total words to date..... 58129

Total fiction words for the month..... 23297
Total fiction words for the year..... 302891
Total nonfiction words for the month... 4930
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 108040
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 410931

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 4
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 49
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [WGM Publishing Workshops](#)

The Journal: Nothing to See Here

[May 8, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Nothing to see here
- * Yesterday
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Insanity is relative. It depends on who has who locked in what cage.” Ray Bradbury

Nothing really to see here today. In fact, I'm pre-posting 'cause I know I won't be out here in the morning, so there isn't even anything in “Of Interest” today. My head's too screwed up to fool with it right now.

I thought the novel would end yesterday, and I did some things to try to make that happen. It's in its final throes but it isn't quite there yet. Probably the next time I get back to it. That might be tomorrow, or it might be the next day. Or the day after.

I'll probably be away for a day or three. The next time I write fiction, I'll give you an update here.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

Nada.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... 4382
Nonfiction words today..... 160 (Journal)

Writing of **The Good of the Galaxy 2** (novel)

Day 9..... 3258 words. Total words to date..... 34842
Day 10... 4682 words. Total words to date..... 39524
Day 11... 3881 words. Total words to date..... 43405
Day 12... 4361 words. Total words to date..... 47766
Day 13... 4121 words. Total words to date..... 51887

Day 14... 2338 words. Total words to date..... 54215
Day 15... 3914 words. Total words to date..... 58129
Day 16... 4382 words. Total words to date..... 62511

Total fiction words for the month..... 27679
Total fiction words for the year..... 307273
Total nonfiction words for the month... 5090
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 108200
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 415473

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 4
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 49
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Finished My 50th Novel

[May 10, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Little Richard
- * Yesterday, and Done
- * Topic: On Cliffhangers...
- * Shared World Stuff
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“If only we could remember that fame and money are gifts given us only after we have gifted the world with our best, our lonely, our individual truths.” Ray Bradbury

“What The Subconscious is to every other man, in its creative aspect becomes, for writers, The Muse.” Ray Bradbury

God bless the family and loved ones of Little Richard (Richard Wayne Penniman), who passed away yesterday at the age of 87.

Yesterday, finally, I typed the last words of *The Good of the Galaxy 2* (see Day 17). I have to admit, I'm glad this one is over. For now. As I've mentioned before, this is my 50th novel. Feels like a milestone to me, so I'm feeling a little celebratory.

And yes. It's the second book in a series, so there's what some might call a cliffhanger of sorts at the end. (It isn't really a cliffhanger, but a light enticement to watch for the next book in the series.) The story wraps in and of itself, but it also is open to continue.

Plus this isn't really a series so much as a saga, an ongoing story, much like the Wes Crowley Saga.

Topic: On Cliffhangers and So-Called (Not) Cliffhangers

First, Dean Wesley Smith teaches an EXCELLENT online workshop on Cliffhangers, and it's a Classic, which means it's regularly priced at \$150. Which means until 5 p.m. Pacific time tonight (see "Of Interest") you can get it for only \$75 at Teachable. The last few posts on Dean's site had details, links, the code, etc.

Anyway, as some famous writer (Raymond Chandler, I think) once said, your opening sells your current book; your ending sells your next one.

Recently there was a flap over on PWW about cliffhangers. The most hardcore insisted when they're reading a series, if they encounter a cliffhanger at the end of a book, they will flatly refuse to continue reading the series.

I suspect they don't know what a cliffhanger is. (Even most writers know only one or two of the several types.) Here are a couple of assertions that might help:

If the novelist leaves major plot elements unresolved at the end of one book, ostensibly to be resolved in the next, that is not a cliffhanger. It's poor writing and poor marketing.

If the novelist leaves an enticement at the end of one book (in or out of a series) to get the reader to read the next book, that is good writing.

(And to anyone who will cross their arms over their chest and disrespect my work without having bothered to read it, may a thousand bedbugs infest your navel. But I digress.)

Cliffhangers are used most often (by good writers) at the end of major scenes and/or chapters, and their function is to entice the reader to continue reading past the section or chapter break.

They do not accomplish that task alone. At the beginning of the next major scene and/or chapter, the writer must fashion a "hook" (an enticing opening that pulls the reader to depth in the scene or chapter) that will couple with the cliffhanger to pull the reader through the book.

I am much more likely to stop reading a book when I hit the end of a major scene or chapter that does not have a cliffhanger. That's an excellent place to exit.

But if I've read a full novel in a series and encountered a satisfactory resolution, I will more than likely read the next novel in the series whether or not there's a "cliffhanger" after the resolution (for example, "To be continued") at the end the novel I just read.

Why? Simply because I enjoyed the first one enough to read the whole thing.

Then again, what the hell do I know? I'm just a writer.

For more on all this, see "Scene and Chapter Breaks and Hooks" at <https://harveystanbrough.com/pro-writers/scene-and-chapter-breaks-and-hooks/>. There are other articles there that will help too. Use the Search feature.

Shared World Stuff

I haven't had a lot of interest from folks wanting to write in this Good of the Galaxy Shared World. If you're interested, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com. (If you've expressed interest before and you're still interested, please email again and remind me. This time I'll put your name on a list.)

I'm being very generous. The shared world abounds with story ideas. All I require is that anything you write based on this world is a note in the front matter of you story or novel that it's "Based on *For the Good of the Galaxy: The First Nine Days* by Harvey Stanbrough" and a link to the book's page at StoneThread Publishing.

The "bible" for the shared world will consist of these first two books plus a volume of notes covering characters, locations, and major situations. Of course, if nobody's interested, that's fine too. It will save me some work. (grin) And yes, you can share this info with your writer friends, writing groups, etc. All are welcome as long as they agree to the stipulation above.

During my upcoming "time off" I will finalize *For the Good of the Galaxy* (Book 1) and it will be released on June 1.

More than likely I'll release Book 2 (the one I just finished) on either July 1 or August 1.

If I glean some interest in the shared world, I'll send those folks the first two books as they're finalized and the volume of notes when it's ready.

Today, first, Happy Mother's Day to all the moms out there. I hope it's a great day for you.

Today also, once I post this Journal, will begin what will probably be a few days off and/or admin days. During that time, I'll read and finalized Book 1 and Book 2 of *For the Good of the Galaxy*.

During this time, I also plan to put the finishing touches on a new, more affordable mentoring project, one that focuses on a particular topic in the client's writing.

I will also test out the D2D print (paper) beta, and I might even run a Kickstarter project. Of course, I'll report on all of that here when I come back.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Last Day on Summer Learning Sale" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/last-day-on-summer-learning-sale/>.

See "The Magic in Observation" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/the-magic-in-observation>.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... 2382
Nonfiction words today..... 1070 (Journal)

Writing of *The Good of the Galaxy 2* (novel)

Day 9..... 3258 words. Total words to date..... 34842
Day 10... 4682 words. Total words to date..... 39524
Day 11... 3881 words. Total words to date..... 43405
Day 12... 4361 words. Total words to date..... 47766
Day 13... 4121 words. Total words to date..... 51887
Day 14... 2338 words. Total words to date..... 54215
Day 15... 3914 words. Total words to date..... 58129
Day 16... 4382 words. Total words to date..... 62511
Day 17... 2382 words. Total words to date..... 64893 (done)

Total fiction words for the month..... 30061
Total fiction words for the year..... 309655
Total nonfiction words for the month... 6160
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 109270
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 418925

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 4
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 49
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Harvey Stanbrough](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: A Lot of Stuff

[May 11, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Kris Rusch's Birthday Party
- * Also in "Of Interest"
- * The Next Few Days
- * More Shared World Stuff
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Dean Wesley Smith is doing something really great for his wife, Kristine Kathryn Rusch, for her upcoming 60th birthday. He's throwing her a card party, and all of you can be part of it. For details, see "Of Interest" below.

Also in "Of Interest" is an article on how to "survive the chaos point" in a novel.

A bit melodramatic, isn't it? You aren't charging across open ground under fire. You aren't risking life and limb, okay? Get over yourself. You're sitting alone in a room making sh*t up.

Be forewarned: The author provides some HORRIBLE advice in this article. Still, I linked to it below FWIW just in case some of you might find it useful. This might be a good way for a die-hard outliner to step back a bit and wean himself from that process. I guess.

Anyway, the best way I've found to "survive the chaos point" (I'm still chuckling at the ridiculous melodrama) is to take a deep breath, remind yourself it's only a story, and get over yourself. Then type the next sentence that occurs to you, then the next and the next.

Yes, Just Type the Next Sentence. I know, that's WAY too simple to actually work. But it does. Shrug. That said, what could I possibly know? Do what you want.

And there's more in "Of Interest." I've even decided to begin visiting the Kill Zone blog again, albeit very selectively.

The Next Few Days

Probably no fiction writing for the next few days. I'll be busy reading aloud [For the Good of the Galaxy: The First Nine Days](#). It will release on June 1.

Then I'll probably move on into reading aloud *For the Good of the Galaxy: A Turning Point* (Book 2) and get it out, probably on July 1, but maybe August 1.

With regard to the shared world, I'm thinking of leaving the third novel in the series to someone else. All I need is one person to read the first two novels, feel caught up in that world, and want to write the third novel.

Of course, the author would write it in his or her own voice and with no real constraints. Frankly, I don't see a down side.

When I personally return to write in that world, I might write a prequel, showing life on the aliens' home world before they left it. Or I might leap into the distant past and show the Othgygnrks (pronounced Oth-gig-nurks) engaged in battle back when they still had a military and actual warriors.

Or I might leap into the future and write in the frame of the current story but from a different spot on the globe or even from the alien perspective. Decisions, decisions. What a fun problem to have.

But before I do any of that, I'll probably write another Blackwell Ops book or maybe another Nick Spalding book or something else. Again, a very nice problem to have.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Kris's Birthday Party" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/kris-birthday-party/>.

See "What Really Goes On In The Morgue" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/05/what-really-goes-on-in-the-morgue.html>.

See "Structure for Unruly Writers" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/structure-for-unruly-writers>.

See "True Confessions" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/05/true-confessions.html>.

See "A Farewell Message..." at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/05/a-farewell-message-winnie-the-pooh-said-it-best.html>.

See "It's All in a Font: How Font Choice Affects the Mind" at <https://www.thebookdesigner.com/2020/05/its-all-in-a-font-how-font-choice-affects-the-mind/>.

See "...How to Survive the Chaos Point in your Novel" at <https://annerallen.com/2020/05/survive-the-chaos-point/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 580 (Journal)

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 30061
Total fiction words for the year..... 309655
Total nonfiction words for the month... 6740
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 109850
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 419505

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 4
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 49
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Kristine Kathryn Rusch](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Book Designer](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: On Goals, and a Challenge

[May 12, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Yesterday and Today
- * Topic: On Goals, and a Challenge
- * More Shared World Stuff
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Just when the caterpillar thought the world was over, it became a butterfly.” Unknown (via The Passive Voice)

Yesterday I submitted the clean final copy of *For the Good of the Galaxy: The First Nine Days* to Amazon and D2D. It's still available for preorder until June 1 when it goes live.

To take a look, visit <https://stonethreadpublishing.com/ftgotg-the-first-nine-days/>.

Today I'll begin reading over FTGOTG: A Turning Point.

Topic: On Goals, and a Challenge

I'm a better and more productive writer when I have a goal.

Yes, you read that right. I'm both Better and More Productive when I have a goal. When I push myself, I don't have time to let the critical mind seep in. So I'm setting a new writing goal.

Obviously, I fell off my goal to write a new short story every week for 18 months. I think I was about 12 stories in when I slipped off that one.

I also slipped sideways on my goal to write a new novel every month. The length of my 49th novel threw me a bit. Not that I can't write an 88,000 word novel in a month, but that wasn't what I was expecting, so I didn't plan for it.

Still, we haven't quite reached the ides of March, and I've written five novels this year, so I'm counting that as being on track to write at least one novel each month.

Yesterday as my wife and I talked a little about my having recently achieved a personal benchmark with my 50th novel, she said, "In six years."

Yes. Sort of. I started writing my first novel on October 19, 2014. So it won't officially be six years until October 18, 2020.

Meaning I have time to write at least five more novels by the time I reach my 6th anniversary as a novelist. But really, writing five more novels between now and then isn't much of a challenge. When I set up the challenge to write a novel every month, I was also writing a short story every week. Now THAT was a challenge! (grin)

What to do?

Well, the rest of May plus the first part of October total 37 days, so basically a month with an extra week. And then there are June, July, August and September. That's 160 days.

The novel I just finished came in at just under 65,000 words in 17 days. Hmm... could I actually finish TEN more novels between now and October 19, 2020?

Well, numerically, obviously I could, but then one has to consider coming up with ideas, balancing the goal with the pressure generated by that goal, etc. So setting a goal to write a new novel every 17 days or so feels like it would generate too much pressure.

So here are my two new goals:

1. To write EIGHT more novels by October 18. That's 20 days per novel and should be plenty of time. However, I'll fudge a little and allow my self to "bleed over" to October 31 if necessary and I'll still count that as 58 novels in my first 6 years as a novelist.

2. To write TEN more novels by December 31, 2020, making a total of 15 on the year. That should be easy peasy if I can get the first 8 done on time.

If you want to play along, the only rule is that the story must be complete and must consist of at least 35,000 words (short novel).

Anyone interested, jump in with me. After all, really, seriously, you have NOTHING to lose. Do you? Now what do you have to gain? Trust yourself and what you know and take the dive.

Or in the alternative, jump in and write FOUR new novels by October 31, 2020. Or FIVE by December 31.

Or just write ONE novel. Start sometime in the next few days and finish by October 31 (or December 31), 2020. Do that again in the next five or six months and folks will begin to call you prolific. (grin)

Of course, I still have to read through and launch my last novel. I figure that should take today and maybe tomorrow. Then I'm plunging in. (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Conflict Thesaurus Entry: Physical Exhaustion" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/conflict-thesaurus-entry-physical-exhaustion/>.

See "Some Misc. Stuff" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/some-misc-stuff-2/>.

See "The Top 40 Publishers for New Authors" at <https://www.authorspublish.com/the-top-40-publishers-for-new-authors/>.

See "How to Throw a Virtual Book Launch..." at <https://www.janefriedman.com/how-to-throw-a-virtual-book-launch-using-facebook-live/>.

See "Momentum and Pace—Giving Readers a Satisfying Ride" at <https://www.livewritethrive.com/2020/05/11/momentum-and-pace-giving-readers-a-satisfying-ride/>. FWIW.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 750 (Journal)

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 30061
Total fiction words for the year..... 309655
Total nonfiction words for the month... 7490
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 110600
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 420255

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [LiveWriteThrive.com](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Dylan Thomas and Dorothy Parker

[May 13, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * From David Farland
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.”
Ralph Waldo Emerson (via The Passive Voice)

From David Farland,

“I have a free writing workshop that I teach with award-winning authors Orson Scott Card and Tim Power, based upon our popular Writers of the Future Workshops. Find it online at <https://www.writersofthefuture.com/register/online-workshop/>.”

I signed up for this workshop to see what it's about. It feels to me like it might be a good thing for some writers. If you're still looking around for what might work for you, this is one more place to look. You could do worse than learning from these three authors.

Today I'll continue going through the novel I just finished. Then I'll send it out to some of my first readers. There's roughly a ton of writing ideas/scenarios/characters in "Of Interest" today. Enjoy.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "The Story Behind Dylan Thomas's "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night" at <https://getpocket.com/explore/item/the-story-behind-dylan-thomas-s-do-not-go-gentle-into-that-good-night-and-the-poet-s-own-stirring>. Includes Thomas reading the poem.

See "Dorothy Parker Reads "Inscription for the Ceiling of a Bedroom" in a Rare 1926 Recording" at <https://www.brainpickings.org/2014/04/11/dorothy-parker-reads/>.

See "Towing an Iceberg: One Captain's Plan to Bring Drinking Water to 4 Million People" at <https://getpocket.com/explore/item/towing-an-iceberg-one-captain-s-plan-to-bring-drinking-water-to-4-million-people>.

See "Are Black Holes Actually Dark Energy Stars?" at <https://getpocket.com/explore/item/are-black-holes-actually-dark-energy-stars>.

See "Spiders Can Fly Hundreds of Miles Using Electricity" at <https://getpocket.com/explore/item/spiders-can-fly-hundreds-of-miles-using-electricity>.

See "Maxing Out Your Readership" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/maxing-out-your-readership/>.

See "Alice Munro, The Art of Fiction" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/alice-munro-the-art-of-fiction/>.

See "Readers mean well, but..." at <https://prowriterswriting.com/readers-mean-well-but>.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... XXXX

Nonfiction words today..... 270 (Journal)

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

| | |
|---|--------|
| Total fiction words for the month..... | 30061 |
| Total fiction words for the year..... | 309655 |
| Total nonfiction words for the month... | 7760 |
| Total nonfiction words for the year..... | 110870 |
| Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... | 420525 |
| | |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... | 5 |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... | X |
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... | 12 |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 50 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 208 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Dorothy Parker](#), [Dylan Thomas](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: What Readers Want

[May 14, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Yesterday
- * Topic: A Few Extra Thoughts on What Readers Want
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.”
Ralph Waldo Emerson (via The Passive Voice)

Yesterday I attended class. I was one of the smart ones who backed one of Deans's Kickstarters for \$5. And the Kickstarter funded and then reached two or three stretch goals.

I feel a little bit like a pirate. For a lousy \$5 bill, I got away with

- * Two “Tip of the Week” Lectures (value \$50 each)
- * The “Future Series 1 Refresh and Renew Bundle (a \$300 value)
- * The Six Classic Workshops Bundle (\$900 value, though I already had three of them. Still a \$450 value)
- * Plus two books, one from Kris and one from Dean.

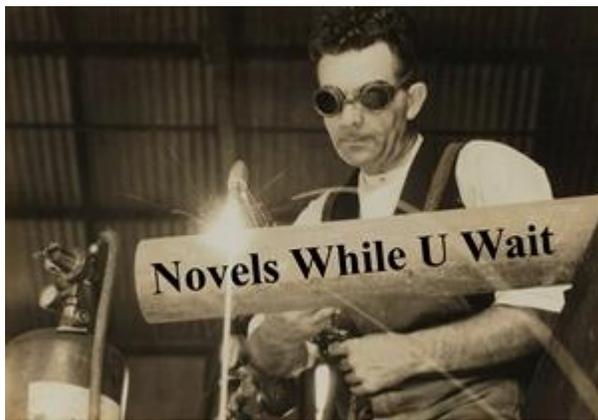
Not bad for five bucks. Just sayin'.

So yesterday I attended class, listening to two of the classic workshops I'd been planning to buy later for \$150 each. Yep, not bad for \$5.

Topic: A Few Extra Thoughts on What Readers Want

This is a follow-up of sorts on Alison's PWW post "Readers mean well, but..."

One: It's kind of cool in a weird, creepy way to know there are people out there who might have the unmitigated audacity to tell me what THEY think a character in one of my stories should do or what should happen next, etc. All without giving me money, of course.



(But hey, cross my palm with enough jing and I'll write whatever you want. I can see it now: a disheveled writer in a seedy storefront, Novels While You Wait stenciled across the front window.)

I even think it's kind of cute that some readers think I actually care about their thoughts on my writing. Seriously, the thought of it kind'a brings a tear to my eye and fills me with a little tingly sense of wonder.

Yeah, not really.

Two: We have an agreement, my readers and I.

First of all, we are not partners. I invest about 60 hours to write a 60,000 word novel. The reader invests around \$5 for the opportunity to read that novel (about 83 cents per hour).

I owe the reader nothing beyond a good story. The reader owes me nothing beyond that \$5 bill.

If readers like what I wrote, they buy more. If they don't, they don't. Shrug.

Three: As a writer, you should definitely be aware that there's a reader out there on the other side of the keyboard. That will happen sometime after you stop concentrating on words and sentence structure, etc. as you type and just tell the story. That awareness of the reader marks the beginning of coming into your own as a writer.

But WHY are you aware of the reader? So you can cater to his every whim? No.

The reader is your mind-control target. You should control everything he sees, hears, tastes, smells and feels as he reads your short story or novel. Your job is to tell your readers what you want them to know. Period.

I know, I know. Someone told you to be vague in your descriptions and the reader would fill in the rest. Shrug. Do whatever you want. But the more you leave to the reader's imagination the less deeply he's engaged in your story and the easier it is to put it down and find something else to do.

Four: None of this means I don't honestly appreciate people who read and enjoy my books. I do. I value them. That's why I give them so many freebies and keep my prices at the rock bottom end of reasonable. That's why I give discounts to any who order through my publisher website. And that's why I keep churning out book after book after book.

But seriously, unless that reader happens to be "the" Stephen King, I'm probably not going to take writing advice or story-direction advice or what-a-character-should-or-should-not-do advice from him.

Today I'll continue as a student for awhile.

Recently I published [two new goals](#). Another alternative I'm considering now that I have 50 novels in my belt is stopping writing for awhile. We'll see.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Business Musings: Phantom 2020" at <https://kriswrites.com/2020/05/13/business-musings-phantom-2020-a-process-blog/>.

See "How Reader Behavior Is Changing During the COVID-19 Crisis" at <https://insights.bookbub.com/reader-behavior-changing-covid19-crisis/>.

See "How Authors Are Approaching Book Promotion During COVID-19" at <https://insights.bookbub.com/authors-book-promotion-covid-19/>.

See "Virtual Book Launch Events: 8 Ideas from Authors" at <https://insights.bookbub.com/virtual-book-launch-events/>.

See "Nightfall Did Fall" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/nightfall-did-fall>.

See "Perilous Work: Writing Cliffhangers" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/05/perilous-work-writing-cliffhangers.html>. FWIW.

See “This Person Does Not Exist” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/this-person-does-not-exist/>.

See “Bookshop, a new startup, is offering publications bigger kickbacks than Amazon” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/bookshop-a-new-startup-is-offering-publications-bigger-kickbacks-than-amazon/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 760 (Journal)

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 30061
Total fiction words for the year..... 309655
Total nonfiction words for the month... 8520
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 111630
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 421285

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [BookBub](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Kristine Kathryn Rusch](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: A New Bundle

[May 15, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Talkwalker Alerts
- * Yesterday and Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Never try to outstubborn a cat.” Robert A. Heinlein (via his character, Lazarus Long)

Wow. Yet again, I’m very glad I use [Talkwalker Alerts](#). Otherwise I might never have known my work is now included in another bundle.

BLOOD ON THE COBBLES includes work from several really good writers, including Rob Jeschonik, Russ Crossley and Kristine Kathryn Rusch. My novel Body Language is included. Fifteen tales of mystery and mayhem for \$7.99. To check it out, click <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B088LTNB2H/>.

I spent some time in school yesterday with one of Dean’s workshops. I also slept for an inordinate, ridiculous amount of time. Probably I’ll do the same today. The workshops, not the sleep. I hope. And maybe some writing, though for some reason I’m just not worried about that at the moment.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Apple Books For Authors Launches – With PC Access” at <https://davidgaughran.com/2020/05/08/apple-books-for-authors-launches-pc/>.

See “Nine Great Weekly Twitter Chats” (for writers) at <https://preview.mailerlite.com/n9n0y4/1421656061978350848/h3v8/>.

See “Card Sharp Silver... Day 18” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/card-sharp-silver-day-18/>.

See “Gravestone Staircase” at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/the-grave-of-florence-irene-ford>.

See “26 Real Animals That Shouldn’t Exist, But Do Anyway” at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/real-animals-that-should-not-exist>.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... XXXX

Nonfiction words today..... 200 (Journal)

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

| | |
|---|--------|
| Total fiction words for the month..... | 30061 |
| Total fiction words for the year..... | 309655 |
| Total nonfiction words for the month... | 8720 |
| Total nonfiction words for the year..... | 111830 |
| Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... | 421485 |
| | |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... | 5 |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... | X |
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... | 12 |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 50 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 208 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Atlas Obscura](#), [David Gaughran](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Nate Hoffelder](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Almost Missed Today

[May 16, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Talkwalker vs. Google Alerts
- * The Blood on the Cobbles Bundle
- * Yesterday and Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“What destroys your voice is rewriting. If you want to completely destroy your own creative voice, just keep doing three or four drafts.” Dean Wesley Smith

Yesterday, I mentioned that I use [Talkwalker Alerts](#). A few folks emailed to ask whether I use Google Alerts too.

Yes, I do. And a similar alert (about the Blood on the Cobbles bundle) popped up on Google Alerts two hours after the alert from Talkwalker. Plus, whereas Talkwalker caught two mentions of my name, Google Alerts caught only one.

As long as I'm talking about it again, the BLOOD ON THE COBBLES bundle includes work from several really good writers, including Rob Jeschonik, Russ Crossley and Kristine Kathryn

Rusch. My novel Body Language is included. Fifteen tales of mystery and mayhem for \$7.99. To check it out, click <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B088LTNB2H/>.

Yesterday, I went through another of Dean’s workshops, one that happens to be very timely for me right now, the Futures: Refresh and Renew workshop. This is not a craft workshop. It’s good for me because I have a lot of IP and I’ve been at this (seriously) for six years now. Your results might vary.

I almost missed posting to the Journal today. Just happened to glance up at the clock and caught it at 6:30. If I do miss soon for a day or two, no worries. Just gettin’ through some stuff.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Card Sharp Silver... Day 19” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/card-sharp-silver-day-19/>. Not really about the book. More about a new office in Vegas.

See PG’s take on “Coronavirus Lockdowns Trigger Rapid Drop in Retail Sales” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/coronavirus-lockdowns-trigger-rapid-drop-in-retail-sales/>.

See “How to Write a Series: 5 Fundamentals Tips...” at <https://blog.reedsy.com/how-to-write-a-series/>. Some good, some to ignore.

See “How to Publish on Google Play Books in 2020” at <https://blog.reedsy.com/how-to-publish-a-book-on-google-play/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 330 (Journal)

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 30061
Total fiction words for the year..... 309655
Total nonfiction words for the month... 9050
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 112160
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 421815

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50

| | |
|---|-----|
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 208 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Reedsy](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: What's Going On

[May 17, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Yesterday and what's going on
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“St. Augustine tells the story of a pirate captured by Alexander the Great. The Emperor angrily demanded of him, ‘How dare you molest the seas?’ To which the pirate replied, ‘How dare you molest the whole world? Because I do it with a small boat, I am called a pirate and a thief. You, with a great navy, molest the world and are called an emperor.’ St. Augustine thought the pirate’s answer was ‘elegant and excellent.’” Noam Chomsky via The Passive Voice

Yesterday, I almost missed posting the Journal. Oops. So the first time I had a break I started adding to this one. The Journal, after all, is supposed to benefit you in some way other than the little “Of Interest” links. So I thought I’d let you know what’s going on.

If you assumed I’m struggling recently, you’re right. I am. Mostly I’m still dealing with strong physiological issues having to do with my stopping smoking cigars. That was a major change, smack in the middle of what I hope will be at least a 100-novel career.

That’s a stupid time to make such a major change. It’s as if I stretched one morning, then thought, “Hmmm. What can I do today to completely screw up my life for a couple of weeks?”

Intellectually, I know it takes the body only 3 days to flush nicotine out of the system. So there’s that. But that three days passed a few days ago and I’m still experiencing some issues: most markedly, an overall brain fog, periods of dizziness, sudden-onset fatigue, and the overall sense that I’m locked in a struggle. And the grouchiness. But I know that’s coming so I can keep it under control most of the time.

I'm not complaining. Just reporting. And really, all of that comprises a good thing because it gives me something to fight against, an antagonist, which is fine. If I win, I win. If I don't, I don't. Either way, it's all on me.

But in the meantime, yeah, I'm not writing fiction, and that's a real kick in the guts. As you know, I write into the dark, meaning I trust my inner two year old to channel my characters and run wild, making stuff up as he goes.

But in my current mental state, it doesn't stop there. Instead, my inner two year old lets HIS inner two year olds—a set of twin demons—run wild, making stuff up as THEY go. These guys scare even Charles Claymore “Charlie” Task. They are not to be trifled with.

Trust me, you don't want to see what might slouch forth as a result of those guys running loose. So I probably won't attempt any fiction until I feel halfway normal again. (Halfway's about as close as I ever get.)

But no worries. I have plenty of other stuff to do. For example, after I posted the Journal yesterday, I invested in a Deposit Photos account and took advantage of their [100 pics for \\$80 offer](#).

Then with two of the first pics I downloaded, I upgraded the covers of [For the Good of the Galaxy: The First Nine Days](#) and FTGOTG: The Battle Begins.

Then I uploaded them to Amazon and D2D and then changed them on the StoneThread Publishing website.

During this “break” I'm also going to rebrand the Wes Crowley saga. I'll change some of the covers and almost all of the sales blurbs.

That really is the best series of novels and the best overall story I've ever written. So it deserves a facelift.

And during this ridiculous, brain-addled time, if I get tired of doing any of the above, I just get up and go do something else for awhile.

So that's what's going on in southeast Arizona. I hope you'll bear with me. Frankly, I can hardly wait to get back to my “normal” schedule. When I do, there will be more topics, updates on fiction, and (I think) an exciting announcement or two regarding classes and mentoring.

Today I'm feeling a little better mentally, as I do each day. Not sure how I'll spend the day, but I'll spend it. There's no helping that.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Card Sharp Silver... Day 20” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/card-sharp-silver-day-20/>. Story of a human mud clod. I only hope a trim person doing the same things would have created as much ire.

See “The Ray Bradbury Formula” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/the-ray-bradbury-formula>.

See “Great Stories Don’t Write Themselves: How To Develop Strong Fiction Ideas With Larry Brooks” at <https://www.thecreativepenn.com/2020/05/11/develop-strong-fiction-ideas/>. I disagree (vehemently) with the initial premise in the title. Still, here it is, FWIW.

See “A Trillion Worlds” at <https://getpocket.com/explore/item/a-trillion-worlds>. Story ideas.

See “Spies Are More Common, and Boring, Than You Think” at <https://getpocket.com/explore/item/spies-are-more-common-and-boring-than-you-think>. Great stories happen when ordinary people are dropped into extraordinary circumstances.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 830 (Journal)

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 30061
Total fiction words for the year..... 309655
Total nonfiction words for the month... 9880
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 112990
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 422645

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Creative Penn](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Thanks

[May 18, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * What Bradbury said
- * Yesterday
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“You see, all my characters write the book. I don't write the book. All these characters come to me and say, ‘Listen to me.’ And then I listen to them and I put it down, and the book gets written. That's how I write, you see. All these lovers surround me, and they love life and they tell me about it.” Ray Bradbury on the writing of *Fahrenheit 451*.

Yes! What Bradbury said. Yes!

For at least four decades, when someone asked about my process, I told them I follow my characters around and write down what they say and do. That's from my earliest short stories and poems to date.

More recently, maybe two or three years ago, I delved deeper and realized that's the only way I CAN write. Because I'm not writing *my* story; I'm writing *their* story. I'm writing the story that my characters, not I, are living. So how can I do otherwise, as Bradbury says, than “listen to them” and put down what they say and do?

I feel very fortunate—blessed, really—that my characters so readily invite me to write their stories for them. If they had physical fingers, I'd be out of a job.

Thanks for the concern over my current, self-inflicted trauma. I appreciate it. But really, everything's fine. It's just life. Once my envious two year old gets over the bitter knowledge that thousands or millions of men smoke cigars with no ill effects, I'll be fine.

Yesterday I did mostly nothing. I read a little, binge-watched a lot of TV, pattered around the yard.

Today (shrug) I don't know. I hope I'll write some fiction.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “When Corvids Go Rogue” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/05/when-corvids-go-rogue.html>. I have never studied the sort of thing she talks about here, but it's worth a look.

See “No One Cares” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/no-one-cares/>. A great blast from the past.

See “NEA Big Read: Meet Ray Bradbury” (video) at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pqp38_uS-eg.

See “Mt. Saint Helens” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/mt-saint-helens/>. I wish he wouldn’t get so abusive toward people who disagree with him, but mostly this is a reprise of a post from a year ago that’s worth reading.

See “Work Habits for Unruly Writers” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/work-habits-for-unruly-writers>.

See “The Origins of 12 Silly-Sounding Compound Words” at <https://getpocket.com/explore/item/the-origins-of-12-silly-sounding-compound-words>.

See “The Problem with Enhanced Ebooks” at <https://www.thebookdesigner.com/2020/05/the-problem-with-enhanced-ebooks/>. Just FYI.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 420 (Journal)

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 30061
Total fiction words for the year..... 309655
Total nonfiction words for the month... 10300
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 113410
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 423065

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Ray Bradbury](#), [The Book Designer](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Satellites and a Poem

[May 19, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Satellites
- * Stone Libraries and the stories they tell
- * Yesterday and Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Mrs. PG gave up bookstore signings a long time before she went indie. Too much time and effort for too little return.” The Passive Guy

Each time I go camping, I try to spot satellites in the night sky. Sometimes I see one or two, sometimes none.

This morning, at 4 a.m. on my way to the Hovel, I glanced up and spotted one traveling from southwest to northeast. (Back in the day, all satellites moved east to west or north to south.)

Then I spotted another one ten to fifteen seconds behind the first. Then another one. Then another. All of them were traveling southwest to northeast on the same path, and each one was ten to fifteen seconds behind the one that preceded it. Before the parade was over, I'd seen seven satellites in a row.

Except for their unusual (for all I know) direction of travel, I'm certain they were all satellites. There were no angular maneuvers, etc. Still.... Maybe the Othgygnrks are coming.

In today's "Of Interest" is an article titled "Stone Libraries." It's all about browsing graveyards and cemeteries. Very interesting.

I wandered into the cemetery in the ghost town of Acme, New Mexico probably two decades ago. The cemetery stood a scant 20 or 30 yards from the ruins of the old school, and I soon noticed that almost all of the tombstones stood over children.

I did some research and learned that cholera had swept through the community in the late 1800s, taking every child in town with it. The residents scratched graves out of the limestone-rock laden soil, buried their babies, then abandoned the town.

I was moved to write a poem about it:

Schoolhouse, circa 1893

No easy matter, bronzing these sad rooms
in words, adobe walls emotionless
and mute, their paneless windows gaping, shocked

that Death crept in so quietly. Coarse weeds
huddle in the corner by the door,
still creaking on the one remaining hinge

that wind and time have yet to rust away.
How fitting for a cholera-ridden school.
The parents must have spent a time white-lipped,

aghast but stoic, trembling in their grief
and fear that what had touched their children
might easily touch them as well. How sad

they must have been, scratching tiny graves
from limestone-laden sand. No easy matter,
piling stones on stones to keep disease

locked in and animals locked out. No task
for feeble men and women lacking faith,
this premature disposal of their future.

* * *

Yesterday I did little to nothing most of the day. Today, I think I'll write. We'll see.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Stone Libraries" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/05/stone-libraries.html>.

See "A Scary Topic" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/a-scary-topic/>.

See "DESCRIPTION – That Little Detail" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/description-that-little-detail>.

See "George RR Martin on Why He Doesn't Write Outlines" (video) at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XF1PyB5v9jI>. (Thanks to Tony H. for passing this along.)

See "GEORGE R.R. MARTIN | Master Class | Higher Learning" at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DDIZnKujSa4>.

See "Mt. St. Helens: The Muse of All Muses" at <https://leelofland.com/mt-st-helens-the-muse-of-all-muses/>.

See “Developing a Writing Practice, Part 7: Engrained” at <https://www.janefriedman.com/developing-a-writing-practice-part-7-engrained/>. Not bad if you skip the intro down to “Set a Schedule.”

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 540 (Journal)

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 30061
Total fiction words for the year..... 309655
Total nonfiction words for the month... 10840
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 113950
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 423605

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [George R. R. Martin](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Nothing Much

[May 20, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Yesterday
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Yesterday I tried to write a little and quickly realized my mind is not yet allowing that. Which is frustrating, but fine. “What cannot be remedied must be endured” (Willie Nelson as the title

character in the film, *Barbarosa*). Or in my case, What one flatly refuses to remedy, one must endure. Whatever.

Nothing much to say today. I'm publishing this edition because of the items in "Of Interest" below. Enjoy.

Even in this time of dense brain fog, I'm learning and improving my craft and reaching for the next plateau. Thanks to Russ J. for a brief but very interesting and thought-provoking conversation on PsOV. I feel an experiment coming on.

Today I'll begin a copyedit of a short nonfiction book (yup, critical mind works fine during this foggy time). Shouldn't take more than a few days and by then I hope to be able to get back to my writing.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Take 40% Off | Nolo's Spring Sale 2020" at <https://store.nolo.com/products/>. Here's your chance to land The Copyright Handbook for 40% off.

See "Social Distancing? Heck yeah" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/social-distancing-heck-yeah>.

See "What Would I Do..." at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/what-would-i-do/>.

See "About Platforms" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/05/about-platforms.html>.

See "Plagiarism – 2020" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/plagiarism-2020/>. Yes, worthless, shameless, thieving humans do exist.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... XXXX

Nonfiction words today..... 220 (Journal)

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 30061

Total fiction words for the year..... 309655

Total nonfiction words for the month... 11060

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 114170

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 423825

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|---|-----|
| Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... | 5 |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... | X |
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... | 12 |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 50 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 208 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [NOLO](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Of Interest

[May 21, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Today
- * Off for a Few Days
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Some good stuff in “Of Interest” today.

This morning I received the final bit of feedback from my first readers on Book 2 of the Othgygnrk Invasion series, which will release on July 1.

I'll make those changes today, then finish the copyedit I'm working on.

Listen, I'll probably be off here for a few days. I have a feeling nobody's reading this recently anyway, and I don't blame you. I need to regroup a little, focus on some things I'm putting together (myself and some other things), so I'll be back before too long. When the Journal hits your inbox again, it should be well worth reading.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Business Musings: Lockdown Licensing Partnerships” at <https://kriswrites.com/2020/05/20/business-musings-lockdown-licensing-partnerships/>.

See “Best Writing And Productivity Tools for Authors” at <https://www.thecreativepenn.com/2020/05/20/best-writing-productivity-tools/>. Scroll down just a little and there's a list that includes other links.

See “How To Sell Your Books Directly To Readers...” at <https://www.thecreativepenn.com/2020/03/20/sell-direct-get-paid-now/>.

See “Freelance and Bumps in the Road” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/freelance-and-bumps-in-the-road>.

See “A Day in the Life of a Detective” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/05/a-day-in-the-life-of-a-detective.html>. Retired RCMP detective Garry Rodgers has joined Kill Zone blog.

See “Pamela DuMond v. Diversion Publishing...” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/pamela-dumond-v-diversion-publishing-corporation-farrah-reilly-simon-schuster-inc-emma-chase-llc-emma-chase-and-simon-and-schuster-inc-case-number-22019cv08922-us-district-court-for-th/>. Very interesting case re copyright and plagiarism, especially if you can get the documents to appear. You might have to reload/refresh the page several times.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 230 (Journal)

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 30061
Total fiction words for the year..... 309655
Total nonfiction words for the month... 11290
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 114400
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 424055

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Creative Penn](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Kristine Kathryn Rusch](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

Skipped May 22

The Journal: Thanks and More Of Interest

[May 23, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Yesterday
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

I'm still on hiatus. Just popping in mostly to share the items in "Of Interest." Those of you who have commented or emailed, thanks for letting me know you're still out there. I'll be back before too much longer.

At this point, I'm pretty sure my next novel will be Book 3 of the Othgygnrk Invasion series, mostly just to get the shared world going and illustrate to players some different ways they can play. I hope to start that sometime in the next few days. I also hope to finish two new novels (in or out of that world) by the end of June. I always work better when I challenge myself.

Happy birthday to my dad, who would have been 92 years old today. He passed in 1987 at the very young age of 59 years and one month. There's a great deal I never got to ask him.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "To Grow or Not to Grow" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/david-farland-writing-tip-to-grow-or-not-to-grow/>.

See "Join Me for Sunday Business Sermons (Free)" at <https://www.janefriedman.com/join-me-for-sunday-business-sermons-free/>.

See "Announcing Vivlio! Reach more European markets with your books!" at <https://draft2digital.com/blog/announcing-vivlio-reach-more-european-markets-with-your-books/>.

See "Setting up Amazon Author pages #AuthorToolboxBlogHop" at <https://tonyriches.blogspot.com/2020/05/setting-up-amazon-author-pages.html>.

See "The Ultimate Guide to Author Collaboration in Writing and Publishing" at <https://selfpublishingadvice.org/author-collaboration-writing-publishing/>.

On Sunday, see "Writing About Writing" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/writing-about-writing>.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 150 (Journal)

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 30061
Total fiction words for the year..... 309655
Total nonfiction words for the month... 11440
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 114550
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 424205

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Draft2Digital](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [SelfPublishingAdvice.org](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Neil Gaiman

[May 24, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * While I wasn't paying attention
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“When you're all alone out there, on the end of the typewriter, with each new story a new appraisal by the world of whether you can still get it up or not, arrogance and self-esteem and deep breathing are all you have. It often looks like egomania. I assure you it's the bold coverup of the absolutely terrified.” Harlan Ellison

When I wasn't paying attention, Neil Gaiman decided to post a few blog posts. I encourage you to read them if you're a Gaiman fan, or if you're human.

See “A Quick Useful Blog about the Sandman Audio Project” at <http://journal.neilgaiman.com/2020/05/a-quick-useful-blog-about-sandman-audio.html>.

Then see “Where I am, what I’m doing, how I’m doing and how I got here” at <http://journal.neilgaiman.com/2020/05/where-i-am-what-im-doing-how-im-doing.html>.

And finally, see “An extremely apologetic post” at <http://journal.neilgaiman.com/2020/05/an-extremely-apologetic-post.html>.

Now, no doubt, he’ll disappear for awhile, though probably not as long as JA Konrath disappears without so much as a “See you around.” God I’ll be glad when this month is over.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “A Possible New Workshop Idea” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/a-possible-new-workshop-idea/>. I did not comment, given my own most recent nonfiction book, [**Quiet the Critical Voice \(and Write Fiction\)**](#).

See “Writing About Writing” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/writing-about-writing>.

See PG’s take on “Can There Be Book Deals Without Meals?” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/can-there-be-book-deals-without-meals/>.

See PG’s take on “What now for authors?” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/what-now-for-authors/>.

See “Join Me for Sunday Business Sermons (Free)” at <https://www.janefriedman.com/join-me-for-sunday-business-sermons-free/>. Today is Sunday.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 250 (Journal)

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 30061
Total fiction words for the year..... 309655
Total nonfiction words for the month... 11790
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 114900
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 424555

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12

| | |
|---|-----|
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 50 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 208 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [Neil Gaiman](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: What's Going On

[May 26, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * What's Going On
- * L. Ron Hubbard's Writers of the Future
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“What a good thing Adam had. When he said a good thing he knew nobody had said it before.”
Mark Twain

“A metaphor, to be judicious, needs to support the tone of the scene or the tone of the action it is describing.” Jessi Rita Hoffman

What's Going On

Reading Gaiman's post from a day or two ago gave me the idea that I'm being a slacker. I set out to share a writer's life with you all, including the life rolls and warts. Yet I haven't talked a lot about my current, self-inflicted life roll. Here's the nutshell:

I'm not ill, but I am incapacitated mentally. Fortunately, I do sense that I'm getting better little by little. But no, knowing that this state will (probably) eventually end doesn't make it any better.

The clock keeps ticking, and the minutes and hours keep slipping into the past. And what's worse, they're passing by unladen with so much as a word of my fiction.

That probably sounds over the top to some of you, but I've lived most of my life and I've accomplished most of what I'm going to accomplish. Writing is what I have left. It's the one thing I love to do, and I neither have nor want any other interests.

So that's what's going on.

If you haven't checked out L. Ron Hubbard's Writers of the Future site yet, do yourself a favor and stop by <https://www.writersofthefuture.com/>. I suggest browsing the tabs. The site offers a free intermediate-level workshop (see "Of Interest" below), a blog, podcasts, etc. And no, this has nothing to do with Scientology or whatever.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Killing Critical Voice Workshop" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/killing-critical-voice-workshop/>.

See "Hoping To Finish Book" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/hoping-to-finish-book/>.

See "L. Ron Hubbard's Writers of the Future Online Workshop" (FREE) at <https://www.writersofthefuture.com/register/online-workshop/>.

See "...The Problem of Self-Conscious Writing" at <https://www.janefriedman.com/do-you-torture-your-metaphors-the-problem-of-self-conscious-writing/>.

See "Active Imagination" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/active-imagination/>.

See "What Happens to Your Body When You Die in Space?" at <https://getpocket.com/explore/item/what-happens-to-your-body-when-you-die-in-spaceb>.

See "Most Difficult Accents for Actors" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/most-difficult-accents-for-actors/>.

See "Wish Fulfillment" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/david-farlands-writing-tips-wish-fulfillment/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 370 (Journal)

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 30061
Total fiction words for the year..... 309655
Total nonfiction words for the month... 12160

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 115270
 Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 424925

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
 Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
 Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
 Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
 Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
 Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
 Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [L. Ron Hubbard](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Writers of the Future](#)

The Journal: An Important Story Bundle

[May 27, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * StoryBundle
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“If you are constantly fighting and saying ‘I really want to be a writer,’ but you don’t ever sit down and write, maybe you don’t want it, because writers are people who write.” Dean Wesley Smith

StoryBundle is offering four different bundles at the moment: African Spec Fic, Write Stuff 2020, Latinx Dark Fiction, and Young Adult Megabundle.

I’ve recently purchased the first two on the list. I bought African Spec Fic because I’m getting more interested in speculative fiction and want to see more variety.

But I bought the Write Stuff 2020 bundle primarily to support the authors involved and because it’s a great value. I encourage you to visit <https://storybundle.com/writing>. There’s even a lecture on Writer’s Block and Procrastination (\$50 value) that contains SO much more than just that topic. Plus a ton of books on writing. All for \$15.

Especially if you’re interested in the freedom of writing into the dark but you’re having trouble with it, get the bundle so you can watch the lecture on Writer’s Block.

For that matter, if you haven't bought it and watched it yet, get the lecture on Heinlein's Rules too. That one lecture alone turned my writing world upside down. (Best \$75 you'll ever spend.) And of course, there are craft books by Dean and Kris and other pro writers.

For a lot more details, see the first item in "Of Interest."

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "A Deal on Writing Ebooks!" at <https://kriswrites.com/2020/05/26/a-deal-on-writing-ebooks/>. (As of this posting, the server was down. I hope it's up by the time you try it.)

See "Do you hear the sounds of words?" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/do-you-hear-the-sounds-of-words>.

See "Shopping and Other Fun" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/shopping-and-other-fun/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 300 (Journal)

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 30061
Total fiction words for the year..... 309655
Total nonfiction words for the month... 12460
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 115570
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 425225

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Kristine Kathryn Rusch](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Just FYI

[May 30, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Nothing much
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“The first principle is that you must not fool yourself and you are the easiest person to fool.”
Richard P. Feynman

“It's easier to fool people than it is to convince them that they have been fooled.” Mark Twain

Nothing much to talk about today. I'm doing fine but still not doing much day by day other than reading and watching TV and urging all this mental fog to be over so I can get back to writing. I'm reminded of Jack Williamson's "With Folded Hands."

But I know it's going to take some time so I'm also trying to be patient and give the healing process the time it needs. Some of you know what I mean. But of course I'm bored out of my mind.

I've dipped a toe or two into depression too, so there's that. And it's to be expected, probably, so no big deal. One can only read so many stories and watch so many episodes of brain-dead TV and nap so long. I try not to go out. Not for fear of contracting the virus, but to avoid witnessing the insanity of so many people going along to get along. Yes, it's different in downtown Manhattan, but I'm about 6 miles south of Benson, Arizona.

Anyway I suspect the depression will disappear the instant I'm able to escape back into a fictional but much more authentic world, one that is likewise peopled with authentic characters who think for themselves and act accordingly.

Do you realize how very fortunate we are? When the nation goes batsh*t crazy and society in general links hands and races along with it, we can retire to a dark room and make up a better, saner world.

Dot dot dot.

Yeah, one problem of this brain fog is that it's suddenly much easier to set aside my comm filters and allow my personal opinions to seep out. (grin) You should see some of the stuff I deleted.

Anyway I wanted to publish this edition for the “Of Interest” section, especially the bit on Affinity Publisher. In the article, note that everything at Affinity is at half-price currently.

I might not be back for a few days, or until this crap clears up. In my absence, check Dean’s site and some of the others from below as well as Jane Friedman’s (she posts something good from time to time) etc.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “A review of Affinity Publisher” at <https://www.bookdesignmadesimple.com/review-affinity-publisher/>.

See “Great Character Arcs” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/david-farlands-writing-tips-great-character-arcs/>.

See “The ‘Oh, No!’ Promo” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/the-oh-no-promo>.

See PG’s take on “How The Publishing World Is Staying Afloat During The Pandemic” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-the-publishing-world-is-staying-afloat-during-the-pandemic/>.

See “Knowing When to Be Quiet” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/05/knowing-when-to-be-quiet.html>.

See “Serialists: How Male and Female Serial Killers Differ” at <https://www.suecoletta.com/serialists-how-male-and-female-serial-killers-differ/>.

See PG’s take on “As bookstores in France re-open...” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/as-bookstores-in-france-re-open-early-euphoria-gives-way-to-plummeting-book-sales-in-week-two/>.

See “Cool Deck of Cards” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/cool-deck-of-cards/>. Great idea, but I’m still waiting for him to finish the novel for the shared world series.

See “How to Become a Self-Published Author” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-to-become-a-self-published-author/>. OR you can write the best book you can at your current skill level, design a cover for it, and distribute it through D2D and Amazon.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... XXXX

Nonfiction words today..... 550 (Journal)

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 30061
Total fiction words for the year..... 309655
Total nonfiction words for the month... 13010
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 116120
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 425775

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Affinity Publisher](#), [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Sue Coletta](#), [The Book Designer](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Putting a Cap on It

[June 1, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Putting a Cap on It
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Putting a Cap on It

By way of clarification, in this case “it” is the craziness. And by way of further clarification, “the craziness” is my own and society’s. And this essay, I guess. So my own craziness, society’s craziness, and what some of you probably will see as the craziness of this essay. Feel free to substitute the word “insanity” for “craziness” at any point.

Pain is relative. Inconvenience, too, and disruption of the norm are relative. I think everyone knows that. What you are going through at the moment is not “better” or “worse” than what anyone else is going through or what you’ve been through yourself at other times in your life. It’s just different, one more thing to endure. And it’s what you’re going through at the moment, so it holds your focus.

As I’ve blathered on here before, I’m steeped in a painful mental fog that denies me the ability to function. I’m focused on that because that’s what I’m going through personally. But that’s not to belittle or deem less-important whatever you or your loved ones are going through in your life.

Now, let's zoom out.

Around the globe, literally thousands of people are dying every day. Most from problems and diseases and conditions other than COVID-19. Others are in hospitals undergoing operations for one condition or another. Others are at home, recovering after such an operation. Basically, everybody's going through something. Yet I can speak only to my own silly problems.

But back to the novel virus for a moment. As the CDC and everyone else (except the propaganda machine that is the media) has said, as viruses go, COVID-19 isn't that bad. Yes, there is an at-risk group (I'm in that group) but most people, as in the high 90-percentile, who contract COVID-19 don't even realize they have it. Most never display symptoms. Most, if they simply wash their hands, never contract it.

Of those who DO display symptoms, most (as in the high 90-percentile) don't require hospitalization. They recover on their own. And the truth is, we'll never know how many citizens actually succumbed to the COVID-19 virus. Why? Because definitions are being shifted almost daily and counts are being inflated to make the problem seem far worse than it is. Which leads us to another "why," but we won't be able to answer that one until we see what awaits us on the other side.

Even my heart doctor, with whom I had an appointment last Thursday, said he received a phone call out of the blue around two weeks back asking whether he wanted to change the official cause of death on a death certificate to COVID-19. The decedent passed away, probably from a heart attack brought on by other factors (though he couldn't know for sure so marked the cause of death "unknown"), over 8 months ago. When there is no autopsy, cause of death is a "best guess" and is the responsibility of the physician who last attended the deceased.

So yes, there is a shortage of toilet paper (???), but there is no shortage at all of bovine excrement. If it were white, we could all go skiing.

The upshot of all this, trite as it sounds, is Keep Calm and Carry On. Focus on You. If you wash your hands thoroughly and often, chances are, you won't contract COVID-19, and if you do, chance are you won't become ill from it, and if you do, chance are you will recover.

Given the actual hard statistics of COVID-19—but ALL the stats, not just the inflated body count—maybe someday our idiot politicians (both sides of the imaginary aisle) will realize their initial mistake of unnecessarily disabling our entire economy... well, if it was a mistake. If so, they will then

- * recommend (not mandate, it's still a free country, at least in most places) continued sheltering at home or quarantine of persons at high risk (if those people choose to go out, they're risking only themselves, no one else)

- * open the economy again, immediately and fully, and

- * let what remains of COVID-19 run its course so the nation will finally be done with it.

Now back to my own crap for a moment.

This mental fog. It's a real thing (or maybe the absence of anything real) and it's accompanied by frustration and depression. All because at the moment, I can't play with my friends. I don't have the capacity. As my wife can attest, there are times I can't decide or verbalize what I want for supper.

But as I wrote at the outset, I don't mean to imply that my problem is any worse than whatever you're going through at the moment. It isn't. It's just what I happen to be going through at the moment. It's part of my life and it affects my writing, so I comment on it here in the hope that it will help someone else.

In retrospect, I wish I hadn't upset the apple cart. I wish I were selfish enough to still be enjoying my cigars. From a practical standpoint, I would have written at least one more novel by now, and maybe two. But that isn't what's real. So another retrospective: back on May 6, I wish I'd written, "I'll be on haitu for awhile. Talk with you again in a few weeks" and left it at that. But I didn't, and here we are.

That said, I believe I'm through the worst of it. Most of the whole-body electric frenzy-urges are gone. I believe the fog will clear soon and I'll be able to start writing again. Maybe today, maybe in a few days.

No clue what I'll write. I've had an urge to return to westerns for some reason. I've also had an urge to write the third novel in the SF series I started, but that's also a shared world so I have to guard against that book becoming "important." If that happens I won't be able to finish it. (By the way, if you're one of those writing in my shared world, don't let that become "important" either. You don't have to impress me or anyone else. You only have to tell a story.) And I've also had an urge to turn back to short fiction instead of writing another novel. So as you can see, I'm still considerably rattled. This too shall pass.

Thanks for your kind thoughts along the way. And whatever you or your loved ones are going through in your own lives, may it pass quickly and well.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Why Am I So Against Traditional Publishing?" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/why-am-i-so-against-traditional-publishing/>.

See "Robert Smalls: The Slave Who Stole a Confederate Warship and Became a Congressman" at <https://getpocket.com/explore/item/robert-smalls-the-slave-who-stole-a-confederate-warship-and-became-a-congressman>.

See "Get Yourself A Goal" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/get-yourself-a-goal/>.

See “A Writer’s Guide to Patience, Practice, and Persistence” at <https://annerallen.com/2020/05/writers-guide-patience/>. FWIW. If someone asked me how to develop patience, practice, and persist as a writer, I would say “Follow Heinlein’s Rules.”

See “Publishing Your Indie Book, Viewed As Jumping From An Airplane” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/publishing-your-indie-book-viewed-as-jumping-from-an-airplane>.

See “My Last Pre-Pandemic Novel” FWIW at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/05/my-last-pre-pandemic-novel.html>. Like so many people, he tells you what you “will have to do” as a writer. Ignore it and do what you want.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 1130 (Journal)

Writing of

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... XXXXX
Total fiction words for the year..... 309655
Total nonfiction words for the month... 1130
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 117250
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 428905

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Anne R. Allen](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Some Things Can’t Be Taught...

[June 3, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

* Quote of the Day

* Topic: Some Things Can’t Be Taught...

- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“The great fun in my life has been getting up every morning and rushing to the typewriter because some new idea has hit me. The feeling I have every day is very much the same as it was when I was 12.” Ray Bradbury

Topic: Some Things Can't Be Taught...

Ironically, I've come to realize the most important writing-related technique I've ever learned—Writing Into the Dark—can't be taught.

I really wish I could teach the technique outright. It's such a wonderful, freeing technique, one that opens the writer up to a whole new world. I wish I could share it by natural transfer, my mind to yours. I wish everyone could experience it.

But there are no measurable mechanics to it. Writing Into the Dark requires belief in yourself and an initial leap of faith. And that's something I can't give you. It's something you can only give yourself.

To write into the dark, especially at first, you have to throw caution to the winds, take a deep breath and dive in. But you have to dive in wholeheartedly. There's no other way.

I know a person, a writer, who learned to hang-glide by jumping off a perfectly solid cliff under a bit of fabric. Yet that same person refused to try writing into the dark because of fear. The writer could face down the fear of falling hundreds of feet to his or her death on rocks below, but s/he couldn't set aside the fear of writing a story without knowing in advance where it's going. That, my friends, is an unreasoning fear.

Those who do experience the freedom of WITD once are amazed at how ridiculously easy it is and how excellent the results are. Most often they try it again, maybe even a few times, to be sure it isn't a fluke. But soon they're hooked and they never look back. And at long last they understand what the fuss is all about.

But again, I can only give you some guidelines. Whether you actually follow them is up to you. If you want to try writing into the dark,

* first, read, understand, and adhere stubbornly to [Heinlein's Rules](#)

* just as stubbornly Trust Yourself and your creative subconscious. Sit down at your keyboard and write whatever comes. When you get stuck, write the next sentence. That really is all there is to it.

* understand that the story you're writing is not important. It's only a few minutes' or hours' entertainment for whoever reads it.

* understand that you really are the worst judge of your own work, both when you think your work is good AND when you think it's bad. Your job is to write. The reader's job is to judge.

* write to entertain yourself, to see what happens next in your characters' story. Trust them to tell their story. They will surprise you, and they will surprise your readers.

As an aside, trusting yourself and your creative subconscious means letting your characters tell the story that they, not you, are living. Doesn't that make sense?

If not, consider this: YOUR story is the one YOU'RE living. The story you're filtering through your fingers and the keyboard is your CHARACTERS' story.

The thing is, you can write into the dark if you want to. All you have to do is set aside the excuses and just do it.

I recommend Dean Wesley Smith's [Writing Into the Dark](#) and my own [Quiet the Critical Voice \(And Write Fiction\)](#).

One other thing—it's much easier to learn WITD if learning to write and writing is your priority. If writing doesn't really matter to you, don't try WITD. You'll be wasting your time.

Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See "Establishing Priorities" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/06/establishing-priorities.html>. Exactly.

See "Cold Poker Gang Kickstarter Launched" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/cold-poker-gang-kickstarter-launched/>.

See "An Acceptance, in rough times" at <http://journal.neilgaiman.com/2020/05/an-acceptance-in-rough-times.html>.

See "30 Themed Calls for Submissions" at <https://www.authorspublish.com/30-themed-submission-calls-for-june-2020/>.

See "Letter to Borges..." at <https://www.brainpickings.org/2013/10/28/letter-to-borges-susan-sontag-on-books/>.

See "...While Thinking about CHARACTER" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/s-c-a-t-t-e-r-s-h-o-o-t-i-n-g-while-thinking-about-character>.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 690 (Journal)

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... XXXXX
Total fiction words for the year..... 309655
Total nonfiction words for the month... 1820
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 117940
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 427595

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Neil Gaiman](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Update and Adding Italics

[June 8, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * End of a personal era
- * Still looking
- * Topic: How to Create Font Attributes
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

For me, an era has ended. No longer having the need for a place to enjoy my cigars and with my wife's help, I spent most of the day yesterday moving my writing and business computers out of the Hovel and back into my office in the house. So dispatches from the Hovel have come to an end.

For those of you who follow the saga of Little Bit, my youngest daughter, the move annoyed her. Not that she didn't want me closer at had to give her things she wants, but she preferred the office remain the way it was. She doesn't care for disrupted routines.

However, as I've explained to her, she (like I) will acclimate, and in the meantime it will be better for both of us to have the company of the other. You can only imagine the patience with which I explained that to her, the grace with which she accepted it, and our mood since. To help you imagine it, I will tell you that we are both Scorpios.

I'm still looking for a program I can install that will make typewriter sounds as I type. IBM Selectric would be nice. If you know of any, please email me with the URL, or leave a note in the comments on the website.

In several comments on a [recent post on PWW](#), several commenters mentioned they wished they could use the italics and bold and underline attributes in comments on websites. I wrote some brief instructions there. Here's a better explanation.

Topic: How to Create Font Attributes Using HTML

Yes, using HTML. And Yes, you can do it. It's a simple matter of using what I call the left and right carat keys (they look like < >) and remembering proper nesting: last open, first closed.

If you want to apply only one font attribute, say bold, there is no nesting. You open bold attribute by inserting a left carat (<) followed by a b (not case-sensitive) and then a right carat (so >). Then you write the word or passage you want to appear in bold. Then you repeat a left carat (<) followed by a backward slash and a b (so \b, still not case-sensitive) and then a right carat (so >). For any purists out there, yes, you can also use an S (for strong) instead of a B to indicate bold.

In plain text the "code" before and after the b would look like . That's all there is to it, and whatever's between those two bits of HTML code would appear in **bold**.

To indicate italics, use the same code, but instead of a b, insert an i (or em, for "emphasis"). And to create underlining or underscoring, use the same code but insert a U. As an aside, in the old days when books were typeset, a writer would underline in his manuscript words that he wanted to appear in italics in the finished book. So underlining was used to indicate *italics*, so you don't really need both, and of course italics is the preferred attribute.

Re "nesting," if for some reason you want to make one word or passage both ***bold and italic*** (for example), you would do so with the same code. Apply either the italics or bold first and the other second, and then close them in reverse order: Last open, first closed. That's it. Any questions, email me.

Using HTML code isn't exactly about writing, but I thought you might find it interesting. It's at least nice to know some of what's going on behind the scenes.

Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See “The World According To Writers, A Guide For The Unruly” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/the-world-according-to-writers-a-guide-for-the-unruly/>.

See “Writing Dystopias” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/david-farland-writing-tip-writing-dystopias/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... XXXX

Nonfiction words today..... 650 (Journal)

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 309655

Total nonfiction words for the month... 2730

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 118850

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 428505

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5

Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Browsing for Information

[June 10, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * I'm not back
- * Topic: Browsing for Information
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“As a child I’d run into Wilde’s witticism ‘The only true talent is precociousness.’ I took my writing seriously, and it seemed to pay off.” Samuel R. Delany

In the early part of the movie *Twister*, Bill keeps saying, “I’m not back.” It provides a quiet comedic undertone. Which is a little how I feel this morning. I’m not back. But I found a few things I hoped you would see and I had a thought I wanted to share about browsing the Internet for info on writing. So here you go.

Topic: Browsing for Information

Several days ago I provided a partial list of URLs that I recommend browsing on a daily or almost daily basis. But I also mentioned that many of those sites offer bad information as often or more often than they offer good information.

At the time, by “bad information” I meant the same tired old clichéd advice you can find practically anywhere. The same advice you’ve been hearing most of your life. The same advice that has never worked. Most who read that stuff do so only to delay the actual writing. And really, that’s about all it’s good for.

And by “good information” I meant advice that piques your interest and that you have NOT heard pretty much your whole life. This is usually advice that empowers you as an individual (teaches you to trust yourself and your creative subconscious) and advances your skills as a writer. It’s often either a whole new way of doing things or a new take on a specific aspect of writing (scenes or hooks or cliffhangers or endings, for example). Most who read that sort of thing do so because they’re excited to learn and absorb something new they can then apply to their work. Or they find something interesting that can benefit them in other ways.

I’m always (a-l-w-a-y-s) in the latter camp.

When I browse those (and other) sites first thing in the morning, as each site opens, I glance at the title of the current offering.

If the title doesn’t grab me — usually because it’s the same regurgitated BS I’ve heard a thousand times before, like “Seven Steps to Writing a Blockbuster Novel” (Reedsy often falls into this category) — I hit the Back button on my browser and click the URL of the next site I want to check.

But if the title DOES grab my interest — say something like “One Tip for a Powerful Ending” — I read the first paragraph or two and give the writer an opportunity to teach me something new and earn a new devotee or to run me off.

1. If reading the article gives me a sense of moving forward, advancing my skill set as a writer, I continue reading.

2. But if I feel like I'm standing still (revisiting something I already know), or moving backward (as when a well-written title disguises something I've already tried and dismissed) I skip the rest and move on to the next URL I want to visit.

In other words, I visit those sites almost every morning, but I read only what's unique. I don't waste time reading new versions of the same old stuff.

Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See "Losing An Art Form In Book Sales" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/losing-an-art-form-in-book-sales/>.

See "Traveling... Oh, My..." at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/traveling-oh-my/>.

See "One Tip for a Powerful Ending" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/david-farlands-writing-tips-one-tip-for-a-powerful-ending/>.

See "Samuel R. Delany, The Art of Fiction" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/samuel-r-delany-the-art-of-fiction/>.

See "How to and (Especially) How Not to Write About Family" at <https://www.janefriedman.com/write-about-family-memoir/>. FWIW if you're interested in writing memoir.

See "What's in a Name?" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/whats-in-a-name/>. And answer the question. (grin)

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 630 (Journal)

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... XXXXX
Total fiction words for the year..... 309655
Total nonfiction words for the month... 3360
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 119480
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 429135

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

| | |
|--|-----|
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12 | |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 50 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 208 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: In Case You Missed It

[June 15, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * In Case You Missed It
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Since I'm posting much less frequently now, I've retitled the "Of Interest" section to "In Case You Missed It." Seems more appropriate.

Not much to talk about right now. Hope you're all well. I'm posting this primarily to pass along what's in the section below.

Talk with you again when I can.

In Case You Missed It

See "Let The Critics Out To Play, A Guide For Unruly Writers" at <https://prowriterswriting.com/let-the-critics-out-to-play-a-guide-for-unruly-writers>.

See "Switching Gears" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/david-farlands-writing-tips-switching-gears/>. For the record, I personally use (and advocate) a combination of the techniques of Dean Wesley Smith and Dan Wells as outlined in this piece.

See "Requiem for the Printing Press" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/requiem-for-the-printing-press/>.

See "Why I'm Leaving Facebook" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/why-im-leaving-facebook/>.

See "You Know You're a Crime Writer If..." at <https://leelofland.com/you-know-youre-a-crime-writer-if/>.

See “When Writers ‘Talk Reading and Writing’” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/when-writers-talk-reading-and-writing>.

And thanks to Karen for “Spies can eavesdrop by watching a light bulb’s variations” at <https://arstechnica.com/information-technology/2020/06/spies-can-eavesdrop-by-watching-a-light-bulbs-variations/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 170 (Journal)

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... XXXXX
Total fiction words for the year..... 309655
Total nonfiction words for the month... 3530
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 119650
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 429305

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [ArsTechnica.com](#), [David Farland](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Snippets and Priorities

[June 19, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Snippets and Priorities
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“What they call you is one thing. What you answer to is something else.” Lucille Clifton (via The Passive Voice)

Snippets and Priorities

The following are snippets of what might have become topics or essays had I followed them through. I thought it might be fun to give you a glimpse at how my brain is working at the moment. Where a new mini-topic begins I use bold and italics.

A few days ago I received an article via email titled “How I Hosted a Socially Distanced Book Event” from JaneFriedman.com. It’s linked in “Of Interest” below just in case it’s your cuppa (and because I mentioned it here), but I didn’t read it.

As I read the title, an epiphany settled over me: I honestly don’t care. And why should I?

One, I’m sick of hearing about CovID-19 and the new “social distancing,” which apparently is cooler-sounding and more chicque than “wash your hands, moron.”

But second, and more important, I’m not a book promoter or a marketing guru. I’m a storyteller, and I believe (fingers crossed) I’m finally about to emerge from the cocoon I dropped into around 6 weeks ago. Based on what I perceive as my progress, I figure maybe another week or two.

When I do emerge, I’ll be different. In fact, I’m different *now*, even more deeply invested in my creative subconscious than before. I jus’ wanna tell stories. I really, literally don’t care whether anyone else reads them.

For a long time, I’ve been passing along DWS’ admonition that the best marketing you can do for a book is write the next book, but I think now I really understand it. Or maybe I’ve even transcended it.

I’m fortunate to be a storyteller. I’m also extremely glad that I learned early-on to trust my creative subconscious. I proved that trust up front by giving over control of the story to the characters who are actually living it. And I proved it on the back end by not second-guessing my creative subconscious (and thereby slowly stifling it) by rewriting or inviting criticism from my own or other critical minds. To me, self-sabotage is just stupid.

My creative subconscious is my partner in this storytelling endeavor. It provides the stories and I provide the fingers and the keyboard. We are dependent on each other. Mistrust is the quickest, surest way to kill a partnership.

Part of the sheer joy of storytelling, for me, is spending time with the characters as whatever’s going to happen next unfolds. But I can do that in my own head without ever sitting down at a keyboard. The other part of the joy is the feel and muffled sound of the actual typing. I love that sensation, the feel of my fingers pressing the keys and bringing the stories to life on the screen one little black mark at a time. That’s like magic to me.

Around 6 years ago, I decided to commit myself completely to becoming a professional fiction writer. To me it was no less important than any other passion, or any other profession. I found a mentor I trusted, and I'm not exaggerating when I say I went all-in with whatever money and time was necessary to learn the craft.

In my opinion, if you want to change your life, that's what you have to do: commit. So I did.

In the early days of my journey (the first month or so), I slashed away the safety net of outlining/signposting, character sketches, world/scene building, critique groups, and rewriting.

I wrote a short story every week from mid-April through mid-October and then I started my first novel. And since that first short story, everything I've written was written into the dark. By the third week or so, I didn't miss the safety net at all and the fear had transformed. Instead of being frightened that some faceless person somewhere might not like what I wrote, I was frightened of how I'd feel if I didn't write the next story. And I was invigorated at the excitement of discovering a story as it unfolded. That's when I realized it wasn't my story at all. It was my characters' story. They, not I, were living it, so they, not I, should tell it.

The safety net I slashed away enabled me to feel safe, but that same safety net also mired me in a web. Because I had to hit all the safety-net buttons (plan, write word for word, sentence by sentence, then rewrite, then seek critique, then polish, etc.) I was unable to Just Write.

Now, after a few million words of practice, my storytelling road has smoothed out. It's no longer a washboard from stuttering over words and phrases and sentence constructions. It's no longer potholed or pockmarked with self-doubt and concern with what others might think. And it's no longer rutted and cross-hatched with a safety net of grooves that keep me to the straight and narrow but also keep me from the excitement of observing and even experiencing a story as it unfolds.

That's not to say I'm not still learning—I am, hungrily—but now I learn mostly from reading the fiction of select masters (King, Block, Higgins, Allende, a few others) and applying the techniques I pick up from them to my own fiction.

I have mixed emotions about my writing and storytelling having smoothed out. A big part of me wishes I'd just found Heinlein's Rules and Writing Into the Dark and was just beginning to practice. It was so exciting, learning so many new things so quickly and watching them gel in my short stories and novels. As I said, I'm still learning, but now it isn't huge, earth-shaking things. Now it's more nuances.

I feel like I might emerge from this fog in another week or two. When I do it will be time to revisit and reset my priorities. From there, I have no idea what might happen. Part of me would like very much to write 100 or 150 novels before I'm finished. Another part of me says, "Hey, you've written 50 already, plus over 200 short stories. Maybe you ought'a go fishing." (grin)

If I continue writing, the Journal will continue, though probably in a different form. For one thing, I'll probably stop trying to teach others how to write into the dark. Frankly I'm tired of my

own voice, especially shouting into a void. Suffice to say, the technique can be learned by those who possess the prerequisites—self-confidence and the ability to trust themselves more than they trust others—but it isn't something that can be taught.

If I continue writing and the Journal continues, probably I'll also continue talking about my own experiences and discoveries while writing. Most of what I learned from others over the years I learned from witnessing their experiences and takeaways, not from direct classes.

And if I decide to go fishing, well, I'll drop back by and let you know that too.

Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See "Pulp Diction. What We Can Learn From The Noir Czars" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/06/pulp-diction-what-we-canlearn-from-the-noir-czars.html>.

See "The Sounds of Silence" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/silence-2/>.

See "How I Hosted a Socially Distanced Book Event" at <https://www.janefriedman.com/how-i-hosted-a-socially-distanced-book-event/>.

See "Building a Bookstore in Your Mind" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/david-farlands-writing-tips-building-a-bookstore-in-your-mind/>. A different perspective.

See "Hong Kong Publishers" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/hong-kong-publishers/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 1250 (Journal)

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... XXXXX
Total fiction words for the year..... 309655
Total nonfiction words for the month... 4780
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 120900
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 430555

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50

| | |
|---|-----|
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 208 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Culling Sites and WITD

[June 25, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Cullilng sites
- * On WITD
- * Congratulations
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

I've culled my own list of sites that I check daily (or to which I subscribe). My list is down to Dean (because he's my friend), David Farland's Writing Tips (subscribe at <https://mystorydoctor.com/blog/>), and The Passive Voice (for general interest). I still check Kill Zone blog too, but that usually takes only a second or two (long enough to read the title and the blogger's name and move on). Only one or two bloggers on TKZ still provide worthwhile, original advice. And I still check JA Konrath's site once a week or so. That's it.

If you're into the Business Side of writing (and you probably should be, although I'm really not), and if you don't mind political boobytraps and ambushes, you should really follow Kris Rusch's Business Musings posts. I no longer do because I do mind those things. It's probably just me, but a category titled Business Musings should be free of political sniping.

As to why I culled the other sites I used to visit, for just one example, a few days ago I read a post that actually advocated writing to market, and even advocated thinking about the market and marketing as you write (picture my head exploding). My immediate thought was *Are you #&\$%ing kidding me?*

That's easily some of the worst advice I've ever heard. Inviting critical thought and the business side of your writing into the creative process is just insane. But (and I quote), "Whatever works for you." To save time in the future, I think I'll shorten that unfortunate cliché to "whatever."

Really, well-over 99% of the writing advice out there is terrible. It stinks of stomach acid. It's regurgitated content, most often upchucked by people who apparently are unable to form an original thought. So to appear wise, they parrot the same tired old crap they've heard all their lives, usually as if they just came up with it themselves. Listen to them if you want. I'll pass.

Back on June 3 I posted [“Some Things Can’t Be Taught”](#). If you missed it, I recommend reading it.

Although I won’t actively teach Writing Into the Dark anymore, I’ll still practice it. It isn’t the “only” way (and I’ve never said it is), but doesn’t it make sense that we should create with the creative voice and keep the second-guessing, self-doubting critical mind the hell out of it? And who wants to be ruled by unreasoning fear? I’m all about things that make sense. What doesn’t make sense is doing things that keep you from writing in order to call yourself a writer. Or doing the same thing over and over when it never works.

Anyway, if you want to learn WITD you have the same resource I had (Dean) plus many others: his books on the topic, my books on the topic, [a free PDF on Heinlein’s Rules](#), and so much more. So if you want to learn it, you will. If you don’t, you won’t. It really is that simple. I hope you do. Not because I’ll get anything out of it (I won’t) but because I wish the wonderful freedom and elation that comes with it for everyone.

Congratulations to my friend Waldo in Texas for completing Dean’s short story challenge (52 short stories, one per week for a year) and earning a lifetime subscription. Way to do, Waldo!

Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See PG’s take on “Place In A Book – Do You Need To Go There?” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/place-in-a-book-do-you-need-to-go-there/>.

See “Opening Well” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/david-farlands-writing-tips-opening-well/>.

See “Be Double-Minded” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/david-farlands-writing-tips-be-double-minded/>.

See “Author’s Copies” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/authors-copies/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 600 (Journal)

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... XXXXX
Total fiction words for the year..... 309655
Total nonfiction words for the month... 5380

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 121500
 Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 431155

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
 Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
 Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
 Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
 Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
 Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
 Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: What Makes for Good Writing and Adios

[June 27, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Even though
- * Topic: What Makes for Good Writing?
- * Adios for a While
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“I can repeat Mr. Heinlein’s advice to writers. If you pay attention to his dictums, you don’t need to know much else.” [Dr. Jerry Pournelle](#), upon being asked his advice to new writers

“The only opinion that counts of your story is whether or not someone will pay you money for it.” Dr. Jerry Pournelle

Even though I haven’t written anything for almost two months, I still have a new book coming out. The second book in the Othgygnrk Invasion series, [For the Good of the Galaxy: The Battle Begins](#), will release on July 1.

Topic: What Makes for Good Writing?

That’s a question I’ve heard for decades both in and out of academia. I’ve finally come up with an answer, at least as far as fiction is concerned.

Over the past few days I was thinking about the novelists whose work I read and study regularly: Stephen King, Lawrence Block, Joyce Carol Oates, James Lee Burke, Isabel Allende and Jack Higgins. There are a few others, but these are the main ones for me.

All of these are what I call Stage 5 writers. (Dean doesn't mention a Stage 5 but admits these are writers "on another plane.") These writers' level of mastery is what I aspire to. Note that all of the writers on this list pull the reader into the story with the opening and then keep the reader invested with the appropriate use of cliffhangers, hooks/openings, and depth of setting through the rest of the story.

For writers at this level, that should be a given. But it also dawned on me that they all have three other things in common.

The first and most important is that they're masterful storytellers. Which of course led me to wonder what it takes to tell a story masterfully. And I finally got it:

A story is masterfully told when no single element of the story — word selection or juxtaposition, sentence structure, setting, pacing, characterization, style, plot, etc. — calls attention to itself and thereby diverts the reader's attention from the story.

In other words, a story is masterfully told when the reader pretty much has no choice but to continue reading. When the writer gives the reader very few if any "outs." And that is something that can be learned.

Don't get me wrong. Even Stage 5 writers occasionally do something to draw the reader's attention from the story, but only very, very rarely.

The other two things those writers have in common is that they've been around a long time, and they're prolific.

Of course, they're masterful storytellers BECAUSE they're prolific. It's called practice. And they've been around a long time because they love to tell stories.

Oh, and one other thing: their stories most often contain strong elements of more than one genre. Thus romance can exist in a horror novel or a western; a mystery can be set in an SF world; and so on.

For me, this was a major epiphany concerning a question I've been chasing and trying to answer for half a century, so I thought I'd share. I hope it helps. And now, I have to say

Adios for a While

I finally understand it's become necessary that I take a leave of absence for a while. I might be back and I might not. At the moment, I just don't know.

Because I consider you my friends, I feel like I owe you an explanation. But don't clasp your hands over your ears and race out of the room just yet (grin). I promise not to bore you to death. After all, we all have our demons to deal with.

Suffice it to say I'm dealing with an overwhelming, multi-faceted life roll. At last count, my personal hydra had ten ugly heads, so it might take me some time to figure out how to clear it. When I do, you will be among the first to know.

Two suggestions —

1. If you've enjoyed the Journal in the past, I urge you to leave your subscription intact. You won't receive an email anyway unless I post to the Journal.
2. Those of you who are patrons, if you want to discontinue your monthly donation, I completely understand. If you want to discontinue an automatic payment and don't know how, email me to let me know and I'll discontinue it for you.

Finally, thanks for being there all this time. Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See "Dr. Jerry Pournelle's Advice" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/dr-jerry-pournelles-advice/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 740 (Journal)

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... XXXXX
Total fiction words for the year..... 309655
Total nonfiction words for the month... 6120
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 122240
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 431895

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Announcement](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Of Interest and Brief Thoughts

[July 1, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

[Incredibly Stupid] Quote of the Day

“I would say that over 75% of literary journals do not pay their writers. I have no problem with that, but it is nice to be paid occasionally.” Emily Harstone

If anyone out there knows a good IP attorney or plumber or mechanic who is so accepting of not being paid for practicing his profession, please let me know.

On fear of failure... As a student of human behavior it sometimes amazes me how unreasonably fearful people can be of things that hold no consequences. Failure, after all, is only proof that you tried. Being willing to fail puts a writer ahead of 99% of would-be writers out there.

I'm posting this today mostly because of the items in “Of Interest” and in case you missed them.

Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See “45 Literary Journals that Pay” at <https://www.authorspublish.com/45-literary-journals-that-pay/>.

See “Workshop Sale... Again...” at <https://www.deanwesleymith.com/workshop-sale-again/>.

See “‘I don't like Jack Reacher that much’: Lee Child and fellow crime writers on their creations” at <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/i-don-t-like-jack-reacher-that-much-lee-child-and-fellow-crime-writers-on-their-creations-1.4291390>. Some interesting stuff here about series characters.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 190 (Journal)

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... XXXXX
Total fiction words for the year..... 309655
Total nonfiction words for the month... 190
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 122430
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 432085

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [the writing life](#)

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... XXXX

Nonfiction words today..... 1440 (PWW)

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... XXXXX
Total fiction words for the year..... 309655
Total nonfiction words for the month... 1900

| | |
|---|--------|
| Total nonfiction words for the year..... | 124140 |
| Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... | 433795 |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... | 5 |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... | X |
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... | 12 |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 50 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 208 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

The Journal: Body Parts and “Gave”

[July 8, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Topic: Body Parts and “Gave”
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Topic: Body Parts and “Gave”

First, read the post over at the Kill Zone blog today, where Terry Odell discusses “Roaming Body Parts” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/07/roaming-body-parts.html>. Her point is that (as a reader) she doesn’t mind passages like “Her fingers flew to her cheeks.” Her reasoning is that since she doesn’t personally mind such constructions as a reader, she’s justified in using them in her writing.

On the surface, that’s fine. Certainly we have the right to read what we want to read and write however we like. But (shrug) who cares?

Your personal preferences (what you mind and don’t mind) AS A READER should have zero bearing on anything you do as a writer. If you want to become a better writer, your very first task is to separate your personal preferences as a reader from your professional attitude as a writer. In other words, you have to learn to THINK like a writer:

First, realize there are readers on the other side of the keyboard, and THOSE are the readers whose preferences matter.

Second, realize you can't please them all, so write for yourself, for the thrill of finding out what happens next. BUT...

Third, don't put ANYTHING on the page that you know your readers MIGHT find distracting. Like "his eyes shot across the room" or "her legs raced down the street" or "his ears heard sirens in the distance." Why sabotage your own story?

If those constructions don't bother the reader, that's fine. But if they do, you've just lost a reader, one you wouldn't have lost with "he looked frantically across the room" or "she raced down the street" or "sirens wailed in the distance."

For the rest of the topic for today, I urge you to read my comment on her post and then visit the links I provided in that comment. Just in case something happens to them, here they are:

<https://harveystanbrough.com/pro-writers/human-parts-do-not-have-human-traits/>

<https://harveystanbrough.com/pro-writers/human-traits-and-human-parts/>

<https://harveystanbrough.com/pro-writers/the-infamous-gave/>

But understand, I'm not personally invested in your career (though you certainly should be). So read my offerings, and then make up your own mind.

Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See "Brandon Sanderson Kickstarter" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/brandon-sanderson-kickstarter/>.

See PG's take on "Harnessing the Power of Coauthoring" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/harnessing-the-power-of-coauthoring/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... XXXX

Nonfiction words today..... 390 (PWW)

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

| | |
|---|--------|
| Total fiction words for the month..... | XXXXX |
| Total fiction words for the year..... | 309655 |
| Total nonfiction words for the month... | 2290 |
| Total nonfiction words for the year..... | 124530 |
| Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... | 434185 |
| | |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... | 5 |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... | X |
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... | 12 |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 50 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 208 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Update and Lessons Learned

[July 9, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Topic: Update and Lessons Learned
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Topic: Update and Lessons Learned

Just to let you know what's going on and share the experience as I pull out of the doldrums, I think I'm over most of the internal stuff. Some of the external crap remains (and it's all crap), but I have no control over that. As Barbarosa (Willie Nelson) says in the film by the same name, "The Mexicans have a saying down here: What cannot be remedied must be endured." A more elegant version of "It simply is what it is."

I'm anxious to get back to writing, and I expect that will happen at almost any time. Oddly enough, my biggest problem in that regard is deciding what to write. That is to say, there has been no atrophy of skill or craft (and no unreasonable "fear"), and there has been no erosion of the desire to write.

My only conscious requirement is that my next work will be a novel. I want to dive back into the deep end of the pool and tell a story that will go on. I've been away from my characters WAY too long. I want to bask in their company for a good while.

I have no shortage of ideas either, both new and “attached” to other series and characters I’ve written in the past. I’m not keeping track, but just today (for example) I had three new ideas:

- * a guy in modern times is sitting in a bar when something big happens,
- * a guy on a horse (historic western or modern) sees something in the distance that he can’t quite make out but he senses that it’s something bad, and
- * a new SF genesis invasion story for a new SF series that would “feel” better to me than the one I recently wrote. (Note: This would be a completely different, separate story, albeit with the same aliens. I like them.)

And I considered writing another Stern Talbot PI mystery (my friend Kenneth Flowers really liked that guy); or maybe returning to the Nick Spalding series and continuing it, albeit with a little time-travel to move the characters from the first to the second world war; or maybe writing a sequel to my SF novel *The Consensus* (Kenneth also loved that one for the unique aliens, and I liked them too).

Really, honestly, I wish I had just met Wes Crowley and could write his story again. But that part of Wes’ (and my) life is far behind us now. I DO think there will be a Book 12. I need to get Wes out of his bed (he was shot) and maybe onto a boat in the Pacific.

Wes always liked the idea of the sea, partly because it reminded him so much of the seemingly endless plains of north Texas. Both the sea and those plains are vast, beautiful, and terrifyingly dangerous places. Everything in both places is designed to test your limits, and Wes craves that.

I talked a little about Wes over on my author site yesterday at <https://harveystanbrough.com/blog/>, but that post was more attuned to readers. Still, you might enjoy it if you haven’t seen it.

When I glance up at the pencil drawing I mention in that post, Wes Crowley is looking back at me. His face is set and serious, and I can hear him saying, with a slight nod, “Hey, it’s all right.”

And I know what he means. As I wrote earlier, there’s maybe one more book and then it’s time (as Wes would say) to “slap open the gate and let the horses run.” Wes is my friend. I’ll miss him.

If you haven’t understood before when I say I wouldn’t dream of controlling my characters, that THEY must tell their story because they, not I, are living it, maybe you’ll understand now.

Ol’ Wes is as real to me as the guy in the mirror, and maybe moreso sometimes. And his beautiful bride, Coralín, was a force of nature in her own right. Her loss is why Wes can’t remain ashore. Like our Hobbit heroes in the Lord of the Rings, Wes’ time has gone. He needs to disappear across the sea.

Anyway, I didn’t mean to wander so deeply into that. Mostly I just wanted to let you know I’m almost back and a little about the process.

Someone asked recently whether it is (or will be) difficult to start writing again after such a long layoff. To be perfectly candid, no, it won't. And I say that with certainty.

Why? Shrug. Because I'm a writer. I'm a storyteller. It's what I do, day-in, day-out, with interruptions when there's no way to avoid them.

But understand, I'm not a capital-w Writer (a calling, complete with an angelic chorus). I'm only a life-support system for a set of fingers through which my characters tell their stories.

I'm also the lucky stiff who gets to hear the stories first. Can it get any better than that?

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Trace Evidence" at <https://trace-evidence.net/>. A new (to me) blog that might interest some of you.

See "Ingram Upgrades Printing" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/ingram-upgrades-printing/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... XXXX

Nonfiction words today..... 870 (Journal)

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 309655

Total nonfiction words for the month... 3160

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 125400

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 435055

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5

Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#), [Trace Evidence blog](#), [Wes Crowley](#)

The Journal: Not Tag-Line Verbs (Update)

[July 15, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Welcome
- * Topic: Not Tag-Line Verbs (Update)
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Welcome

Here I am, barely blogging along after having written a post almost every day for years, and a new reader subscribed yesterday. Welcome, my new friend from Melbourne. While my blogging is less frequent than before, I invite you to use the tag cloud or search box to check for posts on topics that might interest you. A few more folks have joined us over the past couple of weeks too. Welcome, all.

Topic: Not Tag-Line Verbs (Update)

A couple of posts back, I talked about [body parts being treated by writers](#) as if they have whole-human or even super-human traits: eyes flying around the room, legs racing down the street, ears hearing, noses sneezing, etc. as if they weren't attached to a host.

The problem with this is that the reader might see the body part performing a given action sans a body. Not that they *will*, but that they *might*. There's never a good reason to risk distracting the reader from the story. And if there is a good reason, certainly laziness isn't it. Laziness in a writer most often reveals itself in statements like, "Oh, the reader will know what I mean."

The thing is, it isn't the reader's job to figure out what you meant to say. It's your job to convey actions, thoughts and scenes clearly so all the reader has to do is sit back and be entertained.

Today I'll talk about another kind of distraction and one of my personal pet peeves: using verbs that do not indicate a form of utterance in tag lines connected to dialogue. Many well-known writers hold that "said" is the only verb you need to carry dialogue. And they're right.

I've heard poorly informed writing instructors advise students to "spice up" their tag lines with different verbs so they're more interesting. (You'll see some of those verbs later in the list.) That is mind numbingly stupid advice. A tag line is not the place to be original.

Why would you want to draw attention away from the dialogue? Dialogue directly engages the reader, even makes him a character in the story (the eavesdropper). Why water down that effect?

So what is a tag line verb? A verb that indicates a form of utterance. Its only purpose is to let the reader know, as subliminally and unobtrusively as possible, which character is about to speak.

That's it. Then it disappears. The best one is "said." You might also use "asked" (though you don't really need it since you have a question mark) or you might set the subliminal tone with a verb like "muttered" or "mumbled" or "whispered." You get the point. But all of those still indicate a form of utterance.

On the other hand, "chuckled" does not. That is to say, you can't "chuckle" a line of dialogue. You can chuckle and then say a line of dialogue or you can say the dialogue first and then chuckle, but you can't chuckle a line of dialogue.

You who've followed this Journal for any length of time know I've kept a list of non-tag-line verbs over the years. In every case, I took them from manuscripts I edited or from stories I read.

In a story I read recently in *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*, in place of "he said" the author used no fewer than 17 new tag line verbs or verb phrases, with "new" meaning I hadn't see them used in tag lines before. Those new words or phrases were bossed, nitpicked, heaped on, quavered, started out, started out full throttle, morosed, testified, balked, promenaded on, opened, galloped on, speculated, grumbled, helped out, cursed, jumped in.

So yes. There was a line of dialogue, and then instead of "he said," there was "he bossed" or "he morosed" etc. (My all time favorite was "she sentenced.") You get the point. They were so obtrusive in the case of this story, I finally stopped reading and started counting new weird tag-line verbs. From what I could tell, it was a pretty good story, but I guess I'll never know how it ended.

Now, do I really care what verb you use in a tag line? No. Why should I? But YOU should care for the simple fact that you should strive never to pull the reader's attention from the story.

All right, enough of my caterwauling. Here's the list to date. Feel free to copy and paste it for your own use if you wish:

accused, acknowledged, admonished, affirmed, amended, amplified, answered, assured, attacked, attempted, balked, beamed, blurted, blustered, bossed, brayed, broke in, brooded, brought up, bubbled, burlesqued, burst out, cajoled, came back, cautioned, challenged, chastized, cheered, chided, chirped, chirped in, choked, chorused, chuckled, clarified, coached, coaxed, commiserated, complimented, conceded, consoled, contributed, corrected, correcting, countered, cracked, criticized, cursed, cut in, defended, delivered, delved, digressed, denied, editorialized, ejaculated, encouraged, ended, enjoined, enlightened, enthused, eructated, evaded, exhaled, expostulated, extemporized, finished, fished, fly casted, followed, frowned, frowning, galloped on, gave, gave him, gave him back, gave out, giggled, got out, greeted, grinned, griped, gripped, grouched, grumbled, gushed, harrumphed, hazarded, heaped on, hedged, helped out, identified, improvised, informed, instructed, interrupted, intoned, invited, jumped in, justified, kicked out, laughed, lectured, maintained, managed, modified, morosed, mouthed, nagged, nibbled, nitpicked, objected, offered, oozed, opened, opined, ordered, owned up, paddled back, persisted, piped in, piped up, placated, played back, pointed out, pontificated, pounced, pressed, prodded, promenaded on, prompted, pronounced, protested, protracted, pushed, put in, quavered, questioned, quavered, quipped, reasoned, reassured, recommended, reminded, reposted,

resumed, retorted, returned, revealed, scolded, seconded, sentenced, shot, sighed, SLEAZED, smiled, snapped, sneered, snarled, snickered, sniffed, sobbed, spat, speculated, spewed, spoke up, spouted, started, started out, started out full throttle, stumbled, SUBMITTED, suggested, sulked, summarized, supplied, sussurrated, syruped out, talked on, teased, telegraphed, temporized, testified, threatened, tossed, touted, tried, trilled, trumped, tumbled out, ventured, vocalized, voiced, volumed, volunteered, warbled, warned, waved, went on, worried.

If you add any to the list, please let me know so I can update my list as well.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Courage in Fiction” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/07/courage-in-fiction.html>.

See “Changes In Publishing” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/changes-in-publishing/>.

See “Writing for a Living” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/david-farlands-writing-tips-writing-for-a-living/>.

See “Writer’s Block: Over a Dozen Solutions to a Non-Problem” at <https://www.authorspublish.com/writers-block-over-a-dozen-solutions-to-a-non-problem/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 1040 (Journal)

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... XXXXX
Total fiction words for the year..... 309655
Total nonfiction words for the month... 4200
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 126440
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 436095

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [John Gilstrap](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Not Tag Line Verbs](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: WITD Has Two Parts

[July 20, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * The current crisis
- * Topic: WITD Has Two Parts
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“By really getting into your work, the nonessential stuff drops away.” Bill Murray

“Bill’s whole life is in the moment,” says Ted Melfi, who directed Murray in the movie *St. Vincent*. “He doesn’t care about what just happened. He doesn’t think about what’s going to happen. He doesn’t even book round-trip tickets. Bill buys one-ways and then decides when he wants to go home.” Gavin Edwards in “Being Bill Murray” in *Rolling Stone*

The quotes come from an article in “Of Interest” that I wish all writers would read. There are a lot of gems to be mined there. Writing fiction (like living in general) should be fun, not work. See more in today’s topic.

The current crisis seems to be really testing people’s mettle. Or maybe revealing their true character. Control freaks are coming out of the woodwork. The sad thing is, control-freakism is always driven by fear and insecurity. Bless their hearts. I hope they get over themselves.

The whole thing reminds me a little of that *Twilight Zone* episode set during the cold war when a nuclear strike was imminent and the “good neighbors” showed their true colors. Remember? In “normal” times they were all good friends, but when the fear hit, they buckled. Amidst wildly flung racial epithets and even physical violence they trashed the home of the only friend who’d had the foresight to build a bomb shelter. They eventually trashed the shelter itself, and all because the friend with the shelter chose to protect his own family rather than doom them all by trying to cram them all in. Of course when the all clear sounded, they were hyper apologetic, but it was pretty much too late.

Remarkably, I’m weathering this whole thing relatively well, considering that I entered into a personal perfect storm at about the same time the virus hit. And considering that I was also stupid enough to double down by giving up cigars, my only respite from the general bizzaro-world insanity we live in these days.

The only detrimental effect I've suffered personally is my seeming inability to write fiction at the moment. But that will clear up in due course. Or it won't. Shrug.

I hope you're all doing at least as well, and preferably better.

Topic: WITD Has Two Parts

In a comment on Sean Monaghan's post over at PWW today (also in "Of Interest"), Leigh asked what Sean meant when he wrote "Refraining From Rewriting doesn't mean not working on it."

I was going to write a long response to Leigh's comment, but I chose to put it here instead.

At its most basic, Writing Into The Dark means writing one clean draft. It works with short fiction and long. It works with several-book series. It works with anything because the key to WITD is trusting yourself.

If you trust yourself and your creative subconscious, your characters will surprise you since you're allowing them to tell the story that they, not you, are living. That's the key to the whole thing.

But writing into the dark doesn't mean writing sloppy or putting forth less than your best effort. On the other hand, it DOES mean not revising or rewriting, not allowing your conscious, critical mind to polish your natural voice down to something that is no longer unique.

So practitioners suggest you "cycle" as you go. To explain cycling, I'll use my own process.

First, there are two types of cycling: I call them purposeful cycling and routine cycling.

Purposeful Cycling—As I mentioned above, if you write into the dark your characters will surprise you. That's a Good Thing.

But say Aunt Marge pulls a revolver from the pocket of her housecoat in Chapter 32. Without foreshadowing that can seem a miraculous event, a happy coincidence that gets Aunt Marge out of (or into) trouble.

The astute writer will cycle back (purposefully) to an earlier time in the novel and add a sentence or two that lets the reader see Aunt Marge taking the revolver from a nightstand drawer and slipping it into the pocket of her housecoat. This might be earlier in Chapter 32, or it might be back in an earlier chapter.

(Note that this is not conscious-mind intrusion. The writer doesn't consciously insert the gun, etc. The story was unfolding so quickly Aunt Marge simply missed showing how the revolver got into her housecoat earlier.)

That's all there is to purposeful cycling.

Routine Cycling—When I finish a writing session of 1000 to 1200 words, I take a break. No matter how short or long the break, when I come back, I read over what I wrote during the last session. I read it strictly for pleasure, to be entertained, to see what happened, as if I were reading someone else’s story. In other words, I’m not “looking” for anything to “correct,” I’m just reading.

As I read, I let my fingers rest on the keyboard. If my characters want to replace a word or add a sentence or whatever, they do. And when I get back to the white space, I write the next sentence and continue.

Again, cycling is not a function of the conscious, critical mind, though sometimes the C-word tries to sneak in. If I begin to notice myself “looking” critically for things to fix, I get up, walk away, take a break, and come back later.

That being said, sure, if a misspelled word pops out at me as I’m reading, I fix it. But I don’t actively look for them.

When I reach the end of a story or novel, I take a final break. Then I come back, read over the last bit I wrote, and add, subtract or change anything the characters want changed. Then I run a spell check (this is my “second draft” and takes all of maybe 10 minutes) send the story or novel off to my first readers. Their task it is to simply read for pleasure and point out any misspellings or inconsistencies. When I get their input back, I apply what I agree with, then publish.

So that’s the less well-known part of writing into the dark. Thus far I’ve written 50 novels, 8 novellas, and over 200 short stories, all in less than 6 years, all well-received, and all WITD. It works, but only if you can bring yourself to push down the unreasoning fear (because absolutely nothing will happen if you fail) and trust your creative subconscious.

And by the way, I don’t write “fast.” Like most writers, I write around 1000 words per hour (a blazing 17 words per minute). So how can I turn out 50 novels etc. in just over 5 years? Simple. I didn’t waste time rewriting, submitting my work to critique groups, revising and polishing etc.

In other words, I followed Heinlein’s Rules. And I’m successful because of them.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Rejections From The Past” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/rejections-from-the-past/>.

See “Being Bill Murray” at <https://www.rollingstone.com/movies/movie-news/being-bill-murray-175080/>.

See “Heinlein’s Rules for Unruly Writers, Part III...” at <https://prowriterswriting.com/heinleins-rules-for-unruly-writers-part-iii-you-must-refrain-from-rewriting-except-to-editorial-order/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 1190 (Journal)

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... XXXXX
Total fiction words for the year..... 309655
Total nonfiction words for the month... 5390
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 127630
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 437285

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Cycling](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#), [Writing Into the Dark](#)

The Journal: A Little More on Cycling

[July 23, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * It Keeps on Tickin
- * Topic: A Little More on Cycling
- * About Dean Wesley Smith
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“The good parts of a book may be only something a writer is lucky enough to overhear or it may be the wreck of his whole damn life and one is as good as the other.” Ernest Hemingway (via The Passive Voice)

It Keeps on Ticking

I came across an old Timex watch in my desk drawer a few days ago. On a lark, I wound it (no battery) and set the time in sync with the clock on my computer. I wind it again each morning. Four days later it's still keeping good time. The odd thing is, this is the olive-drab Timex I was issued in Marine Corps boot camp in September 1970. That's almost 50 years ago. Go figure.

Topic: A Little More on Cycling

I don't understand why it's so difficult for some folks to get this. And I'm not saying that disrespectfully. I really don't understand.

This isn't a matter of semantics. Cycling and revising are simply not the same thing.

Cycling, like writing into the dark, is done strictly from the creative subconscious. No part of cycling comes from the conscious, critical mind. If while you're "cycling" you're making conscious decisions about your work—omit this, move that over there, etc.—you aren't cycling, you're revising... no matter what you call it.

To cycle routinely (meaning every 500 or 1000 or 2000 words), you simply read for pleasure back over what you've just written. But again, you read for *pleasure*. You don't work. You don't "look for" anything. You don't "decide" anything. You let your fingers rest on the keyboard as you read, and you allow your characters (your creative subconscious) to touch the story or not as they deem necessary. Chances are good they'll change very little or nothing at all.

That's what routine cycling is.

Not only is cycling NOT consciously fixing or correcting things, it's a letting-go of the NEED to "correct" or "fix" things. In fact, it's a letting-go of the need to "look for" things to fix or correct. You're just reading and letting your characters touch the story if they want to. If a blatant misspelling pops out at you as you're reading, can you fix that? OF COURSE. But you don't go in consciously "looking for" things like that.

If you just thought, "Then how will I ever find what's wrong in my work?" you're missing the point. If you assume there's something wrong in your work in the first place, you're still buying into the myth that you can't trust your creative subconscious to... wait for it... create.

The thing is, if you can't let go of that thought or at least push it down, then you can't write into the dark and you can't do what I call cycling. You just can't. And that's fine. Shrug. There's no requirement that says you have to trust yourself and enjoy the freedoms of WITD. You can labor over every word and sentence and paragraph if you want to. Or you can do anything in between.

But if you're making conscious, critical decisions about your work, please don't confuse that with "cycling." Read on....

Revising, on the other hand, like rewriting and editing, is a function of the conscious, critical mind. Revising is second-guessing or “deciding” about words, sentences, paragraphs, etc. that you’ve written. If you’re making conscious decisions about what you’ve written, what’s “right” or “wrong,” etc., you can only do that from the conscious, critical mind. That is revising, not cycling.

This is what I meant awhile back when I said writing into the dark (and cycling) can be learned, but it can’t really be taught. I can talk until I’m blue in the face, but you can’t and won’t learn how to WITD or cycle until you are able to let go and trust yourself and your creative subconscious.

Now, if you just thought “But if I don’t care about cycling why should I do it?” the answer is, you shouldn’t. How you write and whether or how you manage to present a clean manuscript is nobody’s business but yours.

If you’re interested in WITD and cycling but you’re skeptical, I suggest you do what I did: try it as a way to prove once and for all that it won’t work for you. Of course, to do that you have to really try it. You have to release the myths that have been drummed into you for years, push down the fears and really try WITD and cycling. (And when it works, you’ll probably need to try it again to prove that first time wasn’t a fluke. I did.)

Every writer wants to turn out a clean, finished, reader-ready manuscript. Plotters and rewriters haven’t cornered the market on being conscientious. They’ve just cornered the market on making writing seem like work. (grin) Some writers believe turning out a clean manuscript requires writing and rewriting several drafts.

Some even “write sloppy” intentionally on the first draft. (I’ve never understood the reasoning behind doing anything poorly the first time.) Folks like me believe we can write cleanly the first time through rather than having to go over and over and over the manuscript. So we cycle back as we write.

So the whole purpose of writing into the dark coupled with cycling is to produce a clean, finished manuscript in one draft. But it isn’t for everybody. (Yes, it could be, but it just isn’t.)

If you’re finished after writing one clean draft, good for you and welcome to the club. If you feel you have to write several drafts and/or make several “passes” for editing or whatever, that’s fine too. But that’s a club I left a long, long time ago.

So to recap for what I hope will be the final time, cycling goes hand in hand with writing into the dark. Both depend on the writer’s ability to let go of the myths and the unreasoning fear, even if only long enough to write one sentence, then the next, then the next.

In my experience, that leads to letting go long enough to write a scene, then the next, then the next. And then long enough to write a novel. And then the next. And then the next. And before you know it, you’re typing The End on your 50th novel.

The thing about WITD and cycling is, you either want to or you don't want to. If you want to, then you either can or you can't, and you do or you don't. It's all up to you.

If you choose to write into the dark and cycle from the creative subconscious, that's wonderful. If you choose to write and revise from the conscious, critical mind, that's fine too. But either way, I suggest you defend whatever works for you, and while you're at it, call it what it is. Seriously, nobody cares.

About Dean Wesley Smith

I'm blessed with a natural ear for the American version of the English language and, for that matter, for the British version aside from some of the slang. I learned pretty much all I consciously know about the actual craft of storytelling from Dean Wesley Smith. And I learned most of that from tidbits I picked up from his blog posts, online workshops and lectures.

Even in his workshops, knowledge didn't come along in one big chunk. I learned a little here, a little there. And to be honest, Dean isn't always the best at presenting information (at least to me), so I figured out a lot of it on my own. But I hasten to add, I wouldn't have been able to extrapolate what he was trying to say if he hadn't tried to say it in the first place. Even when he didn't bring a concept fully home, he at least planted the seed.

I wrote all that to preface this: You can trust Dean Wesley Smith completely as a writing instructor. You can take what he says as fiction-writing gospel, because it pretty much is. I've questioned or flat disbelieved several concepts he's offered. The first and biggest was Writing Into the Dark. As I've mentioned more than a few times, I set out to prove to myself that no possible way could it really work, and instead I proved the opposite.

As a result, I've written all the stuff you see below in the Numbers section in less than 6 years. Every single time, no matter what technique or concept I questioned, eventually I always came to understand that Dean was right. So I'm just sayin', you'll trim some time off your learning curve if you just trust the guy completely up front.

Specifically,

- * I recommend his lecture on Heinlein's Rules.
- * I recommend his books on Killing the Sacred Cows of Publishing and Indie Publishing.
- * I recommend his books on Think Like a Publisher.
- * I recommend his craft workshops (Pacing, Cliffhangers, Idea to Story, etc.), and
- * I recommend his genre-specific workshops (Thrillers, Mystery, etc.) if they interest you.
- * I specifically recommend his Writing Science Fiction workshop even if that particular genre doesn't interest you because there's so much extra in it.

It might be awhile before I'm back again. I still have a lot of things to figure out. I wish you good luck, good sense and good writing.

Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See “Did a Person Write This Headline, or a Machine?” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/did-a-person-write-this-headline-or-a-machine/>. Stunning news.

See “Follow Ernest Hemingway’s Footsteps Through Havana” at <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/travel/follow-ernest-hemingways-footsteps-through-havana-180967659/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 1620 (Journal)

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... XXXXX
Total fiction words for the year..... 309655
Total nonfiction words for the month... 8210
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 130450
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 440105

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Harvey Stanbrough](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Quit but Keep Teaching?

[July 28, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Topic: Quit but Keep Teaching?
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“You have heard the old chestnut that writers write, right? You wouldn’t say, ‘I’m a mountain climber’ without ever actually climbing a mountain, right?” Chuck Wendig

“I am amazed, astounded, astonished at how often I see writers bitching about writing. I don’t mean bitching like, ‘Oh, shucks, I had a bad day,’ or, ‘Man, this story’s a lot harder to write than I anticipated.’ But... an endless stream of complaining about the very act of putting words on paper, as if it strains them, as if it’s a ceaseless misery, as if it’s a colon full of fire ants. If you hate to write, what the hell are you doing?” Chuck Wendig

Topic: Quit but Keep Teaching?

Over on the Kill Zone blog (and in real life), two sisters write together as the author PJ Parrish. I can never tell which one is posting to the Kill Zone at which time, though others seem able to somehow discern which sister is speaking. Or maybe only one writes for TKZ. Shrug. I dunno.

Anyway, whichever one posted this morning has decided to quit writing. Or that’s how it seems in her post, though she leaves the door cracked a bit. You can read about her decision and her reasons in “Is It Okay To Quit?” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/07/is-it-okay-to-quit.html>.

With my own current situation, I found the post interesting. And PJ pointed to another post about quitting writing over at Chuck Wendig’s place. I recommend it too, unless foul language really bothers you. If foul language bothers you or if you can’t read around it, you might want to avoid Chuck’s place. Still, it’s a pretty good post. Today’s quotes of the day come from that post. In both quotes, Chuck echoes my own sentiments.

Toward the end of Ms. Parrish’s post, she mentions that she will continue as a blogger on TKZ. I didn’t leave a comment, but that seems a little off to me. Still, it’s a decision to be made by her and whomever moderates or runs TKZ, and that’s fine. But it started me thinking about my own situation.

I haven’t written more than a few words of fiction in three months. That’s a very long time for a guy who averaged around 2800 words of fiction *every day* for over 5 years.

And at present, just so you know, I’m not visiting either extreme. I’m neither consciously NOT writing nor sitting at the computer every day, beating myself up and struggling to write. (*Note: Writing should NEVER be a struggle. Never. If it isn’t fun, just don’t do it.*)

Neither have I replaced the time I used to write with “fun” things, like fishing. I’d love to go fishing, but I don’t have a boat or the money for a boat, and the nearest bass lake is well over an hour away. I’ve replaced the time I used to write with, well, existing.

On the other hand, I DO have a computer and writing is fun for me too, when I’m doing it. But at the moment I’m just obeying the quiet little voice in my head that says right now is not the time. Now and then I sit down and try an opening. Thus far none has grabbed my interest.

But the point is, if I come to a place where I know I won't write anymore fiction, I'll also stop writing this blog. I won't pull a JA Konrath and just drop off the face of the earth. I'll write a final post to let you all know what's going on and that will be that.

For now, I'm still looking forward to coming through whatever this is, whacking a few of the heads off my own personal hydra, and maybe even learning something about marketing. Yeah, that's something else I'd hire out if I could afford it. Anyway...

Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See "Plans to Stitch a Computer into Your Brain" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/plans-to-stitch-a-computer-into-your-brain/>.

See "Smashwords Author Day, Spring 2020 Now Online" at <https://blog.smashwords.com/2020/07/smashwords-author-day-spring-2020-now.html>.

See "Writing Hacks: Keyboard Shortcuts" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/07/writing-hacks-keyboard-shortcuts.html>.

See "Six Signs It's High Time To Give Up Writing" at <http://terribleminds.com/ramble/2011/06/08/six-signs-its-high-time-to-give-up-writing/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 710 (Journal)

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... XXXXX
Total fiction words for the year..... 309655
Total nonfiction words for the month... 8920
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 131160
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 440815

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Chuck Wendig](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Why I Try to Teach Writing

[August 1, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Topic: Why I Try to Teach Writing
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Belief and reader absorption come in the details: An overturned tricycle in the gutter of an abandoned neighborhood can stand for everything.” Stephen King

“The good parts of a book may be only something a writer is lucky enough to overhear or it may be the wreck of his whole damn life and one is as good as the other.” Ernest Hemingway

Topic: Why I Try to Teach Writing

Because doing things correctly matters. Purveyors of soup sandwiches need not apply.

I understand there are folks out there who will never understand the difference of usage between “if” and “whether.” That’s fine. It’s why God made copyeditors.

What I don’t understand and will never understand are those who profess to be writers or “authors” but don’t bother to even TRY to learn the nuances of the language. Those who believe “The reader will know what I mean” constitutes a defense of lazy writing.

I recently read an article titled “[The Forgotten Uses of 8 Everyday Objects](#).” The subtitle read, “Have you ever actually thrown a pair of gloves in the glove compartment?”

Again, that’s why I try to teach writing. My immediate thought when I read the subtitle was, “Who the hell’s small enough to be in a glove compartment in the first place?”

My bet is that nobody alive has thrown a pair of gloves “in” a glove compartment. But almost all of us have thrown items “into” a glove compartment. There’s a difference: “In” suggests a place; “into” is a direction.

This sort of inanity is a result of the once-vaunted and now widely accepted as natural dumbing down of America.

But the erroneous replacement of “into” with “in” is such a small thing, isn’t it? Does it really matter?

In everyday use, no, of course it doesn’t matter. But that isn’t the point. The point is, *It Should Matter To Writers*. Those who use the language as a tool of their profession should know the difference, and they should care.

“The reader will know what I mean” should be what we all hope will happen when we overlook a typo or homophonic wrong-word use in a story. It shouldn’t be considered a defense for those who are too lazy to learn or lackadaisical to care about the language.

The reader is not your partner. Her only task is to be entertained, not to try to figure out what you were trying to say.

Likewise, it’s important to understand that the only reader who matters is on the other side of the story. And that reader is not you.

A professional writer (Stage 2) recently wrote in another blog post, “I don’t have trouble with figures of speech, and if I’m reading that a character ‘flew down the block to John’s house’ I don’t see her [in] mid-air.”

That’s fine. I have no problem with her preferences as a reader. But she doesn’t yet understand that what she personally minds or doesn’t mind as a reader has no bearing on what millions of other potential readers mind or don’t mind. You know, the readers who pay money for her stories.

She’s confusing her preferences as a reader with her responsibilities as a writer. The smart writer will never risk confusing the reader when she has a choice. Ever. Why risk running off a reader just because you “don’t mind” reading through lazy writing yourself?

Again, the reader who matters isn’t on THIS side of the keyboard; s/he’s on the other side. Once the writer above begins to take those readers’ preferences into consideration, she will move into being a Stage 3 writer.

Notes

1. When I looked up the original article at MentalFloss.com, the offensive subtitle wasn’t there. So it wasn’t the author’s fault. Apparently whomever vetted the article for GetPocket added it. If I were the author, I would be annoyed to say the least.

2. I suspect the author received wrong information on number 3 (the spoon/ladle part doesn’t make sense, though it would if all pot handles had a groove along the top). And I suspect she flat made up number 7.

I think I’ll be writing fiction again soon. Thanks for hanging in there and bearing with me.

Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See PG'S take on "Both the supply chain and book marketing" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/both-the-supply-chain-and-book-marketing-are-forever-changed-by-coronavirus/>. Seriously. Skip Shatzkin's stuff and just read PG's take.

See "How to Survive a Pandemic, According to an Academic Publisher" at <https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/columns-and-blogs/soapbox/article/83876-how-to-survive-a-pandemic-according-to-an-academic-publisher.html>. This is even more valid for indie publishers. (Thanks to The Passive Guy)

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 780 (Journal)

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... XXXXX
Total fiction words for the year..... 309655
Total nonfiction words for the month... 780
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 131940
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 441595

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [MentalFloss](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: I'm Back

[August 6, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“If it sounds like writing, I rewrite it. Or, if proper usage gets in the way, it may have to go. *I can't allow what we learned in English composition to disrupt the sound and rhythm of the narrative.*” [emphasis added] Elmore Leonard

“Without translation, we would be living in provinces bordering on silence.” George Steiner (just beautifully written)

I'm Back

It's been a struggle, and it isn't over yet, but I'm over the hump. I won't bore you with details, BUT: if any of you are enduring a similar struggle and want to email me about it, I'd be happy to share what I can that might help.

Thanks to my friend Gary V for the book he sent me. Striking to me that McMurtry wrote a trilogy over a span of 28 years. Of course, he wrote a lot of other things (including Lonesome Dove) in the meantime, but still, I have to wonder how that worked. Did the idea for the second novel simply not occur to him until 16 years after the first was published? And did the idea for the third not occur to him until 12 years after that?

The first novel in the trilogy, *The Last Picture Show*, was published in 1971; the second, *Texasville*, was published in 1987; and the third, *Duane's Depressed*, was published in 1999.

Wow. It occurs to me that some writers might find that completely natural. Not me. All I can say is “different strokes” and “every writer is different” and all that, for sure. I've written other things between series novels, but the gap was only months, never years.

Speaking of that, I plan to start a new novel in the next day or two. Maybe even today. Or I might write an exploratory short story or two. Much easier (the short story is about One Event only) but I really prefer the novel form. When I'm writing a short story I'm fretting the whole time about how quickly it will be over.

As part of this weird transition, I probably won't go back to posting the Journal every day. But when I do post, I'll have something to say. And that probably will be more often than I've been posting recently.

I'll keep up the running Numbers count below, too, not as a means of bragging but as an incentive: If I can do this, so can you. That's always been the purpose of me posting my numbers; well, that and in the beginning to hold myself accountable.

Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See “Conflict Thesaurus Entry: Public Humiliation” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/conflict-thesaurus-entry-public-humiliation/>. A few years ago, this is the sort of thing I sought, and when I found it, I studied it, expanded lists, etc.

See PG’s take on “It’s Time to Radically Rethink Online Book Events” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/its-time-to-radically-rethink-online-book-events/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 480 (Journal)

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... XXXXX
Total fiction words for the year..... 309655
Total nonfiction words for the month... 1260
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 132420
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 442075

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: A Few Things

[August 10, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * On Construction and Pronoun Agreement
- * Ideas Again
- * Update on My Silliness

- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“So, in the interests of survival, they trained themselves to be agreeing machines instead of thinking machines. All their minds had to do was to discover what other people were thinking, and then they thought that, too.” Kurt Vonnegut

“You can do many things by yourself. You have freedom to create things. I think that’s the fascination of computers.” Chang Yiming, founder of ByteDance and TikTok

“Writing a novel is actually searching for victims. As I write I keep looking for casualties. The stories uncover the casualties.” John Irving

On Construction and Pronoun Agreement

Yeah. Boring, right?

Does this sentence bother you at all? If so, how would you fix it?

“The idea was to help the average person express themselves by making technology more accessible.”

The sentence was in an article I was reading. I immediately and automatically “fixed” it mentally by changing “the average person” to “average people.” Only then was I able to continue reading the article.

English is a living language, so it has to change. However, any changes should be hard won. They shouldn’t result from people accepting a new spelling or construction just to appease someone or because it’s easier than teaching what has been accepted as correct in the past. (“Till” as a substitute for “til” springs to mind.) And it shouldn’t make writers or speakers sound ignorant, as they do when they refer to “the average person” (singular) as “themselves” (plural).

Ideas Again

A writer emailed to say he was having trouble coming up with ideas, “even after DWS’s Story Ideas course.”

I wrote back that I’m not sure how I can help. Really, the whole thing boils down to your ability or inability to trust yourself. Pretty much period.

If you can trust yourself, the whole world is open to you. You can pick a character, give him a problem, drop him into a setting and write an opening. If the opening takes off, you go with it. If it doesn’t, you write a different opening. Shrug.

And what difference does it make? It's just a story. Nothing earth shaking. Just a story. And you've known how to tell stories since before you even knew there was an alphabet. So tell a story.

But if you can't Trust the process—if you can't bring yourself to trust your creative subconscious to do what it does naturally, tell stories—then you can always revert to the time-honored way of NOT telling a story.

Instead of writing a story, you can think about it, talk about it with other writers, create character sketches and timelines, erect “signposts,” and brainstorm each major turning point in the story to be sure you have a solid handle on What Happens Next. Then you can draw up an outline so you won't go astray from what your (and everyone else's) critical mind is telling you to do. Because God forbid you actually make writing enjoyable.

If I could teach writers one thing, it would be to practice, repeatedly, trusting their subconscious creative mind while silencing their conscious, critical mind.

Wow. Try to have fun out there, folks.

Update on My Silliness

Apparently my “I'm Back” post was a bit premature. I still have a way to go before I'm fully back on this end. And just think — if I didn't trust my creative subconscious, I'd be driving myself crazy trying to force things right now.

Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See “Forget Everything You Think You Know About Time” at <http://nautil.us/blog/-forget-everything-you-think-you-know-about-time>.

See “Tiny Creatures, Episode 6: #Writetip Deconstruction” at <https://www.suecoletta.com/tiny-creatures-episode-6-writetip-deconstruction/>.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 630 (Journal)

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... XXXXX
Total fiction words for the year..... 309655
Total nonfiction words for the month... 1890

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 133050
 Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 442705

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
 Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
 Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
 Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
 Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
 Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
 Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Nautilus](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Sue Coletta](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Nothing Much

[August 15, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Nothing much
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Nothing much to talk about today. I'm still here (waving) and hope to be back to "normal" soon. In the meantime, I wanted you to have the "Of Interest" items below in case you missed them.

During this break, if you have any questions about writing or storytelling that you think I can help with, don't hesitate to ask.

Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See "What Is Writer's Burnout?" at <https://writershelpingwriters.net/2020/08/what-is-writers-burnout/>. Thanks to the Passive Guy.

See "Scary Scam" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/scary-scam/>.

See "The Writer's Online Toolkit" (from Maryville University Online) at <https://online.maryville.edu/blog/the-writers-online-toolkit/>. I was impressed enough to add this to a few categories on my Writers' Resources page on my website.

See "A Guide To Crime Scene Investigation" at <https://leelofland.com/evelyn-ev-e-dense-a-guide-to-crime-scene-investigation/>. Presented in a silly way, but good info.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 150 (Journal)

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... XXXXX
Total fiction words for the year..... 309655
Total nonfiction words for the month... 2040
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 133200
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 442855

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Writers Helping Writers](#)

The Journal: Let's Get It Right

[August 18, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * IMPORTANT
- * Quote of the Day
- * Topic: Let's Get It Right
- * In other news
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

IMPORTANT: See "The Return of Boss Kickstarter" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/the-return-of-boss-kickstarter/>. Dean and Kris are offering some astounding stretch goals, many of which you can receive for a paltry \$5 donation. You can check it out and donate if you want to at <http://kck.st/3jRjlBP>.

Quote of the Day

“If you make [the details] right for the people who know, then the other people will get a lot more out of it.” Sam Eliot on the authenticity of weapons and clothing in the film, *Tombstone*

Topic: Let’s Get It Right

I’ve tried to explain the concept in today’s Quote of the Day to writers for years, and I’ve never heard it explained more succinctly. Authenticity and specificity should matter to fiction writers. Period. Obviously, they mattered to those who wrote the script for *Tombstone*.

For example, that’s why I advocate always calling the mechanism that automatically feeds the cartridges into the action of a semiautomatic rifle or pistol a “magazine” instead of a “clip.”

It’s why Lee Lofland talks over and over about writers who write (wrongly) about combatants smelling the stench of cordite in a modern gunfight. Cordite hasn’t been used as bullet propellant for several decades.

It’s also why I advocate never representing a human body part as having human traits: a nose doesn’t smell; a human smells with her nose.

Likewise, eyes don’t see or “rake over” or peruse things. Ears don’t hear or listen. Fingers don’t feel surfaces, legs don’t race along the street, and fists don’t pump in the air or hit things.

In every case, THE CHARACTER is smelling scents or seeing sights or hearing sounds or feeling textures. And interesting events might catch a character’s attention but they don’t catch his eye. That would probably be devastating.

And no, “The reader will know what I mean” is not a valid excuse.

The last time I broached this topic, one writer took offense, commenting that maybe writers who are younger in the craft are not aware of these nuances. She was right. Writers who are younger in the craft might *not* be aware of these nuances, or might not have thought about them or realized them yet. The point is, writers who want to improve their craft can do so. Writers who care, learn.

We all have a choice: we either learn as we go or we stop learning and our craft becomes stagnant. And the instructional purpose of this blog is to help writers level-up, not to excuse the ignorance of certain craft elements.

The more authentically we write — that is, the more correct we are with the information we present in our stories — the more quickly we’ll be rewarded with a growing readership who trusts us to tell a good story and present factual information in our fiction.

Years ago, I was reading a novel about US Navy SEALs in which the author wrote that during the upcoming assault on an enemy compound, the team “would employ the proven technique of SNE: Silent Neutralization of the Enemy.”

That's fine, except the author presented "SNE" as if it was an ipso-facto technique, something that was actively taught during military training.

Only it isn't. There is no formal "SNE." There is only common sense. When attempting to breach perimeter security, it's better if the guard you take out isn't able to alert others to your presence. Is that really something that has to be taught formally? I don't think so.

The same writer had the combatants firing their weapons until the "clip" was empty. The only combatant in the story who made use of a "magazine" loaded it into his "revolver." Uh, no. A revolver *does* have a magazine of sorts, but it's universally called a "cylinder."

Yeah, I didn't finish that novel.

I'm of the (old?) school that believes if something is worth doing, it's worth doing right. In writing, that means being as authentic as possible in your representations.

In other news, first, thanks for all the well-wishes. I appreciate it more than you know. And I've started writing again. I'll report fiction numbers the next time I post to this Journal.

Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See "US Publishers, Authors, Booksellers Call Out Amazon's 'Concentrated Power' in the Book Market" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/us-publishers-authors-booksellers-call-out-amazons-concentrated-power-in-the-book-market/>. Read this, especially all of PG's take, especially the comparison at "Amazon is a Big Bully That Exploits the Peons" (scroll down).

See "Dream Making" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/david-farland-writing-tip-dream-making/>. Specifically for Dave Farland's thoughts on the sources of ideas for stories.

The Numbers

Fiction words yesterday..... XXXX
Nonfiction words today..... 770 (Journal)

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... XXXXX
Total fiction words for the year..... 309655
Total nonfiction words for the month... 2810
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 133970
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 443625

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|--|-----|
| Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... | 5 |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... | X |
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... .. | 12 |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 50 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 208 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: The Long Road Back

[August 19, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * The Long Road Back
- * A dear friend
- * By the way
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Some days things don’t line up quite right. That’s why they make tomorrows.” Wes Crowley

The Long Road Back

Other writers routinely take off a month or two or more. For me, having averaged almost 3000 words of publishable fiction per day every day for several years, this time of not being productive has been excruciating. So in that way, it’s been a long road back.

But I also hope it will be a long road forward.

I was telling a recent email correspondent how much I envy him being at the beginning of his journey as a novelist. (He’s about to finish his second novel.) I can’t tell you how many times I’ve wished I could wipe my memory, go back to the beginning and write (and experience) the Wes Crowley saga again.

Anyway, yes, for me it’s been a long road, but I believe I’m back.

The first day, August 18, I wrote about 1100 words for the opening of a new Blackwell Ops novel (number 8), then took a break to fight back a craving. I initially set up the Hovel so I could enjoy cigars while I was writing. But eventually I let it go too far and began smoking while I

wrote, strictly out of habit instead of necessity. (There's a huge difference.) As a result, I OD'd. That overdose was the big problem that prompted me to quit altogether.

So now, as I'm writing, if I get a craving for a cigar I stop writing until the craving passes. Basically I'm retraining myself to write in the Hovel (my office away from home) without continually smoking cigars.

And that, I hope, will be the last I say about my stupid personal problems. Thanks for bearing with me through the disruption.

Now to continue with the "I'm back" update: When I came back to the Hovel for the second session of the day, I wrote fewer words. That's solely because I had to check some factual things within the series (the look of the fictional VaporStream device, how it works, etc.). So I wrote only another 600 words or so, then called it a day.

Anyway, I'm excited about the coming storyline though I'm writing into the dark and have absolutely no clue what will happen. Well, certainly killings will ensue — it's Blackwell Ops, after all — but otherwise I have no clue.

How it all started — Before I headed out to the Hovel, my wife asked me how to spell a particular word, and that word led me to the future victim's name, which in turn led to the working title of the novel. Somewhere in the midst of all that, the protagonist's name popped into my head. And that was the beginning.

I won't reveal the working title or either of the names (I don't want to jinx the story), but I think they're both really cool. They're the kind of names that when you hear them, you'd go "Who'd name a kid that?" but at the same time you know you probably would if you'd thought of it first. (grin)

Anyway, the title of this segment is melodramatic at best. It was, for me, a long road back, but it doesn't matter. All that matters (on this end) is that I'm having fun again, the novel corona virus and greedy politicians and society's herd mentality be damned. I'm down inside a story again, running through it with the characters, trying to keep up and enjoying every second of it. And for me personally, nothing else matters. Yep, I'm that selfish, and happily so.

I'm writing in a tested, time-proven series. BUT the protagonist and his victims are all brand new, so I'm excited that I get to learn all about these new characters and situations. And in the first 1100 words the protagonist mentioned his three previous hits, so I suspect he'll want to tell me and Blackwell Ops readers all about those. How they'll tie-in to the current story should be really interesting. Woohoo!

And who knows? Maybe someday I'll write Book 12 in the Wes Crowley saga too. But that will be a kind of sadness for me, and for now my focus is on having fun.

A dear friend emailed to say she was reluctant lately to read the Journal because she's afraid it (well, I) will say goodbye. Let me put that fear to rest: I have no intention of stopping the Journal altogether or of saying goodbye anytime within the foreseeable future.

That being said, anytime you want to talk with me or ask a question, this really isn't our only venue. Please feel free to email me. If you don't have the address, it's harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

By the way, since I'll be posting the Journal every few to several days instead of every day from now on, I'll report fiction totals only in the "Writing of" section below (in case you want to follow along) instead of in a "Fiction words today" listing.

If or when I write another nonfiction book, I'll show those totals under a specific title too. The first entry under "The Numbers" will show the number of words in the Journal entry down to "The Numbers."

Now back to the story. Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See "Shark Mystery" at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/how-did-a-shark-in-a-sydney-aquarium-end-up-with-a-human-arm>. Very interesting.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 920 words

Writing of Blackwell Ops 8 (novel)

Day 1..... 1653 words. Total words to date..... 1653

Day 2..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 309655

Total nonfiction words for the month... 3730

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 134890

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 444545

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5

Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Atlas Obscura](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Dropping by for a Visit

[August 22, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * How are you?
- * Weather update
- * Well, I'm still writing, but
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Some days things don't line up quite right. That's why they make tomorrows.” Wes Crowley

Yeah, I know that's the same quote from the last time I posted, but I like that one. One of the best things Wes ever said.

How're ya'll doing? I hope you're doing better than I am. My brain's still twisting in a wind of its own making (grin), with occasional heavy gusts from elsewhere.

I recently became aware that I no longer have children. I'm also aware, pleasantly, that there are several adults running around out there who look and act like me to varying degrees. That's a pleasant thought.

If you'll forgive me another personal note, for some reason I thought about my first NCOIC (non-commissioned officer in charge) in the USMC yesterday, a guy from Monroe (that's MON-roe) Louisiana named Joe Aycock.

I worked for Sgt Joe in S&C (secret and confidential) files in Yuma in the early 1970s. Some of my favorite times happened on “burn-barrel Friday” when Sgt Joe and I would clear our files of declassified messages, load them into a hand-cranked burn barrel, and slow roast them to ashes over a fire on a barren hill overlooking the Battalion Headquarters.

We most often enjoyed a beer or two as we did that, and sometimes when the ashes were in the wind, I'd play my guitar to keep us amused.

I was a writer (and smart-aleck) of sorts even back then. Joe was instrumental in keeping me out of the brig after he intercepted a note I'd written to a lieutenant whose face I didn't like. Or something. To remind me not to do that again, he fashioned a hangman's noose, complete with 13 turns, out of a round shoestring and gave it to me. I still have it.

There was a great deal more to our friendship than that, of course, but those memories stick out. Joe often took time from his wife and family to meet me for a game or two of 8-ball at a local bar.

Joe and I mostly stayed in touch over the ensuing almost 5 decades, at first courtesy the US Post Office and later through the miracle of email.

Eventually, of course, our contact waned to exchanging Christmas cards and maybe a phone call on the Marine Corps birthday.

And I realized yesterday it had been a long time since I'd heard from Joe. So I looked him up on Facebook.

And I learned, sadly, he'd gone to his final post at Heaven's gate on March 9, 2017.

What? How in the hell did that happen? Joe was only 67 years old. He was born in January 1950 and was only 2 years and a few months older than I.

He was my very first NCOIC and, more importantly, my first lifelong friend in the Corps, and he will be missed.

It's monsoon season here in southeast Arizona.

Two nights ago we had a storm that approached from the northwest. That was unusual. Our storms usually blow in from the southeast, coming up from the Sea of Cortez, or as we Americans most often call it, the Gulf of California. And then occasionally we have storms come in from the southwest.

But when the thing got here, it came with a mind of its own. At first, most of the wind-driven, hard-slanting rain came in from the east. Then it blew in from the north for awhile. Then the south, and finally the west. All of that for a paltry 3/10ths of an inch, not that we aren't grateful. And it was mostly horizontal and the opening at the top of my rain gauge is only about an inch wide, so we more than likely got closer to a half-inch.

Well, I'm still writing, but (not surprisingly) I'm not laying down the words like I did in "the old days" of a few months ago. And honestly, that isn't a concern. Some days I spend a couple hours in the Hovel; others, not so much.

I'm stuck a little on my newest novel. Well, not really stuck. Just playing. It'll run like a wildfire once it gets its wind, so I'm not concerned. I just wanted to drop in and share.

And you shouldn't be gauging your writing productivity against mine anyway, good or bad. Just do what you do and be glad you aren't mired. The fact that I couldn't play a successful game of Tic-Tac-Toe at the moment has no bearing on what I've done in the past or will do in the future. Or on what you do at all.

The craft is there. The technique is there. And that's what matters.

I've noticed one big difference between how I approached writing pre-break and how I approach it now: I'm not as frantic about it. I kind of wish I were and I hope to be again someday, but for now (here it comes) "it is what it is." As they say down south, What cannot be remedied must be endured.

Which brings us back to the Quote of the Day: Some days things don't line up quite right. That's why they make tomorrows. Wade through moss at the edge of the lake today and, with any luck, tomorrow you'll be gliding through the water.

Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See "How To Speak Cop — Version 2.0" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/08/how-to-speak-cop-version-2-0.html>. A fun reading experience.

See "Writing in Broad Strokes" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/david-farlands-writing-tips-writing-in-broad-strokes/>.

See "Step Off the Edge..." at <https://leelofland.com/a-writers-guide-step-off-the-edge-and-waive-goodbye/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 940 words

Writing of Blackwell Ops 8 (novel)

Day 1..... 1653 words. Total words to date..... 1653

Day 2..... 1043 words. Total words to date..... 2696

Total fiction words for the month..... 2696

Total fiction words for the year..... 312351

Total nonfiction words for the month... 4760

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 135830

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 448181

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5

Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Susan Ellison

[August 23, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * The Passing of Susan Ellison and a Story
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“If you aren't getting better, you're getting worse.” Lawrence Welk on practice

“Wit does not always mean funny. Many times it is, but the real basis of wit is sharpness. It gets the point across crisply, memorably.” James Scott Bell

The Passing of Susan Ellison, and a Story

I was late coming to this, but I thought it worthy of sharing in a special post.

First, read Neil Gaiman's touching post at <https://journal.neilgaiman.com/2020/08/susan-ellison-rip-and-love.html>.

Then do as he recommends. Go and read the very short official notice and the short story Harlan wrote for her at <https://www.harlanellisonbooks.com/susan-ellison-1960-2020/>.

This is the ultimate in writing into the dark. How can I tell? Because practically every line — hell, practically every word — leaps off the page. I wish this ability for you.

Enjoy.

Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See “The Strange Similarity of Neuron and Galaxy Networks” at <http://nautil.us/issue/50/emergence/the-strange-similarity-of-neuron-and-galaxy-networks>. On a

personal aside, what if our “universe” is actually just the brain of the being of which we are an infinitesimal part.

See “A Quick Covers Post” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/a-quick-covers-post/>.

See “Have Your Characters Say What You Wish You’d Said” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/08/have-your-characters-say-what-you-wish-you-d-said.html>. I agree with and endorse this post all the way down to “That’s golden.” After that, not so much.

See PG’s take on “Booksellers to America: Save the Post Office” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/booksellers-to-america-save-the-post-office/>. The clerks at my branch of the USPS, massive fish in a 5-gallon pond, are often untenably rude. Just as if everyone else sees them as important as they see themselves.

Finally, if you want some enjoyable reading, some about writing and some not, see “Russell Blake’s blog” at <https://russellblake.com/>. Russell is one of the few people I’m aware of who are more prolific than I am. Now that he’s apparently back, I’ve subscribed to his blog.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 330 words

Writing of Blackwell Ops 8 (novel)

Day 1..... 1653 words. Total words to date..... 1653

Day 2..... 1043 words. Total words to date..... 2696

Total fiction words for the month..... 2696

Total fiction words for the year..... 312351

Total nonfiction words for the month... 5000

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 136160

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 448511

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5

Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [James Scott Bell](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Nautilus](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Russell Blake](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: A Cornucopia

[August 26, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * I hadn't planned
- * In a break from my own norm
- * Just in case anyone's interested
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

"I pretended to be somebody I wanted to be until finally I became that person. Or he became me." Cary Grant

"Everyone wants to be Cary Grant. Even I want to be Cary Grant." Cary Grant

"Write the truest version." Kathleen McCleary

"All you have to do is write one true sentence. Write the truest sentence that you know. So finally I would write one true sentence, and then go on from there. It was easy then because there was always one true sentence that I knew or had seen or had heard someone say." Ernest Hemingway

I hadn't planned to visit again so soon, but with so many good articles popping up in "Of Interest" I thought I'd pass them along. Each appealed to my curiosity, at least, and to expand my knowledge at best. Enjoy.

Note: There are a lot of links in this issue. Don't be overwhelmed. I suggest you take a deep breath, grab your favorite beverage, and click through on any that interest you.

On a purely personal note, I'm still writing although still not frantically. It will be interesting (to me) to see how long it takes in calendar days (vs. writing days) to write this novel.

I'm thinking of discontinuing my habit of including my own fiction word count in The Numbers, and maybe discontinuing The Numbers altogether. If you have an opinion either way, either leave a comment on this post or email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

In a break from my own norm, I recently re-read my own novel The Consensus. It's a good story, but as my then first reader Kenneth Flowers pointed out, it begs for at least one sequel. You can read about it at <https://harveystanbrough.com/the-consensus/>.

Just in case anyone's interested, I recently added a Ghostwriting page to my main website under For Writers > Other Resources for Writers.

I'm not being a smart-aleck here. I believe everyone has a story in them, but I also know not everyone can find the time to sit down and actually write it. So I decided (again) to offer this service. This time it won't go away until I do. The direct link to the new page is <https://harveystanbrough.com/ghostwriting/>.

Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See "Cover Basics" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/cover-basics/>. A necessary finger-wagging, albeit (I hope) preaching to the choir.

See "Take A Long View on Research" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/08/take-a-long-view-on-research.html>.

Want to write a historic fantasy/quest? Maybe start with "The Witch's Eye" at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/loeil-de-la-sorciere-the-witch-s-eye>.

See "Let the Words Flow" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/david-farlands-writing-tips-let-the-words-flow/>.

See "Third person omniscient vs. limited vs. head jumping" at <https://nathanbransford.com/blog/2020/08/third-person-omniscient-vs-limited-vs-head-jumping>. (Thanks to the Passive Guy.)

See "Get Me Out of Here" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/get-me-out-of-here/>.

See "The Conspiracy on Pushkin Street..." at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-conspiracy-on-pushkin-street-the-costs-of-humor-in-the-ussr/>.

Finally, if you're a machine/AI-assisted kind of writer, see "Marlowe, A.I. for Novels" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/marlowe-a-i-for-novels/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 500 words

Writing of Blackwell Ops 8 (novel)

Day 1..... 1653 words. Total words to date..... 1653

Day 2..... 1043 words. Total words to date..... 2696

Day 3..... 1711 words. Total words to date..... 4407

| | |
|---|--------|
| Total fiction words for the month..... | 4407 |
| Total fiction words for the year..... | 314062 |
| Total nonfiction words for the month... | 5500 |
| Total nonfiction words for the year..... | 136660 |
| Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... | 450722 |
| | |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... | 5 |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... | X |
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... | 12 |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 50 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 208 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Atlas Obscura](#), [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Nathan Bransford](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Beware of Scammers

[August 29, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Topic: Beware of Scammers
- * Dave Farland's APEX writers group
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“The best research is often passive. Never be afraid to learn more about people and what they do—who they are.” John Gilstrap

“Like GPS navigation, which started as just a tool but has reduced our engagement with the act of navigating, AI language generators may start by sparing us labor but soon spare us thought.” David A. Price in The Wall Street Journal, courtesy The Passive Guy

Topic: Beware of Scammers

I understand there probably is not a real need for this topic on this site. But too much caution is a great deal better than not enough. I've talked about avoiding scammers a lot before, both here and over on [HarveyStanbrough.com](#), but new factors have come to light. (See “Scammers Impersonating Major Publishing Houses” in “Of Interest” below. When you read the sample email Writers Beware includes, I hope you'll wonder how in the hell any writer ever fell for it.)

Some scammers now are posing as literary agents. Others are posing as representatives of major publishing houses. Still others are posing as agents working for or in concert with major publishing houses.

1. NEVER pay money up front to have your work published. Period.
2. It's perfectly all right to pay a fee for a specific service (copyediting, for example, or cover design, etc.) but not if the offer includes a promise to publish after you've paid for certain services or even a carrot-on-a-stick possibility (or probability) of publication.
3. Never give ANY percentage of the copyright to your book to a person or entity providing service. Legitimate service providers require a fee, not a percentage of your copyright.
4. As you'll see in the article in "Of Interest," it's a really great idea to actually read the email address of the person or entity who contacts you. The scammer in the example uses a gmail address, not an actual publisher email address, though the publisher name might be part of the address.
5. A little unrelated, but always ALWAYS ALWAYS read Terms of Service. If you don't want to slog through all the legalese BS, at least do a search (in your browser menu, click Edit > Find On This Page) for "license" and "all rights" and "copyright" and read those sections.

Be careful out there.

In other news, it's no secret that my writing career is in need of a jump start. I'm thinking about signing up for Dave Farland's APEX writers group (again, see "Of Interest". It's \$209 for a full year. I'm far from wealthy, but a little over two bills seems a small price to pay to see whether it's right for me, and a year seems a good test.

Now, I'm not urging you to do the same, but I'd be remiss in my responsibilities as your mentor/instructor/friend if I failed to at least mention it. Whether you decide to join depends on what you've already learned and where you are in your development as a writer. But from what I've read, APEX accepts writers at all levels.

Currently though, the link to the Terms of Service in Dave's thecompleatwriter.com redirects to a website called Contently.com, where the Terms state that the author gives up "all rights" to his work to the publisher upon receipt of payment for a given work. For me that's a huge red flag.

I have an email out to Dave about that. I'm hoping the redirection is an error. I can't imagine a student of Algis Budrys would endorse such a practice.

Anyway, I hope your writing's going well. I'm visiting with a son and his girlfriend this weekend. Afterward, I might set aside the Blackwell Ops novel I started last week and start something else that interests me more.

Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See “Bad Practices, Good Practices, Best Practices” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/bad-practices-good-practices-best-practices/>. Dave Farland’s APEX writing group is looking better and better to me as a professional writer wanting to take the next step. Just something to consider.

See “Lake Pontchartrain Causeway” at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/lake-pontchartrain-causeway>.

See “Blast From The Early Days” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/blast-from-the-early-days/>.

See “An AI Breaks the Writing Barrier” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/an-ai-breaks-the-writing-barrier/>.

See “Scammers Impersonating Major Publishing Houses” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/scammers-impersonating-major-publishing-houses/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 720 words

Writing of Blackwell Ops 8 (novel)

Day 1..... 1653 words. Total words to date..... 1653

Day 2..... 1043 words. Total words to date..... 2696

Day 3..... 1711 words. Total words to date..... 4407

Total fiction words for the month..... 4407

Total fiction words for the year..... 314062

Total nonfiction words for the month... 6220

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 137380

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 451442

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5

Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Atlas Obscura](#), [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Only an Update

[August 30, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * An Update re APEX Writers Group
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“The power to tightly regulate is a drug not easily kicked.” James Scott Bell

An Update re APEX Writers Group

Re the problem with the Terms of Service I noted in [yesterday's Journal post](#), I received a quick and thorough response from both Dave Farland and his webmaster.

The CompleatWriter.com website is still under construction, and the offensive TOS was an item the webmaster had grabbed as a placeholder, and one that hadn't yet been corrected.

Dave himself was aghast at language that effectively is a rights-grab (as I expected he would be) and they're moving to correct the situation.

So joining APEX will be a safe endeavor should you decide to do so. If you choose to look it over, visit <https://www.thecompleatwriter.com/>.

Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See “The Creative Energy of Crowds” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/08/the-creative-energy-of-crowds.html>. This is where I got the quote of the day. I hope that quote isn't prophetic.

See “The unrelenting vision of Lucian Freud” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-unrelenting-vision-of-lucian-freud/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 190 words

Writing of Blackwell Ops 8 (novel)

Day 1..... 1653 words. Total words to date..... 1653
Day 2..... 1043 words. Total words to date..... 2696
Day 3..... 1711 words. Total words to date..... 4407

Total fiction words for the month..... 4407
Total fiction words for the year..... 314062
Total nonfiction words for the month... 6410
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 137570
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 451632

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [James Scott Bell](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Personal Update

[September 1, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Big deals in Of Interest
- * Personal update
- * CovID-19 stuff
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Terror’s not ghosts flying through the walls, going woo-woo-woo. Terror is when the party is over and everyone has gone home and at last you can take a deep breath and you lock the doors and your place is finally empty and quiet, and you turn out the lights and then you hear the toilet flush upstairs. That’s terror.” Warren Murphy

Okay, again I’m putting out this edition of the Journal mostly to provide the time-sensitive stuff in “Of Interest.” In full disclosure, I haven’t yet checked out the “Writing Class” (it’s FREE) in the second entry below, but Warren Murphy (now deceased) is a great and prolific writer.

And as long as I'm here, I thought I'd give you an update on my own silly stuff. It's all a matter of priorities, taking a deep breath and focusing on one mini-aspect at a time.

1. I made a conscious decision to go back to my cigars, though I have only one on most days and two on really rough days. Essentially, without going into boring details (we all have our problems, don't we?), I'm self-medicating with nicotine, and the act itself of enjoying a cigar has a calming effect. It also helps me function, so it's all good.

2. As a result of returning to my "normal" state, I've started walking again. And I actually enjoy it. I walk hard up a slight incline as far as I can go. Then I mark a progress line in the dirt with my shoe, turn around and relax my way (downhill) back to the house.

I started walking again about a week ago. That day I walked almost a half-mile out, then a half-mile back. This morning, I walked right at a mile out and a mile back. I generally go in the pre-dawn light and get back just before the sun rises. Yesterday I had the pleasure of walking in an Arizona 616 rain: 6 inches between drops and each drop is about 1/16th of an inch in diameter. Basically, a heavy mist. (grin)

Anyway, in the past week I've lost just under 10 pounds. And I needed to lose that, and about 20 more. Woohoo!

3. With those two aspects of my version of normal in place, now I can start ramping up the writing again, re-building that very enjoyable habit.

Finally, I also read a report recently that the CDC has drastically revised their data. Seems the time of attributing a death to COVID-19 "just because" is over. The CDC now reports that 94% of all deaths previously attributed to COVID-19 were actually caused by at least two underlying causes, like heart problems (present) and diabetes. Only 6% of all deaths previously reported as being the result of the virus were actually caused specifically by the virus. Again, woohoo! and with a health dose of "Well, duh."

Still, of course, follow your own heart and do what you think is right for yourself and those around you. However you do it, stay safe.

Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See "End of Summer Workshop Sale" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/end-of-summer-workshop-sale/>.

See Warren Murphy's "Writing Class" (it's free) at <http://warrenmurphy.com/index.php?page=writing-class>. (Thanks to Alexander T. for the suggestion.)

See “Vivian Stephens Helped Turn Romance Writing Into a Billion-Dollar Industry. Then She Got Pushed Out.” at <https://www.texasmonthly.com/the-culture/vivian-stephens-helped-turn-romance-writing-into-billion-dollar-industry/>. Thanks to The Passive Guy for the tip.

See “22 Themed Submissions Calls for September 2020” at <https://www.authorspublish.com/22-themed-submissions-calls-for-september-2020/>.

See “Let Your Fingers Do the Walking” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/08/let-your-fingers-do-the-walking.html>. An excellent article on researching with Google.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 610 words

Writing of Blackwell Ops 8 (novel)

Day 1..... 1653 words. Total words to date..... 1653

Day 2..... 1043 words. Total words to date..... 2696

Day 3..... 1711 words. Total words to date..... 4407

Day 4..... 1221 words. Total words to date..... 5628

Total fiction words for the month..... 5628

Total fiction words for the year..... 315283

Total nonfiction words for the month... 6410

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 137570

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 453463

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5

Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Texas Monthly](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Warren Murphy](#)

The Journal: Minor Update and “Deep POV”

[September 2, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * One astute reader
- * From David Farland's newsletter
- * Topic: On "Deep POV"
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

"Hachette Books, an imprint of Hachette Book Group, bought my book in October 2017. They paid me \$50,000 in the first of three installments constituting an advance against royalties. That first payment netted to around \$29,000 after agent commission and taxes. This money was supposed to cover the cost of the time it would take me to write the book, as well as all additional research and reporting—to say nothing of the years of research and reporting conducted on my own dime before the book's sale." Emma Copley Eisenberg

One astute reader (Thanks, Bruce) emailed to ask me for the link to the article where I read about the new CDC determination re COVID deaths. I should have added it to yesterday's Journal.

The link is <https://www.wnd.com/2020/08/cdc-nows-says-94-covid-deaths-underlying-condition-6-covid-alone/>.

One passage in particular in the article tickled me: "Based on what we've learned, we now understand that as you get older, your risk for severe disease, hospitalization, and death increases." My first thought was "Recent studies indicate as a balloon rises, it gets farther from the earth." (grin)

From David Farland's newsletter for you fantasy writers: "Fyrecon! will be held online November 12-14, 2020. Fyrecon is a great value, far less expensive than most other conventions and workshops. Check it out at" <https://www.fyrecon.com/>.

Topic: On So-Called "Deep POV"

Another writer (Thanks, Tony) emailed to ask my opinion of an article on "Deep POV." I've shared the link to the article in "Of Interest" below, but I admit I haven't read it yet.

I've encountered the term "Deep POV" before though, and commented on it (at length) at <https://harveystanbrough.com/pro-writers/deep-pov/>.

You'll find more at

* <https://harveystanbrough.com/pro-writers/pov-point-of-view/> and

* <https://harveystanbrough.com/pro-writers/on-building-suspense-and-creating-tension/> and

* <https://harveystanbrough.com/pro-writers/take-your-time-part-3/> and

* <https://harveystanbrough.com/pro-writers/what-writing-into-the-dark-really-is/>.

And there are other posts. Just key “Deep POV” into the Search block on the home page at [HarveyStanbrough.com](https://harveystanbrough.com).

I know. That’s a lot. But I suggest you get your favorite beverage, take a deep breath, and check out the links if you haven’t (or to refresh your memory if you have).

Put succinctly, as I replied to the writer who emailed me, “If you’re writing well in ‘limited third person’ or any other POV, you’re writing in ‘deep POV’.

In a nutshell, what many are calling “Deep POV” simply means describing every scene THROUGH the POV character’s (not the author’s) physical and emotional senses: so sights, sounds, smells, tastes and textures (for the physical senses), and mood (anger, remorse, joy, dread, etc.) from the emotional senses.

Note that one POV character might smell the “pleasant aroma” of pipe smoke in a library, whereas another POV character might recoil at the “awful stench” of the same aroma.

Writing this way (through the POV character’s senses) is an excellent way to describe a scene AND to subliminally convey part of your POV character’s back story.

Here’s the gist: The secret of “deep POV” is to run every word in the story through the POV character.

Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See “Men Are Not Women With Chest Hair, Part 2” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/09/men-are-not-women-with-chest-hair-part-2.html>. Great info to file away in your psyche.

See “Fact Checking Is the Core...” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/fact-checking-is-the-core-of-nonfiction-writing-why-do-so-many-publishers-refuse-to-do-it/>.

See “Printer Jam: Serious Supply Issues Disrupt the Book Industry’s Fall Season” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/printer-jam-serious-supply-issues-disrupt-the-book-industrys-fall-season/>. I can only chuckle. Reminds me of the Five Ps: Prior Planning Prevents P*ss Poor Performance.

See “The 19th-Century Nurse Who Was Secretly a Serial Killer” at <https://narratively.com/the-19th-century-nurse-who-was-secretly-a-serial-killer/>.

See “The story of a weird world I was warned never to tell” at <https://www.bbc.com/news/stories-42951788>.

See “4 Ways To Make Limited Third Person Into Deep POV” at <https://lisahallwilson.com/4-ways-to-make-limited-third-person-into-deep-pov/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 610 words

Writing of Blackwell Ops 8 (novel)

Day 1..... 1653 words. Total words to date..... 1653

Day 2..... 1043 words. Total words to date..... 2696

Day 3..... 1711 words. Total words to date..... 4407

Day 4..... 1221 words. Total words to date..... 5628

Total fiction words for the month..... 0

Total fiction words for the year..... 315283

Total nonfiction words for the month... 1220

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 138790

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 454073

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5

Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [BBC.com](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [LisaHallWilson.com](#), [Narratively.com](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Deep POV and Garry Rodgers

[September 3, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

* Quote of the Day

* Um, yeah.

* In today’s “Of Interest”

* Of Interest

* The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“In Deep POV, you’re writing AS the [POV] character instead of about them. The reader experiences the story as the character experiences the story to create an immersive effect. The reader can only know what the point of view character knows, sees, hears, intuits, learns, etc. Every word written comes from the POV character’s perspective.” Lisa Hall-Wilson

Um, yeah. As I wrote in the Journal yesterday, “Deep POV” is just a new name for understanding the craft of good storytelling.

And from what I could find on Amazon and her website, Ms. Hall-Wilson has written one novel. Otherwise she writes “how to write fiction” books. So take that for what it’s worth.

So although she got some of the information in her blog post (see yesterday’s “Of Interest”) right, I don’t really recommend Lisa Hall-Wilson as a source of valid writing instruction. I suggest you stick with the Dave Farlands and Kristine Kathryn Ruschs and Dean Wesley Smiths of the world.

In the first item in today’s “Of Interest” I’ve listed probably the most important link I’ve ever listed with regard to marketing as an indie publisher. Please, please do yourself a massive favor and click through on that link.

Garry Rodgers, a retired RCMP detective and coroner and forensic examiner, wrote the article and included several more links to help you learn about marketing on Amazon, the gorilla of indie publishing.

I also recommend subscribing to Garry’s Dying Words blog at <http://dyingwords.net/>.

Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See “Top Ten Tips for Amazon eBook Publishing Success” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/09/top-ten-tips-for-amazon-ebook-publishing-success.html>.

See “Solving the Decades-Old Mystery of the White Box That Fell From the Sky” at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/white-box-mystery-solved-canada-cia-camera-balloon>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 300 words

Writing of Blackwell Ops 8 (novel)

Day 1..... 1653 words. Total words to date..... 1653

Day 2..... 1043 words. Total words to date..... 2696

Day 3..... 1711 words. Total words to date..... 4407
Day 4..... 1221 words. Total words to date..... 5628

Total fiction words for the month..... 0
Total fiction words for the year..... 315283
Total nonfiction words for the month... 1520
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 139090
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 454373

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Atlas Obscura](#), [Garry Rodgers](#), [KillZone Blog](#)

The Journal: About Marketing, and Alison Holt

[September 6, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * About that second quote (gripping about marketing)
- * Alison Naomi Holt and Kickstarter
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“An author who gives a manager or publisher any rights in his work except those immediately and specifically required for its publication or performance is for business purposes an imbecile.”
George Bernard Shaw (Thanks to The Passive Voice for the quote)

I would add that any writer/author who gives any manager (agent) or publisher all rights needs to work on his or her self-esteem.

“There’s nothing like low sales to shake an author’s confidence. But rather than letting it send you into a negative shame spiral, see it for what it is: a symptom. Your job is to uncover a symptom of what?” Erika Liodice at Writer Unboxed

I admit, that second quote got to me a little.

I'm a very compartmentalized guy. And one small subcompartment of my current "depression" (too strong a word) revolves around wanting to know more about marketing. And then actually being interested in marketing what I write. 'Cause I have to admit, at the moment I know very little to nothing about marketing, and as a bonus, I pretty much don't care. Even the word "marketing" puts me to sleep.

But I'll be looking into it more anyway, albeit grudgingly. Hence the link in "Of Interest" a day or two ago for Garry Rodgers' post about what works for him re Amazon.

But at the same time, I'm also striving to remember not to let marketing (and fretting about sales) into my writing. That is, I'm striving to remain unattached from Outcome. That's always been easy for me before, but lately not so much.

In my experience, being unattached from Outcome is the only way to live a passably worry-free life, or at least to worry only about things that really matter.

My mother-in-law used to say "If you wouldn't notice it from a galloping horse, it probably doesn't matter." I think she was onto something there. But I digress.

I learned long ago that I can control only my own actions and reactions. In writing, for example, that means I can control what I write, but not how many readers buy what I write. Or how I used to say it to various writing groups, "You can't win the lottery if you don't buy a ticket."

To again translate that to writing, I can't sell what I don't write or publish. I mean, yes, there are some things I can do to improve my CHANCE of sales, like

- * continually improve my craft through practice (which means putting new words on the page),
- * create attractive, genre-specific covers,
- * create strong sales copy, etc.

But beyond that, it's really out of my control.

Can I write *and* market? Maybe. But if I can't, I want to come out the other side as a storyteller. Even with a large boatload of IP already in my inventory, I don't want to go stagnant. If I end up having to choose between being a storyteller and a salesperson, I'll stick with being a storyteller and let my heirs rake in the bucks. (grin)

A longtime friend and outstanding fiction writer, Alison Naomi Holt, is running a Kickstarter campaign to raise funds to put the first book of her truly excellent Detective Alex Wolfe series (*Credo's Hope*) into audio.

If you enjoy detective/PI fiction (and/or wry humor), and if you haven't read her Alex Wolfe series yet, trust me, you're missing a sure bet on some great entertainment.

The actual Kickstarter funded in the first 26 hours. (Congrats to Alison!) Still, please take a look and see whether this project might interest you. She put up some great stretch goals. We should all support each other, or at least that's my take on it.

So see "Audio Edition of Credo's Hope" at <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/alisonnaomiholt/audio-edition-of-credos-hope>. And please, tell your friends.

Oh, PS: Alison even offers a glimpse of the finished product. Click <https://www.alisonholtbooks.com/chapter-one-audio-of-credos-hope/> to hear Chapter One of the forthcoming audio book. And just so you know, the link to the fairly derisive post by DWS in "Of Interest" appears in this issue strictly by coincidence.

Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See "Rights Reversion..." at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/rights-reversion-how-to-give-an-out-of-print-book-new-life-with-self-publishing/>. Especially see PG's take.

See "I Shrug At Audio Books" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/i-shrug-at-audio-books/>.

See "The Cujo Method" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/09/the-cujo-method.html>. Interesting about the novel Cujo and the technique Master Writer Stephen King used in it. Otherwise I posted this because it made me shudder. Conscious-mind writing, anyone?

See "Carl Sagan's Bullshit Detection Kit" at <http://dyingwords.net/carl-sagans-bullshit-detection-kit/>. Be prepared to Think.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 750 words

Writing of Blackwell Ops 8 (novel)

Day 1..... 1653 words. Total words to date..... 1653
Day 2..... 1043 words. Total words to date..... 2696
Day 3..... 1711 words. Total words to date..... 4407
Day 4..... 1221 words. Total words to date..... 5628

Total fiction words for the month..... 0
Total fiction words for the year..... 315283
Total nonfiction words for the month... 2270
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 139840
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 455123

| | |
|---|-----|
| Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... | 5 |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... | X |
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... | 12 |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 50 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 208 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [DyingWords.net](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: In my own writing, a decision

[September 8, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * In my own writing, a decision
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“I’ll go to the grave with some regrets, but none will be for things I wanted to do and didn’t try.”
Wes Crowley

In my own writing, I’ve decided to set aside Blackwell Ops 8 for now. Frankly, I’m just not into it, and (in my opinion) it reads like I’m not into it.

Important: I used the qualifier “in my opinion” above because my opinion is only *one* opinion. Another reader might think it’s fine. If I were strictly writing into the dark, I would ignore my own opinion, but I’ve been over this a few times, so I can’t ignore the sense that it’s not good.

When I started writing BO-8, it was supposed to be a jumpstart to jar me out of my malaise. But for some reason, I’ve struggled with it.

Now, as longtime followers of this Journal know, I sometimes bog down later in a story. Then I write the next sentence, then keep on going. It’s all good.

But I never bog down at the beginning (the first 20,000 words or so). In all the stuff I’ve written, this is only the third time this has happened. The first time, I picked up on the idea again later and wrote the whole novel, Situation Solved.

So instead of forcing this one (though I did that for a few sessions), I stopped, sat back and thought about it. Why was I bogging down?

Reading another writer's work gave me the answer.

There's another author whose work, and more specifically, one series, I really enjoy. The stories pull me in to the point that I'd rather read them than do anything else.

But the last novel in that favorite series didn't feel right. And that I was conscious of that fact rang a warning bell. So I asked myself why it didn't feel right.

The answer was this: it felt like the author was struggling. It felt like the author was "working" at what came naturally and easily in the earlier books in the series. Readers can tell, folks.

And that was a wake-up call for me with Blackwell Ops 8. If I was struggling to write it, readers would know.

Sure, I could finish it (albeit like pulling teeth) and put it out anyway, but the realization that my readers would probably be able to tell I wasn't really into the story myself made my decision to set it aside easy.

Honestly, I think I need to simply relax and give myself more time to work through the transition I'm currently going through. Being my age and at my level of health, that isn't as easy as it sounds.

But I'll hold out to write something I really want to write. I'll write something I truly enjoy writing, let the story unfold naturally and smoothly, like the first 7 Blackwell Ops novels and every other novel, novella and short story I've written.

Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See "Deepening Your Descriptions" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/david-farlands-writing-tips-deepening-your-descriptions/>. To his last statement in this post "...you need only to imagine the scene in greater detail" I would add "through all five of the POV character's physical senses."

See "The Language of Cops, Attorneys, and Crooks" at <https://leelofland.com/terms-not-so-endearing-the-language-of-cops-attorneys-and-crooks/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 570 words

Writing of Blackwell Ops 8 (novel)

Day 1..... 1653 words. Total words to date..... 1653
Day 2..... 1043 words. Total words to date..... 2696
Day 3..... 1711 words. Total words to date..... 4407
Day 4..... 1221 words. Total words to date..... 5628 (stalled)

Total fiction words for the month..... 0
Total fiction words for the year..... 315283
Total nonfiction words for the month... 2840
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 140410
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 455693

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Quotes and Other Things

[September 9, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * If you've never read
- * In some of Dean's lectures
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

"I teach a number of writing classes and attend my share of conferences, and one of the questions that always comes up goes something like this: 'I hear authors talk about how there comes a point in every story when the characters take over and start writing the story for you. Does that happen to you?' The short answer is no; and frankly, it sort of ticks me off. I'd love to cede the process of plot development to my characters." John Gilstrap

I wish I could teach him the simple lesson: to trust himself, to trust what he knows.

“Just then it came to him that he was going to die. It came with a rush; not as a rush of water nor of wind, but of a sudden evil-smelling emptiness and the odd thing was that the hyena slipped lightly along the edge of it.” Ernest Hemingway in “The Snows of Kilimanjaro”

“He had loved too much, demanded too much, and he wore it all out.” Again, Ernest Hemingway in “The Snows of Kilimanjaro”

If you’ve never read “The Snows of Kilimanjaro” I hope you will find it and read it. The best way is to purchase *The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway: Finca Vigia Edition*.

And if you’ve read it, I hope you’ll read it again. In most of his stories, though they are not about writing, he talks about writing. It’s an excellent way to learn how to “write the best sentence you can.”

In some of Dean’s lectures and workshops, he talks a lot about the Adobe In-Design program. If you like Adobe and don’t mind paying a monthly fee to use it, that’s fine.

But if you’d rather make a one-time payment and own the program, I recommend Serif’s Affinity Publisher. It costs only \$50 (less than 2 months rental of In-Design), and it’s very user friendly.

Not only can you lay out magazines, novels, etc. but you can also use it to design book covers.

You can learn about Affinity Publisher and even download a free trial version at <https://affinity.serif.com/en-us/publisher/>.

Disclaimer: I have Affinity Publisher, but for now I’m still using Serif’s legacy program, Serif PagePlus. I also recommend that program for book covers if you can still find a copy.

Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See “A Few More Hours On The Half-Priced Sale” at <https://www.deanwesleymith.com/a-few-more-hours-on-the-half-priced-sale/>.

See “Well Behaved Characters (Redux)” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/09/27038.html>.

See “Retirement Secrets of Mexico Preorder” at <https://russellblake.com/retirement-secrets-of-mexico-preorder/>. I found this of interest so I thought you might too.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 450 words

Writing of

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 0
Total fiction words for the year..... 315283
Total nonfiction words for the month... 3290
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 140860
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 456143

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Ernest Hemingway](#), [KillZone Blog](#),
[Professional Writer Series](#), [Russell Blake](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Doodle-bugs and Bigfoot

[September 11, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * During my morning walk
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“We set goals to help ourselves, not to harm ourselves.” a writer closely related to Wes Crowley (grin, and thanks to Aldred G. for the reminder)

During my morning walk, if I encounter other creatures (jackrabbits, coyotes, lines of hard-working ants, etc.) I always say a cordial good morning.

This morning on my way back to the house, a doodle-bug crossed my path. As is my habit, I said, “Good morning, Doodle-bug!”

And just as I was about to step over him, he stopped, looked up at me, and said, “Doodle-bug? My name is Gregory.” Then he huffed and went on about his business.

I apologized and did the same, but I can't escape the feeling I lost the chance to gain a new friend. As I walked, I was reminded yet again (on this day of all days) that generalizations are not only silly but can cause irreparable harm.

So now I'm thinking maybe the Geico Insurance commercial in which Agent Flo is sitting on a rock and having a brief conversation with Bigfoot, who gives her a hurt, confused look and tells her his name is Darrel, isn't so far-fetched after all. If I ever meet a "bigfoot," I will be polite. I will ask whether he's related to Darrel, and perhaps, whether he's a writer.

Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See "Mighty Irks From Little Eggcorns Grow" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/09/mighty-irks-from-little-eggcorns-grow.html>.

See "Sincerity and Song" at <https://hughhowey.com/sincerity-and-song/>.

See "Cannibal Ants, Nuclear Bunker" at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/cannibal-ants-soviet-nuclear-bunker>.

See "12 Old Words That Survived by Getting Fossilized in Idioms" at <https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/51150/12-old-words-survived-getting-fossilized-idioms>. We'll have to forgive this writer for misspelling "dessert," even if she *is* a linguist.

See "100 of the Most Commonly Misspelled Words in the English Language" at <https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/629813/100-commonly-misspelled-words-english>.

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Hugh Howey](#), [Atlas Obscura](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [MentalFloss](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Staring at the Sun, and Revisiting Hemingway

[September 12, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * If you ever wanted to stare at the sun
- * I've been reading
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Before reading the OP, PG might have characterized himself as a cynic, but afterwards, he thinks he’s more of a practitioner of targeted skepticism.” The Passive Guy

Yup, that’s me: a Practitioner of Targeted Skepticism. Nice to know I’m not alone.

“We set goals to help ourselves, not to harm ourselves.” a writer closely related to Wes Crowley

“Goals change over time — and that’s okay!” Joanna Penn (*words to live by*)

“The problem is, as an author you can find yourself just going through the motions.” David Farland

“Reduction to the lowest common denominator should be reserved for math, not the language.” a writer closely related to Wes Crowley in a response to a comment on Elaine Viets’ recent TKZ post

If you ever wanted to stare at the sun without suffering any consequential damage to your retinas, today would be your lucky day if you lived in southeast Arizona.

We have so much smoke in the air from the California wildfires that the sun, almost an hour after rising, is a bright, non-glaring cherry-red ball in the sky. At distance*, it’s roughly half the width of my index finger, so about 3/8”.

*I’ve heard it’s actually a lot larger close up.

I’ve been reading a lot of Hemingway lately, as you could probably tell from my recent recommendation that you read or revisit his short story, “The Snows of Kilimanjaro.”

I always learn (or realize or remember) something more about writing when I read Hemingway’s work. And it always motivates me to write fiction.

Sometimes I’ll use a line from his writing as an epigram. More often I’ll simply steal an idea and expand on it or take it in a different direction. With Hemingway, it’s all about mood.

For example, Hemingway’s work (well, the tone or mood of his work, really) inspired my short stories “Old Suits” and “The Breath Formed” and “No Better Day” and “White Ring Quilt” and many others, as well as my short Nick Spalding series of novels, the novel *Nothing for Nothing*, the novella *Jobs Like That* and probably several others.

I especially enjoy his wartime and travel (Paris, Africa, the sea) stories. I enjoy some of the Nick stories too, but not all. And I love the little vignettes he titled “Chapter I,” “Chapter II,” etc. and stuffed between the regular short stories in *The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway: The Finca Vigia Edition*.

Thing is, the publisher didn’t list those vignettes in the table of contents, so they were a happy little bonus.

I was so impressed with that format that I copied it when I created my own short story collection, *Six Years in May*, though I titled the vignettes “Part 1,” “Part 2,” and so on. So in that collection the reader gets 13 short stories and a dozen or so vignettes. And when you’ve read all the vignettes, they comprise an extra short story. (grin)

But back to Hemingway’s short story “The Snows of Kilimanjaro.”

As any who have read any of my fiction can attest, I enjoy plunging deep into the protagonist’s (and sometimes the antagonist’s) mind. I believe that’s the quickest and most enjoyable way to get the reader to invest in the character. And few short stories are better than Hemingway’s “The Snows of Kilimanjaro” to witness the master of that technique.

I hope you’ve read it and studied that story. If you haven’t and you’re still interested, you can find a free PDF download of it at <https://bit.ly/2ZmHPdf>. The download is automatic. (Thanks to Bob for the download link.)

Anyway, I’ve started a story, a deep dive into a protagonist’s head. At the moment it’s merely something I’m enjoying a great deal, the way others might enjoy golf or a trip to the beach. I’m not sure whether it will be a short story, a novella, a novel or anything at all. I’ll report it or begin reporting it below when I’ve seen what it’s going to be.

Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See “Cynicism and The Function of Cynicism at the Present Time” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/cynicism-and-the-function-of-cynicism-at-the-present-time/>.

See “Lessons Learned From 9 Years As An Author Entrepreneur” at <https://www.thecreativepenn.com/2020/09/10/9-years-author-entrepreneur/> (with thanks to the Passive Guy).

See “Fiction Favorites of the Espionage Pros” at <https://writersinthestormblog.com/2020/09/fiction-favorites-of-the-espionage-pros/>. Again, a nod to the Passive Guy.

See “Why are you writing that Novel?” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/why-are-you-writing-that-novel/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 760 words

Writing of

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

| | |
|---|--------|
| Total fiction words for the month..... | 0 |
| Total fiction words for the year..... | 315283 |
| Total nonfiction words for the month... | 4350 |
| Total nonfiction words for the year..... | 141920 |
| Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... | 457203 |
| | |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... | 5 |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... | X |
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... | 12 |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 50 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 208 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Creative Penn](#), [David Farland](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Writers in the Storm](#)

The Journal: Flash Fiction and Being PC

[September 13, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Flash Fiction and Shameless Self-Promotion
- * A New Font: Polite Type
- * Over the past two days
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“We are not trying to entertain the critics. I’ll take my chances with the public.” Walt Disney

Flash Fiction and Shameless Self-Promotion

In today's “Of Interest” section I’m helping advertise a 4-week course on writing flash fiction. I visited the site and it looks like a good course, though I suspect in her definition of “flash fiction” the instructor includes what we used to call the “short short story” (a short story of fewer than 2,000 words).

My own definition of flash fiction is a complete short story written in 99 words or fewer, including the title. Writing one is an excellent way to study the genre and see all the elements (setting, character, conflict and resolution) at work in close proximity.

When I taught flash fiction in live seminars, I likened seeing those elements to watching the interaction of goldfish in a body of water:

- * If you write a novel, you're watching 4 goldfish (the elements of fiction) interact in a sea.
- * If you write a novella, you're watching the 4 goldfish interact in a lake.
- * If you write a short story, you're watching the 4 goldfish interact in a pond or swimming pool.
- * But if you write flash fiction, the 4 goldfish are interacting in a clear-glass one-gallon jar. (grin) As you might imagine, it's not a bad way to learn to write fiction.

So I encourage you to enroll in Ms. Peary's course if you're interested.

Or you can buy the Kindle edition of my book, *The Art of Writing Flash Fiction*, for only \$3 at <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B004SBO8Q4>.

Or you can buy my audio Course 8: *Writing Flash Fiction* for only \$15 at at <https://stonethreadpublishing.com/audio-lecture-series/>.

A New Font: Polite Type

Also in "Of Interest" there are two articles about an interactive font called Polite Type.

The font actually "rewrites hurtful words, replacing them with more inclusive ones." Yep, I'm not kidding. When I first read the post on *The Passive Voice*, I literally looked up at my calendar to be sure it wasn't April 1.

Then I looked up the site for the font itself, and I realized I have lived entirely too long.

Now you too can both practice political correctness AND enlist in the booming Cancel Culture by simply downloading and using a font that ensures self-censorship. Free, naturally.

Note that this font guards only against hurtful words, but not really. In a test, I typed in "You go to hell." It blurred everything after "You."

Then I typed in "I'm going to kick your ass." As you might expect, it blurred the last word. (I'm not sure why it didn't substitute "butt" or "fanny" or "derriere" or something. When I rewrote the sentence with "butt" it was fine.)

On the other hand, "I'm going to murder you" was fine. But when I typed "Hal is going to lynch that negro," the program changed "negro" to "black person." So the lynching part apparently is all fine with the font and its creators as long as Hal lynches a "black person." Feeling a bit provoked, I typed in "He was out to rape a bitch" and the program changed the final word to "a female dog." Again, not kidding. Apparently the rape itself, and apparently inter-species breeding, are all right.

And for those “words that have no literal translation, or their meaning is too broad to replace with just one word or their purpose is only that of hurting someone,” the font includes the blur symbol, which replaces the “offensive” word. Again, I’m not [blurred]ing kidding.

Finally, “Once the font is installed, it works both offline and online.” I was unable to learn whether the font also automatically replaces all the other fonts on your computer when it’s installed. It probably doesn’t. That’s probably a feature they’re developing for the future.

But kidding around and sarcasm aside, with all the denotations, connotations and nuances of words in our language, there are very few exact synonyms.

That’s one reason I’ve always advised writers to use a thesaurus only to spur their own thought process and not as a grab-bag of handy words to plug in here and there. The language really doesn’t work that way.

I will continue also to tell writers to dig deep and write exactly what they mean, or as Hemingway put it, “Write the truest sentence you know.” And I will never advise anyone to allow or enable censorship, contextual or otherwise.

Yes, People At The Polite Font, there are times when some absolute jerk says or writes something specifically to hurt (or “offend”) someone, but you know what? People like that won’t download and use this font anyway. At least not until it becomes mandatory. (Oops, more sarcasm. Sorry.)

For an instant I thought about writing a future SF story in which PC has taken over everything, all writers everywhere are subjected to a highly advanced version of Polite Font and —

well, and then I realized there wouldn’t *be* any writers. There would be word factories (propaganda factories) certainly, probably reminiscent of the vacuum-tube packed facility featured in the film *Fahrenheit 451*. But very few people would even be literate anymore because there would simply be no reason to be literate. Or to communicate, really, especially in writing. Communicating would be too risky. You know, like it’s becoming today.

Sigh.

Over the past two days I finished what is for now, at least, a short story and shipped it off to a few first readers, more to get their reader reaction than for proofing. Someday it might become the introductory chapter for a novel.

Writing the story was more an exercise in deep-diving into the mind of a character than anything else, and despite the subject matter it was a great deal of fun to write.

Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See “Announcing The Flash Fiction Workshop With Ella Peary” at <https://authorspublish.thinkific.com/courses/the-flash-fiction-workshop-with-ella-peary-september-2020>.

See “PC Font” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/pc-font/>. I checked my computer clock to be sure it isn’t April 1.

See “The Polite Type” at <https://www.thepolitetype.com/>. Be sure to also read the (obviously staged) Questions and Answers at <https://www.thepolitetype.com/Information/questions-and-answers.html>.

See “Name Generator” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/name-generator/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1050 words

Writing of “The Worlds” (short story)

Day 1..... 2010 words. Total words to date..... 2010

Day 2..... 3263 words. Total words to date..... 5273 (done)

Total fiction words for the month..... 5273

Total fiction words for the year..... 320556

Total nonfiction words for the month... 5400

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 142970

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 464526

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5

Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: A Very Brief Update

[September 15, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * In response to an image
- * Two first readers
- * Of Interest
- * The walking
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Dystopia doesn’t arrive with a bang, but in a gradual slide. We read and watch those narratives with terror. But that’s only because we’re on the outside, and can see what’s happening. Living in a dystopia just feels like living: you get through one day, and then you get through the next, and then the next.” Anne Helen Petersen

“Masks are for those people who really believed their clapping saved Tinkerbell.” Mark Lang

In response to an image that popped into my head, I wrote an opening that turned out to be the first chapter of a new novel late yesterday.

I’ll write on it again today, see where it goes.

Two first readers seemed to really enjoy “The Worlds” (the third hasn’t reported yet, but that’s fine) so I’ll publish it as a short story when I make the time to do so. Really it was more an exercise in writing intensive, super-tight description than anything else, so it’s kind of a win-win.

The walking is going really well. I go almost every day, almost always in the pre-dawn cool, and always at least a mile. Sometimes two, but always briskly. Feels great, and the weight is dropping off. In a month I’ve gone from 199 (yeah, and I’m only 5’7” these days) down to 188. My goal is 170-175.

Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See “habituation to horror” at <https://annehelen.substack.com/p/habituation-to-horror>. The article is a downer teetering on the brink of melodrama, but it’s rife with story ideas and the core is intriguing. See the quote of the day above.

See “An inland hurricane...” at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2020/08/14/iowa-derecho-attention-aid/>.

See “How a Portuguese-to-English Phrasebook Became a Cult Comedy Sensation” at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/how-a-portuguese-to-english-phrasebook-became-a-cult-comedy-sensation>.

See “Kitchen Dogs” at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/the-best-kitchen-gadget-of-the-1600s-was-a-small-shortlegged-dog>.

See “Sweden shows lockdowns were unnecessary...” at <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/sweden-shows-lockdowns-were-unnecessary-no-wonder-public-health-officials-hate-it>. Not kidding, folks. Please read this.

See “Trainwreck Fall Edition” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/trainwreck-fall-edition/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 330 words

Writing of **Body on the Beach** (novel, working title)

Day 1..... 1135 words. Total words to date..... 1135

Total fiction words for the month..... 6408

Total fiction words for the year..... 321691

Total nonfiction words for the month... 5730

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 149330

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 464991

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5

Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Anne Helen](#), [Atlas Obscura](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Washington Examiner](#), [Washington Post](#)

The Journal: Can You Make a Living Writing Short Fiction?

[September 16, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

* Topic: Can You Make a Living Writing Short Fiction?

* Of Interest

* The Numbers

Topic: Can You Make a Living Writing Short Fiction?

Not sure why I thought of this again today, but a while back, probably a year or so ago, a friend asked whether I thought a writer could make a living writing short fiction.

I said no, I didn't believe so.

I was thinking of the hierarchy of sales in ebooks. Novels in series sell best, then individual novels, then novellas, then short story collections, then short stories. So looking at that, no, you can't really make much money writing short fiction.

BUT short fiction takes a lot less time to write than novellas or novels. And there are a LOT of magazine markets for short fiction now. And the submission process is relatively easy (just be sure to follow the publication's guidelines).

And there are [Heinlein's Rules](#)....

So let's say the writer is an adherent of Heinlein's Rules, meaning he spends his writing time practicing his craft rather than hovering over rewrites.

And let's say the writer is relatively prolific. If he can routinely turn out one or more novel per month, he could probably turn out 20 to 30 short stories in the same month instead.

And if he submits those short stories to markets that pay professional rates (say 5 cents or more per word), that's 20 to 30 submissions in a month, every month. Plus he's constantly practicing his craft and improving his storytelling ability, so the acceptances will start to come in. Plus when a rejection comes in, the writer sends the submission right back out to another market.

So my answer has changed. If a writer *enjoys writing short fiction*, has the ability to approach this thing we do as a profession, and follows the roadmap above, then yes, I believe a writer can make good money, maybe even a living, writing short stories.

Just wanted to get this out there. Of course, it's just my luck that I'd rather write novels. Sigh.

Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See "Vicolo Inferno" at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/vicolo-inferno>. Exciting. Not a great article, but this caused me to wonder just how it would be to write a full battle scene in a tightly confined space.

See "Lakeside Ghost Towns" at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/ghost-towns-lake-urmia-iran>. More story/scene/setting ideas.

See "Starting a Story" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/david-farlands-writing-tip-starting-a-story/>. Does anyone here still need help starting a story?

See “Aboard the Giant Sand-Sucking Ships...” at <https://getpocket.com/explore/item/aboard-the-giant-sand-sucking-ships-that-china-uses-to-reshape-the-world>. Story ideas abound. Long article. Stick with it.

See “The Navajo Code Talkers” at <http://ronnyhermandejong.com/a-new-life-retirement-at-its-best-2020-38/>. You’ll have to scroll down a bit. There’s a short, very good film at the end.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 450 words

Writing of *Body on the Beach* (novel, working title)

Day 1..... 1135 words. Total words to date..... 1135

Day 1..... 1409 words. Total words to date..... 2544

Total fiction words for the month..... 7817

Total fiction words for the year..... 323100

Total nonfiction words for the month... 6180

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 143750

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 466850

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5

Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Atlas Obscura](#), [David Farland](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Thoughts on Walking

[September 17, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Do you have any favorite quotes
- * If you aren’t a subscriber
- * I’m a fortunate guy — thoughts on walking
- * I didn’t write yesterday

- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Don’t let people drive you crazy when you know it’s in walking distance.” Author Unknown

“I have two doctors, my left leg and my right.” G.M. Trevelyan

“An early-morning walk is a blessing for the whole day.” Henry David Thoreau

“It is not easy to walk alone in the country without musing upon something.” Charles Dickens

“If you seek creative ideas go walking.
Angels whisper to a man when he goes for
a walk. Raymond I. Myers

“Look I probably should have told you this before but you see... well... insanity runs in my family. It practically gallops.” Mortimer Brewster (played by Cary Grant) in the film *Arsenic and Old Lace* (Thanks to the Passive Guy for this one.)

Do you have any favorite quotes on walking and creativity? If so, share them with me in the comments.

If you aren’t a subscriber to the Atlas Obscura (FREE) newsletter, I strongly recommend subscribing. Again, it’s free, and story ideas abound. You can subscribe by scrolling to the bottom of the page at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/>.

I’m a fortunate guy. I’m one of those who can drop weight just by walking. Not everyone can, depending on how well their various glands, etc. are working. As a bonus, walking seems to have a cumulative effect of easing the pain of arthritis in my lower spine. (Pain is too strong a word; as we do with all such problems, we get used to it.)

I’m also fortunate to have a clear walking path east of my house.

On that path, a former pasture access road that meanders eventually to and past the former town playground and park and then past the local volunteer fire station, I can walk a circuit of a little over 2 miles. The penultimate 1/2 mile or so of that particular course lies along a fairly quiet state road.

But I haven’t walked that circuit yet because I don’t like changing surfaces as I walk (soft dirt to unforgiving asphalt and back). Doing so can cause shin splints. I learned that back when I ran instead of walked and reveled in the ignorance of a bullet-proof youth.

Or I can turn around at a gate just shy of the local fire station, which is located outside of town along a country lane. If I turn around there, I’ll log an out-and-back of right at 3.1 miles (5k).

As I leave my house and walk east/northeast along the pasture access road, a range of rocky mud hills lies to the south and parallels my route. To the north and east is open desert, very sparsely populated with scrub mesquite, acacia, creosote and the occasion barrel or jumping cholla or pencil cholla cactus.

On the slopes of the hills, the scrub brush is thicker and punctuated occasionally with juniper and, less often, cedar trees.

I've walked the hills before too, but not at this time of year. At this time of year (spring, summer, fall) there's too great a chance of encountering a rattlesnake. And really, what self-respecting rattler doesn't mind a human stomping cluelessly through his living room? What self-respecting rattler wouldn't defend his home?

So if I walked through that brush and got fanged, I wouldn't have a valid complaint except against my own stupidity. Like a swimmer who goes into the ocean and then complains when he loses a limb to shark. So I don't walk the hills at this time of year, and I never swim in the ocean.

Despite the out-and-back aspect of most of my walks, the path is interesting enough that I don't get bored. Chiefly because I can wander off the path at any point into the open desert and explore. As I said, the vegetation is very sparse.

As long as I'm headed east/northeast, there's a gentle upward slope to the terrain. The elevation increases about 80 feet over about 9/10ths of a mile. (I haven't done the math to figure out the grade yet.) The slope is just enough to make me lean into the walk on the way out. So it's a great workout going out, and I can relax my way back to the house once I turn around.

I'm blessed. I walk in the pre-dawn cool of the morning, a benefit of autumn in the high desert, so most often I get to witness a different sunrise every morning. That among the sweet blossoms of acacia and, if it's rained recently or the humidity is up, the fresh scent of creosote.

And when I reach whatever turnaround point I've selected for the day, I'm doubly blessed with a view of the blue Whetstone mountains to the west, the Rincons (near Tucson) to the northwest, and the Huachuca (Thunder) mountains near Sierra Vista to the southwest.

It's a great life.

And yes, among many other things, I think about stories or possibilities for stories as I walk. Some writers "wait" for inspiration. I'm surrounded by it.

I didn't write yesterday for various reasons. The walk, really, was the only good part of the day. I'll write again today.

Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See “Wildfire Archaeology” at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/wildfire-archaeology-american-west>. The article blames “federal wildfire suppression policies,” but state governors bear most of the blame. When the feds suggest or even mandate conducting preventative controlled burns to deplete fuel and the governors ignore them, well, there y’go. To avoid getting into politics, I won’t name particular states.

See “Woodpecker Wars” at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/acrorn-woodpecker-wars>. Story ideas abound.

Like magic? See “Exclusive Magic Show” at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/atlas-obscura-fan-favorites-camera-tricks-with-ben-seidman-tickets-117448227811>.

See “Dream Job” at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/eternal-employment-in-göthenburg-sweden>.

See “23 Years Ago” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/23-years-ago/>.

See “Top Ten Tips on Formatting eBooks from MS Word” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/09/top-ten-tips-on-formatting-ebooks-from-ms-word.html>.

See “Samuel L. Jackson – celebrity voice for Alexa” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/samuel-l-jackson-celebrity-voice-for-alexa/>. I don’t (and won’t) have Alexa, but if I did I think I’d use this.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 980 words

Writing of *Body on the Beach* (novel, working title)

Day 1..... 1135 words. Total words to date..... 1135

Day 1..... 1409 words. Total words to date..... 2544

Total fiction words for the month..... 7817

Total fiction words for the year..... 323100

Total nonfiction words for the month... 7160

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 144730

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 467830

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5

Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Atlas Obscura](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Stealing Valuable Classes

[September 18, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Since I took part
- * Yesterday I reported
- * Re yesterday's link
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Science fiction writers foresee the inevitable, and although problems and catastrophes may be inevitable, solutions are not.” Isaac Asimov (Thanks to TPV for the quote.)

“[R]eading Mr. Liu [Cixin]’s fiction is essential for understanding how China views America and the world today.” Niall Ferguson

[Referring to Mr. Ferguson’s quote], “[T]his is the biggest misinterpretation of my work. ... [In my books], aliens are aliens, space is space.” Liu Cixin, Chinese SF author

Good on Liu Cixin for defending his work.

Since I took part in a recent Kickstarter (The Boss, Diving Universe) with a meager \$5 (or maybe \$10, I forget) donation, yesterday I received all the stretch goals in an email from WMG Publishing (DWS and KKR). Included in those stretch goals were four or five electronic books. Those more than repaid me for my small donation.

But also included were four “pop-up” workshops, valued at \$150 each: How to Write a Novella, Science Fiction World Building, Creating Believable Aliens, and Living in Space.

There’s always something else to learn, and getting \$600 worth of pop-up workshops for a ridiculously small donation is practically highway robbery, only without having to stand out in the heat along a highway and risk heat stroke or being run over.

I think Dean and Kris have kept open “late pledges” on that Kickstarter, and I suspect you can still get all the stretch goals in exchange for a small donation. Take a look at “Doing Something New...” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/doing-something-new/>.

I tell myself this isn't really theft, but I'm not entirely convinced. Still, since Dean and Kris want to practically give this stuff away, I think I can live with it. (grin)

Yesterday I reported that I planned to write on my novel again. Well, that was the plan. Then I got the email from WMG with the access links to the stretch goals (and those pop-ups) and decided to make much of yesterday classroom time.

One thing I learned (re-realized) is that novellas (15,000 to 25,000 words) can be as lucrative or more so than short stories. So add that to whatever you gleaned from my recent Journal post on [making money with short fiction](#).

Consider, novellas

1. Sell as well as novels.
2. Like short stories, can sell to the magazine markets.
3. Can sell as part of a novella series or a novel series, and
4. Are not as "daunting" as writing a full novel (if you find the prospect of writing a novel daunting)

Re yesterday's link to Garry Rodgers' "[Top Ten Tips on Formatting eBooks from MS Word](#)"

I also use Microsoft Office (and Word) 10 for writing and formatting, mostly, in my case, because Office 10 still contains the photo-manipulation program Microsoft Photo. However, I also own Microsoft Office (and Word) 365, the non-subscription, ownable version of Office (and Word) 2019.

Finally, for a deeper dive into how to use Microsoft Word, you can visit <https://harveystanbrough.com/microsoft-word-for-writers/> where I posted a complete tutorial for using Microsoft Word in a series of free posts.

Today I'll work through two or three more DWS pop-up workshops. If there's time, I'll also write on my novel.

Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See "Feed the Obsession" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/feed-the-obsession/>. Thought I'd toss this in just in case any of you are interested in writing horror. (Chris, I'm looking at you.)

See "Liu Cixin Writes Science Fiction Epics That Transcend the Moment" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/liu-cixin-writes-science-fiction-epics-that-transcend-the-moment/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 590 words

Writing of Body on the Beach (novel, working title)

Day 1..... 1135 words. Total words to date..... 1135

Day 1..... 1409 words. Total words to date..... 2544

Total fiction words for the month..... 7817

Total fiction words for the year..... 323100

Total nonfiction words for the month... 7250

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 145320

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 468420

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5

Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Discoverability and Recommendations

[September 19, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * A New Tool for Discoverability
- * Workshop Recommendations
- * Still working
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“There should be nothing in the world more benign than Goodreads.... What should be a cosy, pleasant corner of the internet has become a monster.” Sarah Manavis of NewStatesman

“PG has seen enough publishing contracts to assure one and all that there is no ‘Standard Publishing Contract’.” The Passive Guy

A New Tool for Discoverability

My friend Sam T. forwarded me an article about Goodreads, how practically unusable it's become, and why Amazon has no apparent desire to fix it. It's a good article. It's linked in "Of Interest" today.

Toward the end of the article, the author mentions what might well be a viable alternative. The StoryGraph, founded by Nadia Odunayo, is in beta right now. The perfect time to jump in.

I recommend reading the original article about Goodreads for yourself.

If you're interested in jumping into the beta for The StoryGraph — and I strongly urge you to do so — see https://beta.thestorygraph.com/ofy_survey.

You'll have to sign up with the typical email, username and password. After you do that, the first page talks about importing your data from Goodreads. You can accept or decline.

I declined because my Goodreads account barely exists at all. But if you have a Goodreads account, I recommend you import data.

So I signed up for the beta, but I'll also ask my wife to sign up since she has a more active Goodreads account than I do. And I'll recommend she imports her Goodreads data. (It contains a lot of my books.)

The survey isn't long and it leaves some things to be desired (for example, Western isn't listed as a genre). You're allowed to select only 5 genres that you like. On the other hand, you can select as many as you want that you Don't like. Of course, the program is in beta, so I assume the survey will improve.

Only two of my books are currently listed: *Beyond the Masks* (a poetry collection), and *Punctuation for Writers*. Yay. But I look forward to seeing lots of my fiction listed too. My hope is that this will become a major new tool for discoverability.

Workshop Recommendations

Okay, yesterday I wrapped up the four pop-ups I got as freebies for backing Kris Rusch's Boss Kickstarter, and I have some recommendations.

If you got in on the deal, watch all four (of course). Chances are, you'll learn something you didn't know before. Seriously.

But even if you didn't get in on the deal, I strongly recommend buying and watching

- * Pop-Up 26: Living in Space
- * Writing Science Fiction classic workshop
- * Ideas to Story classic workshop.

And yes, my friends, I recommend these even if you don't write SF. They are filled with great gems that you can apply to pretty much any story in any genre.

I also recommend the eye-opening Pop-Up 23: How to Write a Novella. Same reason. It's excellent.

As long as I'm recommending things, I also recommend taking the Writing with Depth workshop and then Advanced Depth.

I still plan to buy and watch the Tags classic workshop. Somehow I missed that one. From what I can tell, I already have all the others I want.

Each classic workshop and each pop-up is valued at \$150. Regular workshops are \$300. Or you can wait to try to get them by backing a future Kickstarter.

Or you can run your own Kickstarter and use part of the proceeds to buy the courses you want. Just an idea. And you can enroll in the FREE "Kickstarter Best Practices for Fiction Writers" by going to <https://wmg-publishing-workshops-and-lectures.teachable.com/>.

Still working to get my new schedule under control and get back to writing (regularly) and doing all the other things I was doing before I took a break. Today we're visiting estate sales.

Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See "Why Goodreads is bad for books" at <https://www.newstatesman.com/science-tech/social-media/2020/08/better-goodreads-possible-bad-for-books-storygraph-amazon>.

See "Don't Do Business with Incompetents" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/dont-do-business-with-incompetents/>. You can skip down to For Authors if you want. Read the comment too. (grin) All about publishing and publishers.

See "The End of the Story..." at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/09/the-end-of-the-story.html>. Not about writing, but some great writing in my estimation.

See "The Need For Cat Pictures" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/the-need-for-cat-pictures/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 720 words

Writing of Body on the Beach (novel, working title)

Day 1..... 1135 words. Total words to date..... 1135
Day 1..... 1409 words. Total words to date..... 2544

Total fiction words for the month..... 7817
Total fiction words for the year..... 323100
Total nonfiction words for the month... 8470
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 146040
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 469140

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Goodreads](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [The StoryGraph](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: A Horrific Essay and Time to Get Serious

[September 20, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * A Horrific Essay
- * Time to Get Serious
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

A Horrific Essay

In today's "Of Interest" I've included a link as I often do to a David Farland (The Story Doctor) Writing Tip.

I suggest you read it, if only as a cautionary tale. To my way of thinking, it's a flat-out horrific essay. I physically shuddered in a few places as I read it.

So CAUTION. I included the link only as a (shudder) warning for most of you. The very title itself — and most of the rest of the post — actually advises you to engage your critical mind and bring the business side of writing into the writing itself.

I disagree with almost everything in the post. That being said, every writer is different. If the post speaks to you, by all means, go for it.

Time to Get Serious

In other news, even as I'm reinventing my own writing routine, I'm also looking at the business side and the teaching side. As part of the latter, prompted by a brief discussion with a former mentoring student, I'm creating a new series of mentorships.

As before, there will be different mentorships to serve different purposes. Unlike before, there will be a one-time payment and a somewhat flexible time limit for each mentorship. As anyone who has worked with me can attest, you will always get more than your money's worth.

Soon I'll announce the specific mentorships and offer them on both the Journal website and on HarveyStanbrough.com.

Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See "Last Statements From The Texas Death Row Chamber" at <http://dyingwords.net/last-statements-from-the-texas-death-row-chamber/>. Maybe a little morbid, but some great writing prompts.

See "What James Daunt did and did not say about Barnes & Noble's future" at <https://www.idealogue.com/blog/what-james-daunt-did-and-did-not-say-about-barnes-nobles-future/>.

See "Write a Big Moment For All It's Worth" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/09/write-a-big-moment-for-all-its-worth.html>. As a bonus, there's a 9-minute film clip from an old, miraculous Dodger baseball game.

See "Costs Versus Rewards" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/david-farlands-writing-tip-costs-versus-rewards/>. CAUTION: Beware inviting your critical mind into your writing.

See "Jack Reacher's revenge..." at <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8724461/Jack-Reachers-revenge-mother.html>. A belated thanks to Patrick D. for the tip.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 360 words

Writing of Body on the Beach (novel, working title)

Day 1..... 1135 words. Total words to date..... 1135

Day 1..... 1409 words. Total words to date..... 2544

Total fiction words for the month..... 7817

Total fiction words for the year..... 323100

Total nonfiction words for the month... 8830
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 146400
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 469500

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [DyingWords.net](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Surface Advice

[September 21, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Topic: Surface Advice
- * The New Mentorship Program
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Clothes make the man. Naked people have little or no influence in society.” Mark Twain

Topic: Surface Advice

That's what I call the popular but basically meaningless buzz-words that some instructors recommend and then can't explain, or can't explain adequately, or explain incorrectly. It's what I call surface advice. It sounds good but it explains nothing. At best it's a waste of time. At worst, especially if the explanation is incorrect or the examples are erroneous, it can be downright harmful.

In today's "Of Interest," I almost included a link to an article by a fiction editor who counts among her clients at least two top-selling authors. But I didn't.

As I read the article, it soon became apparent to me the author was only skimming the surface. Not because that's what she wanted to do, but because her knowledge was that limited. And she couldn't explain the subject technique well or provide in-depth advice on how to achieve it (wait

for it)... *because she doesn't write fiction*. She only talks about fiction. And she tries to teach others how to write fiction. She even writes books about writing fiction.

I'm not disparaging the editor's character or abilities. She might well have the eyes and other sensibilities to be a great copyeditor, but she doesn't have the experience to teach fiction writing.

To be sure, some of the points the author offered in the post were spot-on. As they say, even a broken clock is right twice a day.

But even when her advice was correct on the surface, it was vague and thin, consisting mostly of the aforementioned buzz-words (e.g., "deep POV" and "add suspense" and "show, don't tell") without examples.

So I gave her the momentary benefit of the doubt and drilled down. In a separate post on "Show, Don't Tell," she *did* present examples, but they were nothing short of horrible. In both the before (tell) and after (show) examples, she was telling instead of showing.

The internet is rampant with such advice. My point here is not that you should avoid it — I'm pretty sure you can't unless you live under a rock — but to literally Question Everything.

When you come across what appears to be valid writing advice, read it closely. Does it say anything you didn't know before? Does it provide examples, and do the examples make plain sense to you? Are they examples you can apply to your own writing? And if you do so, do they enhance your writing?

If the answer to any of the above is No, run from that site and don't visit it again.

Be careful out there.

The New Mentorship Program

I'm still revising my new mentorship program, and I'm very excited about it. It will feel good to get back into teaching directly, one-on-one, with students who believe enough in themselves to make an investment in their future.

I suspect I'll have all the glitches worked out and be ready to announce the new mentorships formally in a few days.

Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See "Tips for Historical Writers" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/tips-for-historical-writers/>. Some good stuff here.

See “A Rare, Horrifying Logbook” at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/logbook-slave-ship-mary>. Maybe story ideas.

See “Berggasthaus Aescher Wildkirchli” at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/berggasthaus-aescher-wildkirchli>. I hoped for pics of the interior.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 570 words

Writing of Body on the Beach (novel, working title)

Day 1..... 1135 words. Total words to date..... 1135

Day 1..... 1409 words. Total words to date..... 2544

Total fiction words for the month..... 7817

Total fiction words for the year..... 323100

Total nonfiction words for the month... 9400

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 146970

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 470070

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5

Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Atlas Obscura](#), [Mentorships](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: A Recommendation and the New Mentorships

[September 23, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Worked a full day
- * A Recommendation
- * The New Mentorships Are Live!
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“You don’t win elections by solving problems.” Jeff, commenter on TPG blog
post<https://www.thepassivevoice.com/prh-opens-the-conversation-to-sustain-antiracist-engagement/#comment-453479>

My commentary and response: “You win elections by creating problems and then promising to solve them.”

Wow. For the first time since I don’t remember (probably a couple of months), I actually worked a full day yesterday. It felt good.

I spent most of the morning polishing the mentorship information, putting the web pages together, and writing a couple of posts to announce them. Then lunch I went to lunch, then back to school to study covers with DWS.

For various reasons, I was a couple of weeks behind on that workshop. So I watched those two weeks and took notes (and learned some), and that was the day.

A Recommendation

Before I get too far into today’s Journal, I want to make a recommendation. I’ve been meaning to mention it for some time now.

One of the most tightly written and well-acted TV series I’ve ever seen is the British drama *DCI Banks*. We watch it on Amazon Prime. According to the internet, it is also available on Netflix. I don’t know about other providers.

I strongly recommend it, both for sheer entertainment and as a learning tool for writers. (I’ll be watching it a second time through with a notepad in my hand.)

There are currently five seasons (if I remember correctly) with four or five two-part stories in each season. Each two-part story is based on a different novel by Crime Writers of Canada Grand Master Peter Robinson. There are currently 22 DCI Banks novels available through Amazon. According to Robinson’s website, he just released the 26th book in the series.

I haven’t read any of the novels yet, but I plan to. I mention this because the screenplays, at least, are extremely tightly written. Each tale is rich with twists and surprises.

You can read about Peter Robinson at <https://inspectorbanks.com/>. To see what he’s accomplished, be sure to read his About page. I was impressed.

The New Mentorships Are Live!

After a few months of putting together six new mentorship programs and thanks to recent input from a former mentoring student and from my wife, I'm finally ready to pull the trigger on them. There are six in all.

Three are writing-intensive: **The Writing Craft I, The Writing Craft II, and The Writing Craft III.** (Two and Three derive from One). You can see those at <https://harveystanbrough.com/the-writing-craft-mentorships/>. If you've ever seriously considered upping your game as a fiction writer, this might be the time.

The other three are non-writing but writing related: **Clearing Out the Myths, Inventory and Sales, and Licensing.** You can see those at <https://harveystanbrough.com/non-writing-mentorships/>.

In "The Gist" on each of those pages, you'll see my rationale and experience. Farther down on each page, I wrote about the fees (and payments, if necessary); refunds; and issued a privacy and security statement.

I see these mentorships as an opportunity for me to help other writers and would-be writers benefit from what I've learned over a lifetime of writing and publishing.

Maybe best of all, unlike various other online lectures, workshops, seminars and classes from different sources, my mentorships are not one size fits all.

I hope you'll take a look and let me know what you think. As always, comments and questions are welcome via email or on the Journal.

Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See "Reigniting The Passion" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/09/reigniting-the-passion.html>.

See "It's STILL A Dark And Stormy Night...Thank Goodness" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/09/its-still-a-dark-and-stormynight-thank-goodness.html>. A little fun.

See "The Simple Algorithm That Ants Use to Build Bridges" at <https://www.quantamagazine.org/the-simple-algorithm-that-ants-use-to-build-bridges-20180226/>.

See "The Vampire Ship" (not about vampires) at <https://newrepublic.com/article/159252/vampire-ship>.

See "Abandoned Ellis Island" at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/ellis-island-before-restoration>. Want a great Setting exercise? Have your POV character describe those settings.

See “14 Literary Magazines That Read No-Fee Submissions All Year” at <https://www.authorspublish.com/14-literary-magazines-that-read-no-fee-submissions-all-year/>.

See “Everyone Wants Barnes & Noble to Survive. Can It?” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/everyone-wants-barnes-noble-to-survive-can-it/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 680 words

Writing of Body on the Beach (novel, working title)

Day 1..... 1135 words. Total words to date..... 1135

Day 1..... 1409 words. Total words to date..... 2544

Total fiction words for the month..... 7817

Total fiction words for the year..... 323100

Total nonfiction words for the month... 10080

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 147650

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 470750

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5

Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Atlas Obscura](#), [Clearing Out the Myths](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Licensing](#), [Mentorships](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Quanta Magazine](#), [Sales](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Dialect

[September 25, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

* Topic: Don't Write Dialect Unless You Know How

* Of Interest

* The Numbers

Topic: Don't Write Dialect Unless You Know How

Simple, straightforward advice, right? And it makes sense. Few problems will jerk a reader out of your story faster than poorly written dialect.

But it's also a paradox. After all, how can you learn how to do something if you don't try? But if you try, you're not following the advice.

I have both a book ([Writing Dialect](#)) and an audio course ([How to Write Effective Dialect](#)) on the topic. But even in those, I didn't quite cover everything.

Because how characters speak is such an important topic, I've also added **Writing Effective Dialect** and **Writing Dialogue and Dialogue Tags** to the list of topics in the [Writing Craft mentorships](#). That increases the number of topics in the Writing Craft I mentorship to 14 and lowers the price of the mentorship to under \$72 per topic.

Of course it also makes those two new topics available to those who select Writing Craft II or III. (I also had a brain aneurism and lowered the price of Writing Craft II to \$129 per topic for 2 to 5 topics.)

For those who sign on for a mentorship, I can check how they use dialogue and dialect directly in their work and give them personalized real-time instruction.

For now, though, let me just say this. If you want to use dialect in your work, especially if you want to use phonetic spelling to effect your dialect, know the rules of pronunciation. THAT'S how you can know what you're doing, more or less, before you attempt to write dialect. For example, it might be valuable to know that an E tacked on the end of a word that begins with a hard consonant usually makes the earlier vowel pronounce long.

I read a very short story that was submitted to a contest recently, and the writer substituted "dere" for "there." Jerked me straight out of the story. In my mind, "dere" pronounced the same as "deer." I understood the author wanted me to hear "derr," but to get to that point I had to stall my reading and figure out what the writer was trying to say. Even then, it looked like the writer was TRYING to write dialect instead of actually knowing how to write it.

Folks, anytime you force a reader to "interpret" you work — anytime you force him to try to figure out what you're trying to say — you risk losing (or running off) that reader. Your job is to tell a story and entertain the reader, period. And the reader's job is to be entertained, period. The reader doesn't work for you. You work for the reader.

The same writer in the same story also substituted "dat" for "that" and "dis" for "this."

Now, almost nobody EVER says "dat" or "dis." (One exception is the ever-popular "diss" meaning "disrespect," as in "she dissed me," but that isn't the same as using "dis" as a substitute for "this.") "Dat" or "dis" might sneak into some spoken constructions (depending on the sound of other words that are juxtaposed next to it), but most often the actual pronunciation is "at" or "is" (the apostrophe that replaces the missing "th" makes it sound like "iss") not "dat" or "dis."

Finally, the writer also wrote “Come ‘ere.” And I can pretty much promise the characters were not British.

Uh, no. Read “Come ‘ere” aloud. If I’d had a shot at this manuscript, I’d have recommended the writer use “C’mere.” Why? Because that’s how it sounds when people combine “Come here” into one spoken word. Sometimes even in the UK.

Here are the original two lines from the story:

“Leave dat thing alone! Wanna get us caught?”

“Come ‘ere, help me get dis open. Dere must be a fortune in it.”

See what I mean?

So one more tip — If you’re going to write dialect, you **MUST** read your work aloud afterward. If you read it aloud and it sounds stupid or unintelligible or like you’re trying too hard, it is and you are.

So to revise the initial advice, don’t write dialect until you know how (or until you at least have a good grounding in the rules of pronunciation).

Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See “Another Go At A Myth...” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/another-go-at-a-myth/>. And instead of renting Adobe In-Design you can buy Affinity Publisher outright for around \$50. And if you don’t own a Mac (so can’t use Vellum) you can learn to format your work in Word and use D2D to create a beautiful ebook. Just sayin’.

See “How is The Speed of Darkness Faster Than The Speed of Light?” at <https://futurism.com/how-is-the-speed-of-darkness-is-faster-than-the-speed-of-light>. Interesting discussion.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 800 words

Writing of “Five Tigt Indians” (short story memoir)

Day 1..... 2715 words. Total words to date..... 2715 (done)

Writing of Body on the Beach (novel, working title)

Day 1..... 1135 words. Total words to date..... 1135
Day 1..... 1409 words. Total words to date..... 2544

Total fiction words for the month..... 10532
Total fiction words for the year..... 325815
Total nonfiction words for the month... 10880
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 148450
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 474265

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 208
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Futurism.com](#), [Professional Writer Series](#),
[the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Dark Scenarios

[September 27, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Musing on Autumn in southeast Arizona
- * Short stories abound
- * Dialect revisited (lightly)
- * Writers of the Future contest
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“[Y]ou have hopes and then you plan to fulfill them by doing things in the present: that’s utopian thinking. Meanwhile, you have middle-of-the-night fears that everything is falling apart, that it’s not going to work. And that’s dystopian thinking. So there’s nothing special going on in science fiction thinking. It’s something that we’re all doing all the time.” World-renowned science fiction novelist Kim Stanley Robinson

Autumn is rapidly becoming my favorite time of year. It’s cool enough in the morning that I can wear my sweats, but warm enough later in the day that I can change into shorts and a t-shirt. The morning walk is comfortable and each day is filled with possibilities.

As an added bonus, my Hovel, with its 3-foot thick adobe walls, is warm in the morning and cool later in the day. As near perfection as I could ask.

Well, I'm writing again. For whatever reason, a rush of short stories have flooded through my head and so far I've managed to get them on paper. Three short stories in the past two days, and probably more to come today and, I hope, through the rest of the month.

On Friday (as I reported) I wrote "Five Tight Indians," a memoir/story of just over 2700 words. Then yesterday, I wrote two, both very twisted tales: "At the Moment" for 2557 words and "A Gesture of Friendship" for 4073 words. Yesterday was a great day at over 6500 words on the day.

None of these want to be novels, but I don't mind. Both of the last two stories seem to fit under a phrase I took from "At the Moment." The phrase was "dark scenarios." So probably sometime or other I'll publish a collection called Dark Scenarios, and I'll brand each story in that collection as "a Dark Scenarios short story."

Interesting. Makes me wonder how my brain comes up with some of this stuff. And frankly, it frightens me a little. But not enough to make me stop writing them.

If you read my recent [post on dialect](#) and were at all interested, I urge you to read the comments. They and my response are illustrative of the fact that dialect is difficult to write well. They're even more illustrative of the fact that you must remember there's a reader on the other side of the page as you're writing.

From David Farland, "Please note that we are nearing the end of the quarter for the Writers of the Future Contest, one of the world's largest short-story contests. You could win thousands of dollars in cash and prizes for your submissions! Check it out at www.writersofthefuture.com."

Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See "Publish 100 Cat Stories" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/publish-100-cat-stories/>.

See "Fun With Bloopers" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/09/fun-with-bloopers.html>.

See "How Science Fiction Works" at https://www.thepassivevoice.com/_trashed/.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 500 words

Writing of "At the Moment" (short story)

Day 1..... 2557 words. Total words to date..... 2557 (done)

Writing of “A Gesture of Friendship” (short story)

Day 1..... 4073 words. Total words to date..... 4073 (done)

Writing of **Body on the Beach** (novel, working title)

Day 1..... 1135 words. Total words to date..... 1135

Day 1..... 1409 words. Total words to date..... 2544

Total fiction words for the month..... 17162
Total fiction words for the year..... 332445
Total nonfiction words for the month... 11380
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 148950
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 481395

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 211
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Writers of the Future](#)

The Journal: Dare to Be Bad and a Lot More

[September 29, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * There's a link
- * If you hadn't noticed
- * I have a really cool problem.
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“[T]here are no real repercussions of mailing a story that fails. No editor reads anything that doesn't work and no editor will remember your name if your story doesn't work. ... The reality is that no one notices, which I suppose for some people is worse. But there are no real risks.”
Dean Wesley Smith

“I would also turn every story in to a workshop [critique group] after I had mailed it to an editor. The workshop, of course, would back up my fear that the story sucked beyond words and I needed to fix a hundred different things about it. Then I would sell the story and be very, very glad I didn’t listen to the workshop or my own fear.” Dean Wesley Smith

“[F]or seven years my fixing and polishing had gotten few stories written and finished and no sales. Mailing first drafts got me a career.” Dean Wesley Smith

There’s a link to a GREAT reprised and updated article from Dean Wesley Smith in today’s “Of Interest.” I might resemble item number 3 in his post with my novel starts lately. I’ll have to think about that, give them another shove, and see what happens. And that’s with 50 novels already published.

If you hadn’t noticed, I usually avoid “pandemic” stuff in this Journal. I assume we’re all bombarded with more than enough about that — I know I certainly am.

But I included a link to one article in “Of Interest” today strictly as food for thought and because the article is replete with story ideas. Just in case you want to write something about a viral disease. I don’t.

Nor do I necessarily agree with the author of the article. (Whether I agree or not doesn’t really matter; whatever’s going to happen will happen with or without my input.)

I have a really cool problem. Day before yesterday I started a short story called “An Inch and Three-Sixteenths.” And then yesterday, I started another one called “Turnaround.”

Thing is, I’d already forgotten all about the first one before I started writing the second one. Who does that? (grin) I usually forget about a story after it’s finished and published, but I hadn’t even put that one on my spreadsheet yet.

Anyway, I’ll read over it today to be sure it’s finished and then I’ll finish “Turnaround.” So today is Day 2 for both of those. And who knows what’s next. I just hope they keep coming. I’m having a ball. (grin)

Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See “Dare To Be Bad” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/dare-to-be-bad/>.

See “What if Earth had rings?” at <https://www.space.com/what-if-earth-had-rings.html>.

See “Literary Themes” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/09/literary-themes.html>.

See “Here’s How the Pandemic Finally Ends” at <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2020/09/25/how-covid-19-pandemic-ends-421122>.

See “26 Short Story Publishers Seeking Submissions of Horror Stories” at <https://www.authorspublish.com/26-horror-fiction-markets-open-now/>. (I’m lookin’ at you, Chris.)

See “I Am An Author But Not Who You Think I Am!” at <http://booksbywomen.org/i-am-an-author-but-not-who-you-think-i-am/>.

See “Writing Humor to Heal Mind and Body” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/writing-humor-to-heal-mind-and-body/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 530 words

Writing of “Turnaround” (short story)

Day 1..... 1092 words. Total words to date..... 1092 Day 2..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX (done)

Writing of “An Inch and Three-Sixteenths” (short story)

Day 1..... 1481 words. Total words to date..... 1481 (done)

Writing of **Body on the Beach** (novel, working title)

Day 1..... 1135 words. Total words to date..... 1135

Day 1..... 1409 words. Total words to date..... 2544

Total fiction words for the month..... 19735
Total fiction words for the year..... 335018
Total nonfiction words for the month... 11910
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 149480
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 484498

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 213
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [BooksByWomen.org](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Space.com](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Start a Writing Career

[September 30, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Start a Writing Career
- * I finished one
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Start a Writing Career

I'm one of those writers Dave Farland talks about in his article, linked in today's "Of Interest." I don't worry a lot about sales. I follow Heinlein's Rules. I write, submit to a market or indie publish, and write again.

But marketing and sales? The very concept puts me to sleep, with the exception of two rules:

1. The opening of a book sells that book, and the end of a book sells the next book. So I worked hard to learn openings and endings. And I worked hard to let my style come alive so the reader would make it all the way from the opening to the end.
2. You must have an attractive, genre-specific cover and great sales copy (blurbs, etc.).

But I've never done the pro-active thing Farland talks about in the article. I've never bothered to build a list of folks who are willing to spread the word about my books when they're released or pre-released. I've never built a list of readers who are eagerly awaiting the next book in a series or genre.

Don't get me wrong. My loyal readers are out there, and I appreciate them more than they know. But I can't name them. And I've never emailed them ("the list") to let them know the next book is coming and when to expect it and, "Oh, by the way, would you please tell all your friends?"

In other words, I don't know many readers personally, and the ones I do know are writers. And for whatever reason, writers in general don't buy fiction written by other writers they know. I'm not putting them down or disrespecting them. I'm just stating a fact.

There are a few exceptions out there, of course. I'm an exception.

For example, before I study with a fiction writer whose farther along the road than I am, I buy and read some of his or her fiction to be sure s/he can practice what s/he's preaching. Really, beyond the basics I learned from Dean Wesley Smith (he opened my eyes to how very much I *didn't* know), I learned most of what I've learned about writing by reading and studying works by the masters whose work I admire: Hemingway, Allende, King, Burke and Higgins just to name a few.

And yes, I also regularly buy fiction from writers I know personally but who are not “big names” and whose work I like. But again, I’m an exception.

So now, after reading Farland’s article, I’m thinking I need to do more on the business side. Maybe I need to put out a separate email newsletter (separate of the Journal and my other blog). Maybe through the publisher’s note at StoneThread Publishing. We’ll see.

I’ll start by making an appeal to those readers I can identify (if I can identify them) on Amazon, Smashwords, D2D and elsewhere and try to create a list. And I’ll make an appeal to the subscribers to my blog on my author website (though I suspect most of them are writers too) and see what happens there.

I already announce pretty much all of my writing on this Journal. You guys can spread the word if you want, but you already know that. (If any of you actually are fans of my fiction and would like to be added to my official “list,” please let me know via email at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.)

Anyway, it isn’t something I can bring myself to really fret over, but I will give it some thought. Every little bit helps, I guess.

On the other side of that though, I’m being “paid” by being fortunate enough to write the stories in the first place and to pass along some of what I’ve learned to other writers. My heir(s), I suspect, will be the ones who will rake in the piles of cash. There are a few readers and business minds among them, so I hope they do well.

Either way, I’ll pass-on to them a multi-million dollar spreadsheet full of IP. Not kidding. Whether they make coffee money or something more from that IP will be up to them. At that point, I definitely won’t be worried about it. (grin)

So all of that was a long-winded way of saying I hope YOU have enough business sense to build a list. Farland not only says you should (as many do) but actually tells you how to do it (as most don’t). So don’t miss that article.

I finished one of the short stories I started a day or two ago, but not the other one (yet), and I didn’t write anything new yesterday. Meh, no biggie. I should finish the other story today, and even more importantly, I hope I’ll start at least one new one if not two or three.

Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See “How do You Create Your Career as a Writer?” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/building-your-writing-career/>. I wish you luck with this.

See “Henry Kuttner” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/henry-kuttner/>.

See “The Real Aerial Battles That Inspired Star Wars” at <https://www.airspacemag.com/history-of-flight/air-battles-became-star-wars-1-180975832/>. I found this while I was reading the physical magazine, then looked it up online so I could share it with you.

See “International Church of Cannabis” at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/international-church-of-cannabis>. Obviously from the You Can’t Make This Stuff Up department.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 910 words

Writing of “Turnaround” (short story)

Day 1..... 1092 words. Total words to date..... 1092 Day 2..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX (done)

Writing of “An Inch and Three-Sixteenths” (short story)

Day 1..... 1481 words. Total words to date..... 1481
Day 2..... 176 words. Total words to date..... 1657 (done)

Writing of **Body on the Beach** (novel, working title)

Day 1..... 1135 words. Total words to date..... 1135
Day 1..... 1409 words. Total words to date..... 2544

Total fiction words for the month..... 19911
Total fiction words for the year..... 335194
Total nonfiction words for the month... 12820
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 150390
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 485584

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 213
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AirSpaceMag.com](#), [Atlas Obscura](#), [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: October Already and TMI

[October 1, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * The first of... October?
- * The return of Blackwell Ops 8
- * A little personal good news
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“I make no conscious effort to be tough, or hard-boiled, or grim, or any of the things I am usually called. I merely try to write as the character would write.” James M. Cain in the preface to *Three of a Kind*

“[M]y style is rural rather than urban; my ear seems to like fields better than streets. I am glad of this, for I think language loses a bit of its bounce the moment its heels touch concrete.” James M. Cain (ibid)

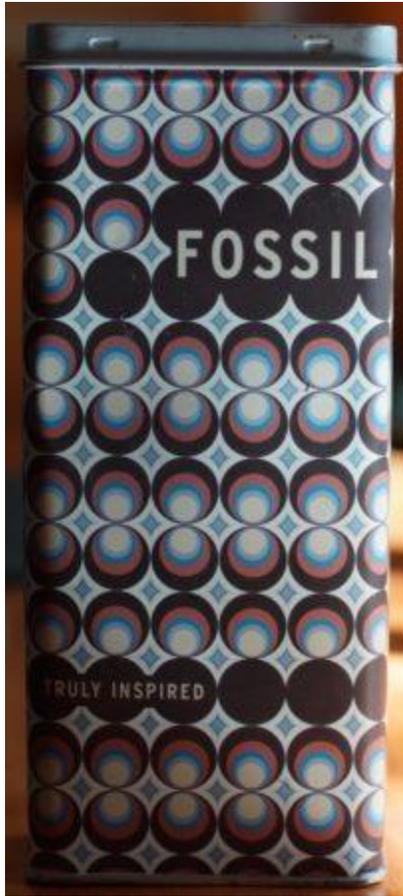
“He said if truth were the main object of writing, I would have a hard time competing with a \$3 camera.” James M. Cain (ibid)

“My purpose is to entertain myself first and other people secondly.” John D MacDonald

Wow. The first of October already. Where did September go? Anyway, I didn't do any writing yesterday at all. I took the day to do some yard work I've been putting off, then caught a movie.

I received an email from a reader who was previously unknown to me. He wanted to know whether I'd be adding to the Blackwell Ops series, and if so, when the next book would be out. After my Journal post yesterday, I can only assume that's kismet.

So because of that email and after reading over the past few days both Dean's post on “Dare to Be Bad” and one of Farland's comments in one post or another about writing what feels “right,” I decided to add Blackwell Ops 8 back into the rotation. I reported it “stalled” and stopped reporting on it in the Journal back in early September.



So you'll see it below. I wasn't really stalled. I just stopped writing. So I'll update numbers on both it and Body on the Beach plus whatever else I write as I get to them. So it might be a little confusing down there in "Numbers" for awhile, but I seem to be going through a transition. Frankly, I hope it all clears up soon.

A little personal good news — after renting for the past several years (the whole time we've been in Arizona this time around), I talked with my friend and landlord a couple days ago and he agreed to sell us our current house on +- two acres (including the Hovel, of course).

That's very good news because of a windfall that's coming in about a year. At that point, we were anticipating making a final move, probably to Sierra Vista. And frankly, even the idea of packing up and moving everything and basically starting over at my age was more than a little off-putting.

So all's well at Casa Stanbrough. We'll buy this house and be here for the duration. I might even name the house if my wife will let me. I can see it now: an ornately put together sign that reads Final Destination. (grin)

Yeah, I already know that sign ain't gonna happen. She doesn't always appreciate my morbid sense of humor. You should've seen her reaction when I told her I wanted to be cremated. That part was all right, but she wasn't delighted with my notion of having my remains relegated to a tin that reads Fossil on the front. (grin) If you look closely, toward the bottom left it even reads Truly Inspired. (grin)

Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See “Inspiring Quotes From Inspiring Crime Thriller Writers” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/10/inspiring-quotes-from-inspiring-crime-thriller-writers.html>.

See “Words on Writing from James M. Cain” at <https://kupps.malibulist.com/2013/09/17/words-on-writing-from-james-m-cain/>. So intensely written I had to bookmark it and read only a bit at a time.

See “Remembering When Women Ruled a Wild West Town” at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/remembering-when-women-ruled-1920s-wild-west-town>.

See “Postcards From Mecca” at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/postcards-from-mecca-california-lost-desert-pictures>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 640 words

Writing of “Turnaround” (short story)

Day 1..... 1092 words. Total words to date..... 1092 Day 2..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX (done)

Writing of Blackwell Ops 8 (novel)

Day 1..... 1653 words. Total words to date..... 1653
Day 2..... 1043 words. Total words to date..... 2696
Day 3..... 1711 words. Total words to date..... 4407
Day 4..... 1221 words. Total words to date..... 5628
Day 5..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX

Writing of Body on the Beach (novel, working title)

Day 1..... 1135 words. Total words to date..... 1135
Day 1..... 1409 words. Total words to date..... 2544

Total fiction words for the month..... XXXX
Total fiction words for the year..... 335194
Total nonfiction words for the month... 640
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 151030
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 486224

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|---|-----|
| Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... | 5 |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... | X |
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... | 12 |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 50 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 213 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Atlas Obscura](#), [James M. Cain](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Cultural Appropriation

[October 2, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * "Cultural Appropriation"... whatever
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

I'm a little under the weather and not in a good mood besides, so I'll keep this short. In fact, I'm publishing it at all mostly to get the "Of Interest" stuff out to you.

I was going to write a whole long rant on so-called "cultural appropriation" but I changed my mind. Aren't you glad?

Suffice to say, the actual purpose of a phrase like "cultural appropriation" is to intimidate and infuriate, not to effect actual change. To make that vein on the forehead bulge in such a way that the utterer of the phrase is provided with a moment's entertainment and a temporary sense of power.

Come to think of it, the purpose itself was "culturally appropriated" from spoiled toddlers in every culture around the world who want to get their way and are willing to hold their breath until they turn blue if they don't.

When my own toddlers tried something like that, I responded with, "Okay, go ahead." Then I sat down with a bowl of popcorn on my lap to watch the show.

That was my response because saying, "Shut up and go do something useful" is as wasted on those who scream phrases like "cultural appropriation" as it is on the aforementioned toddlers.

Anyway, I like to think my response is why, as my own toddlers advanced through childhood and adolescence into adulthood, they stopped muttering meaningless phrases like "cultural appropriation."

Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See “The Artist or the Emperor? Cultural Appropriation and Children’s Classics” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-artist-or-the-emperor-cultural-appropriation-and-childrens-classics/>. See PG’s take after the OP.

See “The Teenage Girl Gang That Seduced and Killed Nazis” at <https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/578187/teenage-girl-gang-seduced-and-killed-nazis>. Just think, instead of taking actual action, these girls could have spent all their time talking about “cultural appropriation.”

See “Are aliens hiding in plain sight?” at <https://www.newsbreak.com/news/2055122323085/are-aliens-hiding-in-plain-sight>. Interesting discussion of possible new definitions of life.

See “Poor Clares Convent Cemetery” at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/poor-clares-cemetery>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 330 words

Writing of “Turnaround” (short story)

Day 1..... 1092 words. Total words to date..... 1092 Day 2..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX (done)

Writing of Blackwell Ops 8 (novel)

Day 1..... 1653 words. Total words to date..... 1653
Day 2..... 1043 words. Total words to date..... 2696
Day 3..... 1711 words. Total words to date..... 4407
Day 4..... 1221 words. Total words to date..... 5628
Day 5..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX

Writing of Body on the Beach (novel, working title)

Day 1..... 1135 words. Total words to date..... 1135
Day 1..... 1409 words. Total words to date..... 2544

Total fiction words for the month..... XXXX
Total fiction words for the year..... 335194
Total nonfiction words for the month... 970
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 151360
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 486554

| | |
|---|-----|
| Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... | 5 |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... | X |
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... | 12 |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 50 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 213 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Atlas Obscura](#), [MentalFloss](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Just Chatting

[October 5, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Just chatting
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Written stories belong to their individual creators as individuals. Copyright laws around the world reflect this belief and value. ... Stories don't belong to cultures or people who bear some similarity to the characters in a book.” David Vandagriff (as The Passive Guy) harkening back to my previous Journal post

Just chatting this morning.

I haven't talked with you in a few days. That omission was unintended. But really, I haven't had much to talk about, at least regarding writing. Even “Of Interest” is slim this morning.

I do plan to write today. Probably I'll finish the short story first, then move on to another short story or one of the novels. The past couple of days I didn't write at all.

Instead, I worked around the place, and I did a lot more than I expected to. I'm not as old on the inside as I am on the outside. My brain says “You can totally do that, dude.” (Yeah, my brain calls me “dude.”) But my body says “Slow down a little or I'm gonna hurt you.”

And I generally obey my body 'cause, you know, robotic elements work only as well as they're oiled. I'm sure some of you can relate. If you can't, wait for it. Trust me. (grin)

Anyway, I was working (am still working) toward putting in a new Z-shaped walk-through passage in what had been a solid barbed-wire fence. The idea is that humans will be able to make it through the Z but cattle and horses won't.

The new path is necessary. It leads to our water well, which occasionally needs to be reset. The well is only about 40 yards away line-of-sight from the Hovel, but it's about a half-mile round-trip if I walk from the Hovel, around the corral, through a faux-locked gate, and along a dirt road. And back. And I have a personality flaw: I enjoy walking, but not when I have to.

The path leads through what was originally a lot of tall grass and brush and the strong possibility of encountering an annoyed rattlesnake from mid-spring through late fall.

So once I took out a section of fence, I got out my mower and cut all of that a small segment at a time. Usually I had to angle the mower deck so it would come down on top of the grass or brush so the mower wouldn't stall.

Then when the preliminary clearing was done I had to wait for the dust to clear. Literally. The wind that seems always to be here wasn't here when I needed it (natch) so the dust cloud hovered in place for several minutes.

When it finally cleared I got out my hand scythe and then the loppers to finish clearing the path. Finally I sank two more t-posts and pieced together a few lengths of barbed wire between them to complete the Z.

I rounded out the day by taking a shower, then watched movies the rest of the day because doing that was a lot easier than, say, moving around. (grin)

Then the next morning (yesterday), I came out and tried the Z-gate and caught my sleeve on barbed wire. The angles were too small for a clear passage. And after looking at the configuration for a while, I realized if I made them wide enough, a more adventurous than usual cow or horse could make it through the Z too.

Back to the drawing board. I might have to go buy a few new t-posts so I can change the angles appropriately into more of a Y than a Z. But more than likely I'll just fashion and hang a regular gate on one of the existing posts and be done with it.

And that's what I'm working on this morning while it's still cool outside. Afterward, if body and mind agree, I'll write.

Talk with you again when I can.

Of Interest

See "Kick the Writing Blues to the Curb" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/10/kick-the-writing-blues-to-the-curb.html>. Frankly, I'm amazed. Yes, Mr. Bell, when you get stuck, "just write the next sentence."

See “The Mystery of Time’s Arrow” at <http://nautil.us/issue/71/flow/the-mystery-of-times-arrow-rp>. Story ideas.

See “Breonna Taylor: The Search Warrant – Part One” at <https://leelofland.com/breonna-taylor-the-search-warrant-part-one/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 720 words

Writing of “Turnaround” (short story)

Day 1..... 1092 words. Total words to date..... 1092 Day 2..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX (done)

Writing of Blackwell Ops 8 (novel)

Day 1..... 1653 words. Total words to date..... 1653
Day 2..... 1043 words. Total words to date..... 2696
Day 3..... 1711 words. Total words to date..... 4407
Day 4..... 1221 words. Total words to date..... 5628
Day 5..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX

Writing of Body on the Beach (novel, working title)

Day 1..... 1135 words. Total words to date..... 1135
Day 1..... 1409 words. Total words to date..... 2544

Total fiction words for the month..... XXXX
Total fiction words for the year..... 335194
Total nonfiction words for the month... 1690
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 152080
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 487274

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 213
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [KillZone Blog](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [Nautilus](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Better Than Usual

[October 6, 2020](#) by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Update on my construction woes
- * Better than usual
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“A successful runner doesn't see the finish line in a race; he sees ten yards beyond it. That's his goal and the visualization keeps him moving beyond the expected end. A good writer does the same thing – pushes beyond the obvious limit to ensure a successful conclusion.” Dan Baldwin in “The Long and Short of Endings” (To subscribe free email baldco@msn.com.)

“Don't think about making art, just get it done. Let everyone else decide if it's good or bad, whether they love it or hate it. While they are deciding, make even more art.” Andy Warhol (via Dan Baldwin)

“You don't regurgitate plot. You give them the elevator pitch. And if you can't answer in three sentences or less, chances are you've lost a sale.” PJ Parrish

“Coming up with a headline or slogan for your story is a great clarifying exercise. It makes you think beyond mere plot and deep into that sweet spot where story, character and theme mesh.” PJ Parrish

Yup. Same applies for the art of writing.

Update on my construction woes

Well, I'm no engineer, but I managed to figure out a Y gate and got'er done. (Yeah, I like Larry the Cable Guy. Sue me.) It took 'til mid-morning because I tied the fence sections to the t-posts correctly. It's an art form.

Still some work to do, but just bits and pieces here and there, so I can do those on successive mornings without wearing myself out and having to rest for the balance of the day.

Today I'll write and attend the remainder of Dean's “Covers 101” workshop. I enrolled but have been so busy with other things I forget about the workshop at times and lagged behind.

Better than usual “Of Interest” items today with links for the quirky and/or horror, links for SF and for fiction writers in general.

Of Interest

See “The Woman Who Gave Birth to Rabbits” at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/mary-toft-gave-birth-to-rabbits>. A solid basis for a horror story or two.

See “25 Themed Calls for Submissions” at <https://www.authorspublish.com/25-themed-submissions-calls-for-october-2020/>.

See “Very Impressed...” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/very-impressed/>. Covers 101 is a good basic class in design elements for covers. Something to consider.

See “Looking For Your Story’s Heart? Try To Write Its Headline” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/10/looking-for-your-storys-hearttry-to-write-its-headline.html>. I would add only that you can do this after the story is written (in case you’re WITD). And this post includes an exercise.

See “NASA is testing the first of its new moonwalking spacesuits” at <https://www.space.com/nasa-artemis-spacesuits-tech-underwater-photos>.

See “Did NASA detect a hint of life on Venus in 1978 and not realize it?” at <https://www.space.com/life-on-venus-pioneer-13.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 450 words

Writing of “Turnaround” (short story)

Day 1..... 1092 words. Total words to date..... 1092

Day 2..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX (done)

Writing of Blackwell Ops 8 (novel)

Day 1..... 1653 words. Total words to date..... 1653

Day 2..... 1043 words. Total words to date..... 2696

Day 3..... 1711 words. Total words to date..... 4407

Day 4..... 1221 words. Total words to date..... 5628

Day 5..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX

Writing of Body on the Beach (novel, working title)

Day 1..... 1135 words. Total words to date..... 1135

Day 1..... 1409 words. Total words to date..... 2544

Total fiction words for the month..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the year..... 335194

Total nonfiction words for the month... 2140
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 152530
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 487724

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 213
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Atlas Obscura](#), [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#),
[KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Space.com](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Writing, and Story Ideas

October 7, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Not a lot
- * Thank you
- * What is a Y gate?
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Simply put, adding information, such as a message or data, to a particle in one location will make the data appear at the other location: the essence of teleportation.” Dan Hurley quoting on the forthcoming quantum internet

Not a lot in today's Journal. I'm posting today mostly for what's in “Of Interest.”

I wrote a little on the short story yesterday, but (again) I forgot to get caught up in Dean's Covers 101 class. I'll attend to that today, then write more on the story.

This thing might turn out to be something longer than a short story. Maybe a novella. Maybe a series of novellas. (Like I need another series.) But at the moment I just don't know, and it doesn't really matter. I'm having fun writing it, and that's what matters.

Thank you to all my patrons and first-readers, and readers of this Journal. You're a special lot. Regardless of how much you give, you enable and encourage me to continue with this Journal.

And oddly enough, most of you don't even bother with collecting rewards for your generous donations.

Please take a moment to browse those rewards at <https://hestanbrough.com/become-a-patron/> and let me know via email (harveystanbrough@gmail.com) if there's anything you'd like to have. I'll send it as soon as I see your email.

If you are not currently a patron, you might also look over the rewards and see whether anything interests you. There are four levels of patronage with rewards.

Finally, if you'd like to receive something from me that isn't listed there, let me know. Chances are good I'll add it.



A friend wrote to say she loves the American west but never got a chance to live here. She also wanted to see a photo of a Y gate.

In this photo of the one I put up a few days ago, the bottom of the Y extends to the left (east, three strands of barbed wire) from the t-post on the left.

The top of the Y splits at that t-post. One section of it (in regular field fencing) runs to the post on the far right to form the north opening (gate) and the other section runs to the white t-post, second from the far right, to form the south opening.

The tall t-post (second from the left) is a little over a foot inside the top of the Y. More barbed wire fencing extends to the west from that post all the way past my house.

The idea is that a large mammal (cow or horse) will poke his nose into the opening between the white t-post and the taller one, then realize s/he can't bend well enough to make the turn and will back out. The US Forest Service often uses these.

Beyond the t-post on the left, you can see part of the wide path I cut to the well, which is just around the turn in the path to the left and out of the picture.

Oh, and the black wire you see at the top of the tall t-post leads from my modem in the house and into the Hovel so I have internet out there. (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest (Story Ideas Abound)

See "Men They Couldn't Hang" at <https://www.suecoletta.com/men-they-couldnt-hang/>.

See "The Quantum Internet..." at <https://www.discovermagazine.com/technology/the-quantum-internet-will-blow-your-mind-heres-what-it-will-look-like>. From the article: "Simply put, adding information, such as a message or data, to a particle in one location will make the data appear at the other location: the essence of teleportation."

See "The Virtual You" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/10/the-virtual-you.html>.

See "Why Do Canadians Say 'Eh'?" at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/why-do-canadians-say-eh>. A little linguistic fun.

See "Your Brain Chooses What to Let You See" at <https://www.quantamagazine.org/your-brain-chooses-what-to-let-you-see-20190930/>.

See "What is the mysterious 'global Hum'..." at <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2019/mar/13/what-is-the-mysterious-gl-hum-and-is-it-simply-noise-pollution>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 650 words

Writing of "Turnaround" (short story, probably)

Day 1..... 1092 words. Total words to date..... 1092

Day 2..... 1287 words. Total words to date..... 2379

Day 3..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX

Writing of Blackwell Ops 8 (novel)

Day 1..... 1653 words. Total words to date..... 1653
Day 2..... 1043 words. Total words to date..... 2696
Day 3..... 1711 words. Total words to date..... 4407
Day 4..... 1221 words. Total words to date..... 5628
Day 5..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX

Writing of Body on the Beach (novel, working title)

Day 1..... 1135 words. Total words to date..... 1135
Day 1..... 1409 words. Total words to date..... 2544

Total fiction words for the month..... 1287
Total fiction words for the year..... 336481
Total nonfiction words for the month... 2790
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 153180
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 489661

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 213
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Atlas Obscura](#), [Discover Magazine](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Quanta Magazine](#), [Sue Coletta](#), [The Guardian](#)

The Journal: Magic Realism, Writing, and the WIBBOW Rule

October 9, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * How I came to write magic realism
- * The WIBBOW Rule
- * A Note on Covers
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Writing to me is an advanced and slow form of reading. If you find a book you really want to read but it hasn’t been written yet, then you must write it. ... It took me a long time to do a short book; a long time to leave the world of language and the building up and shaping of the book, but once it began to float I knew I could not not do it....” Toni Morrison

“I write the kind of stuff I’d like to read but can’t find. If I didn’t like it I wouldn’t write it.” Mickey Spillane

“You may be disappointed if you fail, but you are doomed if you don’t try.” Beverly Sills

“As a writer, I’m always trying to create the book I want to read, but can’t find anywhere.” Janet Fitch

“Sometimes if there’s a book you really want to read, you have to write it yourself.” Ann Patchett

Two major topics in the Journal today. I almost split this into two posts, but I didn’t. So get a beverage and settle in. First, a reader of the Journal emailed to ask me “How did you come to write magic realism?”

Another reader a few days ago mentioned in an email that one of the least-developed characters in one of my magic realism stories (the character’s patiently waiting in the wings to become a major character) is her favorite of all my characters. I was a little surprised, but pleasantly.

So I thought I’d talk here a little about how I came to write what I write. Sometimes thinking about why you write what you write will spur you to write more.

First, my definition of magic realism — A magic realism story occurs when the characters live and breathe at the precise point on the horizon where reality folds into imagination.

I say “on the horizon” because whether it occurs in a physically distant place or within one’s own body or mind, it’s something the reader can’t quite get a handle on but can only sense and experience from afar, as in a waking dream.

The magic realism event is something that can neither be seen nor ignored but only felt. In that way, it’s the impossible brought to life and experienced (hands-off) by the reader.

Oddly, the writer has to experience the magic realism event the same way: hands-off, but simultaneously at a distance and in the center of it.

I came to write magic realism because I fell in love with the stories of Franz Kafka (The Metamorphosis and The Trial) and Octavio Paz (“My Life with the Wave”) and Isabel Allende and Jorge Luis Borges and several others. I enjoy the writing of Gabriel Garcia Márquez, but not as much as Paz and Allende and some others.

I even wrote a magic realism short story collection (Stories from the Cantina) in which each story stood alone but were also interconnected with the others. So when taken as a whole, the collection is also a short novel. It was patterned after *The Stories of Eva Luna* by Allende.

But the same is true with short stories and novels (and films) in other genres: crime, war, historical western, detective/private investigator, SF, action-adventure and thriller. I love those genres so I write stories and novels in them. I can't imagine writing in a genre I haven't enjoyed reading.

As many others have said (see *Quotes of the Day*), if there's a story you want to read but you can't find it, you should write it. That's what and why I write. A character pops into my head with a line of dialogue or a scene and off I go.

The WIBBOW Rule

Dean Wesley Smith often quotes the WIBBOW Rule, which he attributes to writer Scott William Carter. Dean reportedly applies the rule often, especially when he's faced with deciding what to work on next (or at all) in his multiple roles as writer, instructor, publisher, and old-guy trying to stay in shape.

The acronym stands for *Would I Be Better Off Writing* (WIBBOW).

I've really never slowed down to apply the WIBBOW rule. Shrug. I just write. Or did for the longest time.

But it's no secret that my own writing has slowed — a lot. I've typically written 10 novels and dozens of short stories every year. At this point, the best-case (but realistic) scenario for 2020 is that I'll finish the year with 53 novels (so only 3 new), 8 novellas (0 new), and maybe as many as 220 short stories (20 new and only 7 more than I have right now).

Part of that is because I have plenty of other things to do, all on the marketing and/or publishing side of the business. And thoughts of all those other things sometimes feel overwhelming. Sometimes they effectively freeze me in-place. Apparently those thoughts have intruded into my writing.

For example, I need to re-do and brand or rebrand some of my covers (both series and stand-alones), rewrite some of my sales copy, and (lesser importance) put together a few templates to make future jobs easier. (To that end, I've removed some things from my Numbers section this morning. They aren't dead. Just waiting.)

I also want to put more of my titles in paper, and I want to do it myself, so that's another job and another learning curve. For me personally, saddled with my particular personality, that's a bit of a daunting task.

Finally, in order to do all of that, I also need to familiarize myself with a new program, one I bought about a year ago but haven't made time to learn yet. I've been cruising along in my

comfort zone with an older program I've been using for years to create book covers (Serif PagePlus).

That program still works fine, but it won't suffice anymore. Support for the program has gone the way of the mastadons. More importantly, though it will work for the cover re-dos and branding (sales copy doesn't enter in), it won't suffice for interior design or cover spreads (for putting my books into paper). And it won't suffice for a major new project I've had in mind for about a year now.

So I'm at a turning point that includes three stages:

1. I have to invest the time NOW to learn the new program. With my personality and way of doing things, that means writing will have to take a back seat until I've learned the new program.

2. As a function of learning the new program, I'll practice. I'll begin creating new, rebranded ebook covers (so at least that much will be out of the way). Plus I'll probably get a good start on that new project I mentioned above (albeit only in ebook format at first).

Stages one and two should take a week to two weeks. Of course, as I learn new things about the program or otherwise, I'll share those things here. So I hope you'll stay tuned.

3. Once I feel comfortable with the new program, if going to paper still feels important to me I'll create interior layouts and full-spread covers and publish to paper. This one is shaky. This is where I'll probably apply the WIBBOW rule and maybe return to writing instead.

In the past, again because of my personality and way of doing things, I've separated Writing and Publishing into separate compartments. It's always been difficult for me to move smoothly from one to the other in the same day. If I'm writing that day, I write. If I'm designing covers and writing sales copy and publishing, I do that to the exclusion of writing.

But I hope that once I've settled into using the new program, I'll be more able to do both, writing part of the day and publishing part of the day. So that's where I stand at the moment.

If you're at all interested, the new program is Serif's Affinity Publisher. It's intuitive and an attractive rival to Adobe InDesign, but instead of being saddled with a monthly subscription fee you can buy the program outright for \$50. You can read about it at <https://affinity.serif.com/en-us/publisher/>.

A Note on Covers

No matter which program you're using to create covers (and if you are prolific and *aren't* designing your own covers you're wasting a lot of money), you need to study covers that are selling.

How? Go to Amazon. Look for modern bestsellers in your genre. If a cover attracts you, study it. Learn that the author name and book title should always be HUGE so they can be seen plainly in

the thumbnail version. Learn the kind of artwork used in your genre. Just knowing the program isn't nearly enough.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "One of My Favorite Pictures" at <https://www.deanwesleymith.com/one-of-my-favorite-pictures/>. I was fortunate to study under Jack Williamson at ENMU at Portales (the town Dean mentions in his post) in 1994. He was a great man and a great writer.

See "Amazon Author Insights" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/amazon-author-insights-2/>. And see the post that occurs after this one at TPV.

See "5 Ways Paragraphing Supports Story" at <https://writerunboxed.com/2020/10/08/5-ways-paragraphing-supports-story/>. Also, start a new paragraph when the focus shifts character to character or scene to scene.

See "Having Fun In Week #2..." at <https://www.deanwesleymith.com/having-fun-in-week-2/>. I seldom find fault with DWS, but all I can think of to add to this is "monthly means every month."

See "Vietnamese Publishing House Co-Founder Arrested" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/vietnamese-publishing-house-co-founder-arrested/>. And be sure to read PG's addendum.

See "The Virtual You" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/10/the-virtual-you.html>.

See "Just Who Are You Calling Old?" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/10/just-who-are-you-calling-old.html>.

See bestselling author John Gilstrap's YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/c/authorjohngilstrap>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1620 words

Writing of "Turnaround" (short story, probably)

Day 1..... 1092 words. Total words to date..... 1092

Day 2..... 1287 words. Total words to date..... 2379

Day 3..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 1287

Total fiction words for the year..... 336481

Total nonfiction words for the month... 4410
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 154800
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 491281

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 213
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [John Gilstrap](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#), [Writer Unboxed](#)

The Journal: Very short post today

October 12, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Very short post today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“It is a good rule in life never to apologize. The right sort of people do not want apologies, and the wrong sort take a mean advantage of them.” PG Wodehouse

Very short post today. I was going to publish this Journal entry yesterday, but we had a wide power outage in southeast Arizona and the power came back on a little too late to file this.

As it turns out, I didn't have a lot to say anyway at the moment. As previously reported, I'm studying Affinity Publisher (there are TONS of good vids on YouTube, especially those by Rachel Harrison-Sund. I recommend them.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Should a Fiction Writer Use a Thesaurus?” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/10/should-a-fiction-writer-use-a-thesaurus.html>. Stupid topic, really. If you need it, use it, but don't rely on it blindly. Remember that words have connotations as well as denotations.

See “Norway’s authors fight...” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/norways-authors-fight-to-be-on-more-unlimited-subscription-platforms/>. Especially see PG’s take after the original post. I recommend you read the comments too. You earn a 70% royalty from Amazon on any ebook priced from \$2.99 to \$9.99 even if you are not in KDP Select.

See “We Now Return You to ‘The End’” at <https://fourknightspress.com/f/we-now-return-you-to-the-end>.

See “Poetic Pain” at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/the-colorful-pain-index-of-the-stinging-ants-bees-and-wasps-around-the-world>. (Hint: Not about poetry.)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 230 words

Writing of “Turnaround” (short story, probably)

Day 1..... 1092 words. Total words to date..... 1092
Day 2..... 1287 words. Total words to date..... 2379
Day 3..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 1287
Total fiction words for the year..... 336481
Total nonfiction words for the month... 4640
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 155030
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 491511

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 213
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dan Baldwin](#), [Four Knights Press](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: More on Affinity Publisher

October 13, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * From Diane Darcy
- * More on Affinity Publisher
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“[T]he final product isn’t important to me. What is important is the fun of the process of telling a story. ... I love writing. I can take or leave having written.” Dean Wesley Smith

“I don’t like every song [short story, novel] I write, but I like that I wrote it.” Jeff Tweedy

Professional indie fiction writer and Journal reader Diane Darcy recommends a book called Writing and Marketing Systems. You can find it at <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08B4MN9BJ/>. Just thought I’d pass that along.

You all know I’m currently learning Affinity Publisher. Affinity itself has free tutorials, but for me, they’re confusing. Possibly, that’s because those who present the tutorials are the designers who put Publisher together in the first place. Still, your results might vary. I encourage you to give the free official tutorials a try. They’re included with Publisher.

But if the free official tutorials are as confusing to you as they are to me, I encourage you to check out Ally Anderson’s free introductory tutorial “Top 10 Things Beginners Want To Know” [about Affinity Publisher] at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=py6fqmvlaqY>. Frankly, Ally’s a little effervescent for me, but she seems to know what she’s talking about. Her instruction is clear and concise.

She also offers Affinity Publisher for Beginners, a complete comprehensive course that costs only \$25 and covers every aspect of Publisher. You can find it at <https://courses.affinityrevolution.com/p/affinity-publisher-for-beginners/>. When you get to that URL, scroll down to see the full list of course features. As I wrote above, it’s comprehensive. I signed up for it immediately after I finished the “Top 10 Things...” video I mentioned above.

Most importantly (to me), the course comes complete with practice sessions (assignments). Also important, you can download all the practice files and videos. So you can complete the entire course online, but you can also complete the course (or revisit it for a quick refresher) offline.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “5 Ways Affinity Publisher beats Adobe InDesign” at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nd19DUrQfPU>. A 7-minute video.

See “Making Writing Important” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/making-writing-important/>. Just a reminder.

See “5 Songwriting Tips We Learned From Jeff Tweedy’s New Book” at <https://americansongwriter.com/how-to-write-one-song-jeff-tweedy-book-interview/>. All writing is writing.

See “Ten Tips on How (NOT) to Manage Your Email List” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/10/ten-tips-on-how-not-to-manage-your-email-list.html>. Chock full of stuff I wish I’d done back when I was teaching at conferences around the nation.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 410 words

Writing of “Turnaround” (short story, probably)

Day 1..... 1092 words. Total words to date..... 1092
Day 2..... 1287 words. Total words to date..... 2379
Day 3..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 1287
Total fiction words for the year..... 336481
Total nonfiction words for the month... 5050
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 155440
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 491921

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 213
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Affinity Publisher](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Griping a little

October 14, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Griping a little
- * Still in class
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“[L]ibraries promote more reading, which creates more readers, which creates more book purchasers, which means publishers make more money.” The Passive Guy

I’m griping a little today. I don’t like inaccuracy in writing instruction, and there’s a lot of inaccuracy out there. When I read or hear a blatant inaccuracy that is obviously not a typo in a blog post or a misstep in a writing class, it makes the hairs on the back of my neck stand up.

Some would-be writing instructors don’t know how to safeguard their credibility by using qualifiers like “some” or “most” or “hardly ever.” Instead they use absolutes (or extremes) like “all” or “always” or “never.” And when they do, they’re almost always wrong.

You could pretty safely say the sunrise “always” occurs at the eastern horizon of the earth. Barring a truly major cataclysm, that will always be true.

But you can’t accurately write that “You CANNOT use an apostrophe to create a plural.” (See today’s “Of Interest.”) Of course, the writer who wrote that then contradicted herself by adding

“My characters can mind their Ps and Qs. But when it comes to dotting I’s, [my editor] prefers the apostrophe because it avoids the confusion with the word Is. And, for consistency, she included the apostrophe with crossing T’s.”

YES! I’ve taught my students that exception for thirty years or more, although the example I used was one parent talking to another about Little Johnny’s report card. In that case, you might write “He earned three A’s, two B’s and a C.” The first apostrophe would avoid reader confusion with “as” and the second would be for consistency.

So in her advice, why did the author of the article write the absolute “THERE IS NO USE THREE” instead of “The third use of the apostrophe, to form a plural, is an exception to the norm”?

Why did she choose to write “You CANNOT use an apostrophe to create a plural” instead of “You can use an apostrophe to create a plural only to avoid confusing the reader” and then insert her example?

When you’re a professional writer, part of your job is learning how much you don’t know. Another part of your job is correcting that lack by learning. Until you do that, you shouldn’t pose as a writing instructor.

Writing instructors owe it to their students to get it right. Spreading misinformation, whether intentionally or out of ignorance, is just wrong.

A day or two ago, another professional writer, one I admire, commented on a Journal post that she misses my daily word counts. Flippantly, I replied that I miss them too. (grin)

But I owe her (and you) a better answer than that. So here it is.

I'm still in the class on Affinity Publisher for Beginners, and I'm making good headway. Yesterday I made it through about 1/4 of the lessons before my head was full and I had to stop. (I've already learned about Layers and a few other things that are well worth the price of the course.) Overall, this is a great course, easily worth four times the price and maybe more.

In addition to the benefit of all that I'm learning, this course also feels like a transition. As you know, I've been in the doldrums for a few months now.

To recap, I finished my last novel back in early May. I wrote no fiction during June and July, and I made an aborted start on a new novel in August. In September, I made another aborted start on another novel and then wrote four short stories and started another one.

And I finally *FINALLY* realized I need to focus my mind on a different task for awhile. So I enrolled in this course on Affinity Publisher.

But my creative subconscious is tugging at the bit. I suspect once this learning cycle is out of the way, I'll be back to writing normally again — well, my version of normal, which is to say prolifically, with regular, elevated word counts.

So really, this is my way of clearing the decks, knocking out an obstacle to my writing. When I get through the other side, I'll still be a good storyteller, but I will be a much more knowledgeable indie publisher.

I'll go through the entire course once, mostly just viewing and listening. Then I'll go through specific parts of it again and apply them to a specific project as I go. That will complete my training. So I figure another week, maybe two.

Thanks for hanging in there. Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Caution on the November Writing Challenge..." at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/caution-on-the-november-writing-challenge/>. True stuff about possible drawbacks to NaNoWriMo.

See "Using Apostrophes" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/10/using-apostrophes.html>. As is typical of this author, she inaccurately paints a very specific topic with a very broad brush. Still, 2/3 of the information is good, so I linked to it here.

See “When to Form a Plural with an Apostrophe” at <https://www.dailywritingtips.com/when-to-form-a-plural-with-an-apostrophe/>.

See “Publishers worry as ebooks fly off libraries’ virtual shelves” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/publishers-worry-as-ebooks-fly-off-libraries-virtual-shelves/>. Especially see PG’s take.

See “All of Barnes & Noble’s Computer Systems...” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/all-of-barnes-nobles-computer-systems-are-down-and-i-do-mean-all-of-them/>. Again, see PG’s take. If you have books for sale at B&N, this should matter to you.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 900 words

Writing of “Turnaround” (short story, probably)

Day 1..... 1092 words. Total words to date..... 1092
Day 2..... 1287 words. Total words to date..... 2379
Day 3..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 1287
Total fiction words for the year..... 336481
Total nonfiction words for the month... 5950
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 156340
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 492821

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 213
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Daily Writing Tips](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Save This Post

October 15, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Save This Post
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Save This Post

If you're still on the fence about whether to purchase Affinity Publisher and/or the Affinity Revolution full course for how to use publisher, I recommend you keep this post. I might talk again about using or learning Affinity Publisher, but I probably won't list the links again (see below).

I'm still working my way through the so-called "beginners" course on Affinity Publisher. I've slowed down a little because as I come to things I don't already know but that interest me, I'm applying and practicing them in my own copy of Affinity Publisher.

I'll practice again on my second time through the course to be sure I've got it, though I'll revisit only those videos that interest me. Nothing I've seen so far has been difficult to understand at all. Both Affinity Publisher and the course are extremely user-friendly. You don't have to be a techie.

I can't stress this strongly enough — I'm even more convinced now that this course is an absolutely excellent value. I would have readily paid at least four (and maybe even eight) times the \$25 price.

The instructor says the course is for "beginners," but in that she's wrong. This is a comprehensive course that literally teaches you everything you need to know.

First, a few points —

1. If you don't already own Affinity Publisher, you can check it out at <https://affinity.serif.com/en-us/publisher/>. It costs only \$50, and that's a one-time fee (NOT a subscription) to actually own the program. (You can download it multiple times if you have more than one computer.)
2. If you already own Affinity Publisher and you want to invest in the course I'm talking about (and taking myself), visit <https://courses.affinityrevolution.com/p/affinity-publisher-for-beginners/>. Again, this is a comprehensive course that literally teaches you everything you need to know.
3. If you're a Mac user and go with Vellum, that's fine. (There is no Vellum for PC.) Affinity Publisher will still augment Vellum.
4. If you're currently paying \$20 per month every month (Dean Wesley Smith, I'm looking at you), you're missing a bet.

Every comparison post I've checked online says Affinity Publisher is better all-around. The price can't be beat, and it's user-friendly and intuitive. Affinity Publisher integrates all three programs in the Affinity platform: Publisher, Photo, and Designer.

In fact, although I own all three (each is only \$50), because I own Publisher I don't really even need the other two for any aspect of indie publishing: cover design for ebooks or paper books, layout for either one, and print-ready export for either one.

As the logline for the course URL above says, this course includes "Everything you need to publish like a pro."

Okay, now I'm off my soapbox. Talk with you later.

Of Interest

See "Kobo — A Truly International Indie Publishing Platform" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/10/kobo-a-truly-international-indie-publishing-platform.html>. Ba patient. It will pay off. This is a long but absolutely excellent post, chock full of great marketing information.

See "Top Ten Tips on Formatting eBooks from MS Word" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/09/top-ten-tips-on-formatting-ebooks-from-ms-word.html>.

Also see "Microsoft Word for Writers" (my series) at <https://harveystanbrough.com/microsoft-word-for-writers/>.

See "Kobo Writing Life" (a blog) at <https://kobowritinglife.com/>. I encourage you to browse the posts (and subscribe) and also browse the website.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 540 words

Writing of "Turnaround" (short story, probably)

Day 1..... 1092 words. Total words to date..... 1092
Day 2..... 1287 words. Total words to date..... 2379
Day 3..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 1287
Total fiction words for the year..... 336481
Total nonfiction words for the month... 6490
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 156880
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 493361

| | |
|---|-----|
| Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... | 5 |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... | X |
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... | 12 |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 50 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 213 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Affinity Publisher](#), [Affinity Revolution](#), [Harvey Stanbrough](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Kobo](#), [Microsoft Word](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: A Quick Primer on Cover Design

October 16, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Topic: A Quick Primer on Cover Design
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“[I]n the online world, the cover is the single most important way to position the book.” Bigstock blog

“When you browse the Amazon bestsellers in your genre, you should notice patterns in color schemes, fonts, layouts, and images.” Dave Chesson, Kindlepreneur

Topic: A Quick (Very Basic) Primer on Cover Design

If your immediate response to this is “I don’t need this because I have a cover designer,” well, good for you. But you’re throwing away a lot of money. If you’re prolific and haven’t yet hit the lottery, you probably really can’t afford to pay for cover design. But that’s all right. It isn’t difficult to learn.

I’m pretty settled with how to design book and ebook covers that sell. Still, in today’s “Of Interest” I listed a URL where you can learn more if you want to. (Disclaimer: I haven’t fully read the article yet as I write this.)

I've taken the "Designing Mystery, Cozy and Thriller Covers" online lecture from Allyson Longueira (if I remember right, it was only \$50) and I learned a ton of very useful information that I can apply across the genres.

I've also taken the "Covers 101" online workshop from DWS (regularly \$300, though I got it for half price). To me, the lecture was more valuable.

More importantly, I've designed hundreds of ebook covers for both myself and others. So I've practiced. A lot.

Here are a few really important notes:

1. Chances are good that the first time potential readers see your book, they will see it on Amazon or some other online resource. That means they'll see it in thumbnail.

Therefore

a. The title should be LARGE so it can be read in the thumbnail version.

b. The author name should be LARGE so it can be read in the thumbnail version. Your name is what initially sells your book.

When readers find what they're looking for (your name) and click the thumbnail,

2. The cover art must be appropriate to the genre. I know. Duh. Yet you'd be amazed how many covers are not appropriate to the genre. Then the authors wonder why the books don't sell. So

a. Bring up a list of bestsellers in your genre (again, Amazon is a great resource) and study the covers. What kind of art did they use? Illustration or photo? Light or dark? Colorful or bland?

b. Notice the space on the art for the title and author name. Was it natural to the illustration or photo or was it manufactured (a block or circle, etc.)?

c. Notice how the various elements of the cover (art, title, author name, author tag, series or genre tag, front cover tease) are aligned.

d. Mimic the cover with the same type of art and the same placement of cover elements used by those bestsellers.

3. As I've already said, the elements and their alignment are important. But what exactly are the elements?

a. Art — according to DWS, for fiction it's better to use an illustration instead of a photo for your cover. For me, the jury's still out on this. But remember that you can use PART of a piece of art for your cover. You don't have to use the whole thing. The crop tool in any program is a wonderful thing.

b. Title and author name — as I’ve already mentioned, both should be huge. Consider not only height but also weight of the fonts you use. Within a series (or within a genre), consistency in placement and appearance is important.

c. Author tag — DWS uses “USA Today Bestselling Author” as his author tag. If you aren’t yet a bestselling author, you can use “Author of XYZ series,” “Author of the acclaimed novel XYZ,” etc.

d. Series or commercial- or literary-genre tag — For a series, this might be as simple as “Book 8 in the XYZ series.” For a genre, you might use something like “A Mystery to Die For” or “A Cozy Mystery to Snuggle Up With” or “Romance with a Twist” or “A Science Fiction Thriller” or “An Intense Mystery Short Story” etc. You get the idea.

e. Front cover tease — (Note: Not all covers for short stories or novels have a front cover tease. But if you want good sales, this really is the only element that’s optional. That being said, the cover tease isn’t a blurb, but a tease, something to make the reader want to read more. A cover tease is usually very short on one to three lines in much smaller print. It might be something like “What’s it like to watch your own life slip away?” or “Could you mine the bones of your own people? At what cost?”

I can’t overemphasize the importance of the front cover. A good cover will make the reader want to click through to see more.

Hope this helps. I’m happy to entertain any questions via email at harveystanbrough@gmail.com or in the comments. Your question might result in another post. (grin)

Talk with you later.

Of Interest

See “Barnes & Noble hit by cyberattack that exposed customer data” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/barnes-noble-hit-by-cyberattack-that-exposed-customer-data/>. See PG’s take.

See “Do We Live in a Simulation? Chances Are about 50–50” at <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/do-we-live-in-a-simulation-chances-are-about-50-50/>. Intriguing.

See “50 of the best graphic design blogs for inspiration in 2020” at <https://www.creativeboom.com/inspiration/50-of-the-best-blogs-for-graphic-design-inspiration/>.

See “Book Cover Design Mastery” at <https://kindlepreneur.com/book-cover-design/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 890 words

Writing of “Turnaround” (short story, probably)

Day 1..... 1092 words. Total words to date..... 1092
Day 2..... 1287 words. Total words to date..... 2379
Day 3..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 1287
Total fiction words for the year..... 336481
Total nonfiction words for the month... 7380
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 157770
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 494251

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 213
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [CreativeBoom](#), [KindlePreneur](#), [Professional Writer Series](#),
[Scientific American](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: An Intensive Learning Month

October 17, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * An Intensive Learning Month
- * Book Covers
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“In 1792, while Gustav III was attending a masquerade ball, he was shot and killed by someone who didn’t like him.” PG

Well, it looks as if October 2020 will be my intensive learning month. (grin)

The instructor of the Affinity Publisher for Beginners course also offers a couple of FREE courses on Affinity Photo. I’ve already signed up. To read about those, see

* 10 Steps to Amazing Photos at <https://courses.affinityrevolution.com/p/10-steps-to-amazing-photos>. This will also provide an intro to the instructor of the Affinity Publisher for Beginners course I mentioned in previous posts.

* Magically Remove Shadows at <https://courses.affinityrevolution.com/p/magically-remove-shadows-in-affinity-photo>

There's also a full Affinity Photo for Beginners course (different instructor) available for only \$25 at <https://courses.affinityrevolution.com/p/affinity-photo-for-beginners>. (I've signed up and am taking this one next.)

The same instructors also offer a course for Affinity Designer. If that's your interest, you can read about it at <https://courses.affinityrevolution.com/p/affinity-designer-for-beginners>. Just sayin'.

A regular reader of the Journal and long-time friend emailed to ask me to create a cover for his upcoming release.

I know what I'm doing with cover design and I enjoy the alternative creative outlet, so that part isn't a problem. But I have so many other irons in the fire — learning two new major programs, organizing and evaluating my IP, the secret major project I've mentioned here recently, and eventually getting back to actually writing — that I almost refused the job outright. Primarily because although I used to create covers for others with some regularity, I don't do that anymore.

I also used to design websites for others, but I *definitely* don't do that anymore.

However, because I designed the cover for my friend's first novel (and I know a LOT more now than I did then), and because of that friendship, and because he plans to toss me roughly half a boatload of money for the finished product, I decided to make an exception. Or at least give it a shot.

So I'll add that to the list.

One caveat — It's all practice, so I'm being "paid" in that way if no other. So if my friend isn't pleased with the process at any point before I'm finished and changes his mind, I'll either prorate the fee or I won't charge a fee at all.

Because that's how businesses should be run.

So if anyone else out there would like me to design a book cover for them (full spread paper and ebook covers), email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com. You should know up front I'll want to read your story or novel first, so be prepared to send it.

Talk with you later.

Of Interest

See “How to design book covers for any genre ” at <https://99designs.com/blog/tips/book-cover-design-by-genre/>. Even though I’ve been designing book covers for years, I bookmarked this one and will be referring back to it from time to time.

See “Listening to Your Inner Voice” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/10/listening-to-your-inner-voice.html>.

For some fun, see “Is American Fiction Too Provincial?” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/is-american-fiction-too-provincial/>. See PG’s tongue-in-cheek take. He was on his stride.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 520 words

Writing of “Turnaround” (short story, probably)

Day 1..... 1092 words. Total words to date..... 1092
Day 2..... 1287 words. Total words to date..... 2379
Day 3..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 1287
Total fiction words for the year..... 336481
Total nonfiction words for the month... 7900
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 158290
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 494771

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 213
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [99designs.com](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Bottom-Line Concerns

October 19, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Bottom-line concerns

- * Degrees of communication
- * Writing into the dark
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“In order to control myself I must first accept myself by going with and not against my nature.”
Bruce Lee

“Bottom line concerns have all but decimated the publishers’ promotional efforts....” Paul Dinas
on Anne R. Allen’s blog

“Bottom-line concerns.” Yes. Because today the major traditional publishers increase the value of their corporation NOT by publishing and selling books but by paying a pittance for IP, then valuating that IP and simply adding it to the assets column of their spreadsheet.

At 5 a.m. this morning it was 13° above freezing. That sounds a lot colder than 45°, doesn’t it? Illustrating that how you say a thing can communicate much more than what you say.

For all those out there who write into the dark and discover the story as we go, we are not alone. We already know King and Child several other contemporary “name” authors write into the dark. Apparently JRR Tolkein did the same thing. Just sayin’....

I met a lot of things on the way that astonished me. Tom Bombadil I knew already; but I had never been to Bree. Strider sitting in the corner at the inn was a shock, and I had no more idea who he was than had Frodo. The Mines of Moria had been a mere name; and of Lothlórien no word had reached my mortal ears till I came there. Far away I knew there were the Horse-lords on the confines of an ancient Kingdom of Men, but Fangorn Forest was an unforeseen adventure. I had never heard of the House of Eorl nor of the Stewards of Gondor. Most disquieting of all, Saruman had never been revealed to me, and I was as mystified as Frodo at Gandalf's failure to appear on September 22.

J. R. R. Tolkien, in a letter to
W. H. Auden, 7 June 1955

Talk with you later.

Of Interest

See “The Reading Habits Of Five Generations” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-reading-habits-of-five-generations/>. More informative than the title sounds.

See “A Former Paid Reviewer Shares” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/a-former-reviewer-shares/>.

See “Blog 3,000 Days in a Row!” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/blog-3000-days-in-a-row/>. I made only a few hundred days with the Journal before I missed. (grin)

See “Video Marketing and Social Media Tips” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/10/video-marketing-and-social-media-tips.html>.

See “Surviving—and Thriving—in The Brave New World Of Publishing” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/surviving-and-thriving-in-the-brave-new-world-of-publishing/>. I encourage you to click through to Anne R. Allen’s blog post, but added this link so you could see PG’s take on the post.

See “Stephen Hawking Left Us Bold Predictions...” at <https://qz.com/1423685/stephen-hawking-says-superhumans-will-take-over-ai-is-a-threat-and-humans-will-conquer-space/>. Story ideas.

See “Bruce Lee on Death and What It Takes to Be an Artist of Life” at <https://www.brainpickings.org/2020/10/16/bruce-lee-death-artist-of-life/>.

See “Be Like Water...” (philosophy) at <https://www.brainpickings.org/2013/05/29/like-water-bruce-lee-artist-of-life/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 300 words

Writing of “Turnaround” (short story, probably)

Day 1..... 1092 words. Total words to date..... 1092
Day 2..... 1287 words. Total words to date..... 2379
Day 3..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 1287
Total fiction words for the year..... 336481
Total nonfiction words for the month... 8200
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 158590
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 495071

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 12
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 213
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Anne R. Allen](#), [BrainPickings.org](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Quartz](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: A Rare Second Post

October 19, 2020 by [Harvey](#) (NOT A TYPO. THIS IS A SECOND POST ON THE SAME DAY.)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Two Journal posts today
- * Six years ago today
- * Writing Into the Dark
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Some days things don't line up quite right. That's why they make tomorrows.” Wes Crowley

If you don't receive two posts via email today, you can see the earlier post at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-journal-bottom-line-concerns/>. There are several “Of Interest” items in that post and none in this one, so you might want to take a look.

I felt like something was special about today, October 19, but I couldn't quite bring it up. My wife mentioned it when I left the Hovel and went up to the house for breakfast: Six years ago today, I wrote the opening paragraph to my first novel (a Wes Crowley novel), *Leaving Amarillo*:

Wes Crowley leaned forward and poked at an ember that had popped out of the campfire a moment earlier. “Been a long trail this time, boys.” His attention fixed on the ember, he worked the tip of the stick under the edge nearest him, then flipped it backward into the fire. A few sparks released. “Sure lookin' forward to gettin' back.” He looked up, a tired, easy grin on his face. “What about you, Mac?”

The novel was published on November 11, and I was off and running. Wow. What a ride it's been so far: 50 novels, 8 novellas, and over 200 short stories, all written into the dark.

To celebrate, I'm going to skip off learning for the day and write more on “Turnaround” (short story, probably). (grin)

Writing Into the Dark

If you're new to the Journal, or if you otherwise don't know what writing into the dark means (we often use the acronym WITD), it means Trust:

- * Trust what you already know.

You've gleaned knowledge over the years about grammar, syntax, punctuation, etc. You learned with your conscious mind, but stored the information in your subconscious. It's all there, and the skills you need will surface automatically as you're writing.

As you attend workshops and lectures and read things like this Journal and the works you admire of other authors, you will learn new skills and those too will be absorbed into your subconscious. So again, trust in your knowledge and keep learning new skills.

* Trust your subconscious storyteller to tell your stories.

You've been telling stories since you were a toddler, long before you even knew there was such a thing as an alphabet. The same subconscious storyteller that rendered you cute and clever back then will do the same thing now if you trust what you know and get out of your own way.

The surest and quickest way to screw up a short story or novel and render it a bland, boring, predictable reading experience is to second-guess your subconscious. Don't worry about where the story's going next, even when you bog down or get stuck. Just write the next sentence that occurs to you, then the next and the next. And soon you won't be bogged down or stuck any longer.

And my favorite tried-and-true method to begin a story?

1. Sit down and put your fingers on the keyboard.
2. Now come up with a character, give him a problem (usually a very minor problem like an untied shoelace or a sticking door, not "the" problem of the story) and drop him into a setting.
3. Then write an opening of a page or two (say 300 – 500 words). Be sure to include all five of the character's physical senses.

To do that, describe the setting through the senses and opinions of your character. If you include an emotional sense from the character (forboding, fear, joy, elation, unease, etc.) so much the better.

If the opening takes off, run with it. If it doesn't, cut your losses, delete the story start, and write another one.

Sometimes an opening will turn into a short story. Sometimes it will run to a novella or novel. (The only difference between a short story and a novel is that a short story is about One Event.)

One caution — Don't "decide" anything. Just write the opening and the ensuing story. Remember, it's the character's story, not yours. You're only recording it.

Practice this exercise several times over a few weeks. If nothing else, practice it to prove it won't work. (That's what I did when I started.)

But I promise (and not lightly), if you're faithful to yourself (if you trust yourself) WITD will work for you. You'll experience both the fear of the unknown and the satisfaction of watching a story write itself to a successful conclusion. And all of that will mix with the excitement of being the very first person in history to enjoy your character's story as he conveys it to you.

Happy writing. Talk with you later.

Harvey

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Harvey Stanbrough](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#), [Writing Into the Dark](#)

The Journal: “Turnaround” and Links

October 20, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * “Turnaround” Finished
- * My friend Robert S.
- * Not a lot, but links
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“The most regretful people on earth are those... who felt their own creative power restive and uprising, and gave to it neither power nor time.” Mary Oliver

As advertised, I played a little yesterday and finished “Turnaround.” I wasn’t sure of the title when I started (it was just what occurred to me) but the reason for the title became clear as the story wrapped up. (grin) I love it when that happens.

In response to the October 19 post, my friend Robert S. wrote “I think this is the best ‘full & nuanced explanation’ of WITD you’ve thus far cast out into the Universe.”

Thanks, Robert. Glad I’m improving. (grin) I like to come at a topic in different ways for different readers. And I don’t mind repeating information for new readers.

If ya’ll find the Journal helpful, please remember to tell your writer friends.

Not a lot in the body of the Journal today, but several links. Speaking of which, did anyone else get story ideas from the Stephen Hawking link <https://qz.com/1423685/stephen-hawking-says-superhumans-will-take-over-ai-is-a-threat-and-humans-will-conquer-space/> from the first post on October 19? Just wondering. I got at least two ideas for SF novels.

I’ve written four or five short stories during my break from writing. If any of my patrons would like to read any of them, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com. I’ll be happy to send them out in PDF, albeit sans covers for the time being.

Talk with you later.

Of Interest

See “27 Publishers...” at <https://www.authorspublish.com/27-publishers-with-excellent-distribution-that-accept-unsolicited-submissions/>. I recommend indie publishing but whatever works for you.

See “Do Everything Faster With These Keyboard Tricks” at <https://www.wired.com/story/do-everything-faster-keyboard-shortcuts-tricks-tips/>.

See “The Intimacy of Crime Scene Photos...” at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/alphonse-bertillon-crime-scene-photos>. Story ideas.

See “The World’s Most Efficient Languages” at <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/06/complex-languages/489389/>.

See “Promoting Your Audiobooks” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/promoting-your-audiobooks/>.

See “Readings, reinvented” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/readings-reinvented/>. See PG’s take.

See “An Open Letter to Barnes & Noble” at <https://www.startawildfire.com/2020/08/open-letter-barnes-noble.html>. Thanks to PG.

See “KDP University” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/kdp-university/>. Thanks to PG.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 340 words

Writing of “Turnaround” (short story)

Day 1..... 1092 words. Total words to date..... 1092

Day 2..... 1287 words. Total words to date..... 2379

Day 3..... 2036 words. Total words to date..... 4415 (done)

Total fiction words for the month..... 1287

Total fiction words for the year..... 336481

Total nonfiction words for the month... 9320

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 159710

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 498227

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5

Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

| | |
|--|-----|
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13 | |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 50 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 214 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Atlas Obscura](#), [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Promoting Audiobooks](#), [The Atlantic](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [wired.com](#)

The Journal: Heinlein's Rule 2

October 21, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * I've updated the mentorships
- * Topic: Heinlein's Rule 2 — You Must Finish What You Write
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“At some point in the next 1,000 years, nuclear war or environmental calamity will ‘cripple Earth.’ However, by then, ‘our ingenious race will have found a way to slip the surly bonds of Earth and will therefore survive the disaster.’ The Earth’s other species probably won’t make it, though.” Max de Haldevang, quoting Stephen Hawking in Quartz magazine

“In fiction, emotional release is boring. Drama lives within a character’s efforts to keep his emotions in check—to plow forward despite the pain. We’ve seen it at funerals as sons and daughters struggle to get through their eulogy....” John Gilstrap

I've updated the mentorships I offer. If you're want to invest in your writing with one-on-one instruction that will vastly improve your craft, visit <https://harveystanbrough.com/the-writing-craft-mentorships/>.

If you want to write but seem unable to get started, or if you want specific, one-on-one instruction on Inventory and Sales or Licensing, click <https://harveystanbrough.com/non-writing-mentorships/>.

Topic: Heinlein's Rule 2 — You Must Finish What You Write

Much as I talk about being an adherent of [Heinlein's Rules](#), I haven't been for awhile.

Immediately after I posted yesterday's Journal entry, it struck me that I'd finished "Turnaround," the short story I started earlier in the month.

Why was that significant? Certainly not because of the story itself. After all, even though it was great fun for me to write, it's only another few minutes' entertainment for the reader.

But it was significant because it dawned on me that all I did was "decide" to return to the story, read through what I'd already written (while allowing my character to touch it as I went), and then type the next sentence.

And that's what I did. I let the character led me through to the end of the story, as I knew he would. (That "trust" thing from the October 19 post.)

So I re-learned a couple of valuable lessons:

1. *Just Type the Next Sentence* really is an invaluable piece of writing advice. It works when the story bogs down or gets stuck, and it works when you just leave a story for awhile for whatever reason and then come back to it.

2. *If you want to be a writer*, first you have to make a conscious decision to write. And then you have to sit down, put your fingers on the keyboard, and write. (Or as my grandma would say, "You have to put feet in your prayers.")

If you write into the dark (see the second October 19 post), you trust your subconscious mind — your onboard storyteller — and write what you're given. It's wonderful, primarily because when you WITD, you don't have to switch back and forth from your conscious mind to your subconscious mind.

For the past couple of months, I haven't been a writer. I've been a student. Now maybe I can be both again. To that end, I've added a new project below to practice finishing what I start. Not that I'll begin it immediately or move forward on it rapidly. I haven't even written the opening yet. But I will. (grin)

Again, any patrons who would like to read any of the short stories I wrote while I was on a break from writing in general, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com. I'll send them to you, free, in PDF format.

For now, back to school.

Talk with you later.

Of Interest

See "2020 Holiday Spectacular" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/2020-holiday-spectacular/>. As of this writing, this has already funded, but I still encourage you to read the post. They're offering an exciting new workshop as well as a lot of other rewards.

See “The end of the general trade publishing concept” at <https://www.idealogue.com/blog/the-end-of-the-general-trade-publishing-concept/>.

See “On Nurturing Writers” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/david-farlands-writing-tips-on-nurturing-writers/>. Yes! What he said.

See “Writing In The White Space” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/10/writing-in-the-white-space.html>.

See “C:\ Thinking in an http: World” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/c-thinking-in-an-http-world/>.

See “Two New Books and a tawny owl in a pear tree” at <https://journal.neilgaiman.com/2020/10/two-new-books-and-tawny-owl-in-pear-tree.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 670 words

Writing of The Ark (novel or something)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 4415
Total fiction words for the year..... 339609
Total nonfiction words for the month... 9990
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 160380
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 499989

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [James Scott Bell](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Neil Gaiman](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: NaNoWriMo Approacheth

October 23, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Topic: NaNoWriMo Approacheth, Slouching...
- * I'm writing again
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

"It is the writer that creates a story that will sell ... if the writer allows himself to be in the story with the character." Dean Wesley Smith

Topic: NaNoWriMo Approacheth, Slouching Toward Keyboards Everywhere

Forgive me the following. I'm going to get a little snarky.

In an article in Kobo Writing Life yesterday, the author advised writers to "prepare" for NaNoWriMo. The article suggests writers

1. Plot their outline
2. Do a chapter breakdown
3. Write up some character sketches
4. Do any necessary research, and
5. Do any necessary world building.

They recommend all of this immediately after reminding prospective writers "remember, you can't write any of your book before November so don't get too in depth!"

That was where I burst out laughing. I mean, seriously? "Don't get too in depth?" My "Don't Cheat" persona says they're advising folks to write their entire novel before the month even begins, albeit in strictly abbreviated form, then write it again, filling in all the gaps between known quantities, in November. And my I'm Too Lazy To Enjoy Doing The Same Job Twice For No Reason self says they're advising folks to go through all this extra work just to write a lousy 50,000 words of fiction in a MONTH. (grin)

That being said, just in case this is your thing, I linked to the article in "Of Interest." So have at it.

But in the meantime, do the math, folks. I mean, there are writers and would-be writers across the nation right now all but hyperventilating because they're going to attempt to write 50,000 words of fiction in a month.

Given a month of 30 days, that means they have to write (on average) 1667 words per day. That's two hours of writing time, max. (1000 words per hour equals 17 words per minute. Or one word every 4 seconds.)

But I do understand. Many will say “but I can’t write on Xxxx days.” (What that actually means is “writing is not enough of a priority to me to carve time out for writing on those days.”) But that’s fine.

Even if they take weekends off, that still leaves 21 days in the month, so they’d have to write a more realistic 2381 words per day. So two to three hours of writing time per day. But again, they can only do what they can do.

The author of the article even gives a nod in the direction of those who write into the dark: “[O]f course there are some experienced pantsers out there for whom this does not apply.”

Okay, one, I despise the term “pantsers.” I refuse to accept it until they call those in the other camp “plodders.” But more important is that whole “experienced” thing. Back when I first started “pantsing” (WITD with no experience at all) I was writing 3000 words per day every day. And lo and behold, I didn’t have to slow down to check some stupid outline or character sketch!

Still, again, I included the article below just in case you can’t quite trust yourself enough yet to write into the dark. The article DOES include some good tips for those who want to do double the work, telling the story first in an outline and then in the actual story. And it also contains some other resource links.

But as always, I encourage you to hike up your big-boy britches and take a shot at trusting in your own abilities. Because seriously, beyond the sheer fun of being the first human EVER to hear the story that comes out of your subconscious, storytelling really isn’t a serious prospect. And if you’re a writers, WITD is the most fun you can have with your clothes on.

Seriously, if NaNoWriMo is right for you, go for it. If you need the safety net of an outline, write one up. If you need character sketches etc., write those up too.

But while you’re writing, if the story or characters take a direction that isn’t in your outline or doesn’t align with your character sketch, go with the story and adjust the outline or character sketch later. Don’t force the story into an outline that your conscious mind came up with.

And one more thing — each time you return to the writing, read over what you wrote last time. Allow yourself (your characters) to touch it, correcting spelling errors, etc. so that when you’re finished you’ve written a clean draft. And then don’t rewrite. Trust your subconscious voice. Just sayin’.

I’m writing again, and let me just say up front it has nothing to do with NaNoWriMo. (grin)

I wrote an opening for The Ark (a new novel and probably a new series), and to say it took off would be a massive understatement. The thing flew out of my fingers. Wow that feels good. (grin)

How do I know it's a novel and not just a short story? 'Cause I wrote a short story just in the first chapter to get the thing started. No possible way will this be about a "single event." Feels good to be excited again.

Talk with you later.

Of Interest

See "A Lesson..." at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/a-lesson/>. Great advice. I hate it when he starts out with something negative like "But few will listen."

See "NaNoWriMo: Story Prep" at <https://kobowritinglife.com/2020/10/22/nanowrimo-story-prep/>. Really, I posted this because it struck me as funny.

See "No, Transient Evidence is Not Evidence Left Behind by Homeless Criminals" at <https://leelofland.com/no-transient-evidence-is-not-evidence-left-behind-by-homeless-criminals/>.

See "How to Negotiate Your Way Out of a Publishing Contract" at <https://www.authorspublish.com/how-to-negotiate-your-way-out-of-a-publishing-contract/>. First, hire a lawyer. Second, read this article.

See "Thunder Mountain..." at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/thunder-mountain/>.

See "Maximizing Your Amazon Author Central Page" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/maximizing-your-amazon-author-central-page/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 960 words

Writing of The Ark (novel)

Day 1..... 3196 words. Total words to date..... 3196

Total fiction words for the month..... 7611

Total fiction words for the year..... 342805

Total nonfiction words for the month... 10950

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 161340

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 504145

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5

Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Kobo Writing Life](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [NaNoWriMo](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: I Guess I'm Smug

October 24, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * I love a writing challenge
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Maybe you can be smug when you can actually write 50,000 words of fiction in a month again. When was the last time you did that?” A guy named Steve in [a comment on my October 23 post](#)

I was going to write a whole thing about what it's like to be challenged with a personal affront by a person for whom you're trying to do a favor, but I spent enough time on that in my response.

I let the comment through in the first place because I try to be as open as I can in this Journal. And I responded so thoroughly because I thought it might help others. (It certainly helped me.)

I love a writing challenge, but writing 50,000 words of publishable fiction in a month is not a challenge. If you think it is, maybe you should go back to eating the elephant one bite at a time instead of trying to gorge on the whole thing at once.

Just write a sentence, then another and another. That will lead you to the end of a scene. Then write another scene and another. If you do that in a story that's bound to be a novel, you'll easily clear 50,000 words in a month.

The only prerequisite is solving the old “seat application” problem: you have to first apply your seat to the seat of a chair, put your fingers on a keyboard, and write words. No amount of planning and hoping and wishing will accomplish that if you don't first sit down, put your fingers on a keyboard, and type. (Or grip your pen just right, apply the tip to your notebook or legal pad, and write.)

But as I said, I spent enough time on the topic in my response. So instead I followed my normal morning ritual, checking for items for “Of Interest,” writing the blurb above, and publishing this.

Now I'll try to scrub the nasty taste out of my psyche, and then I'll spend the balance of the day with my new novel.

Not because I want to write a certain number of words in a day or a week or a month, but because the story interests me and I want to see what happens next.

Folks, if you find this Journal less than useful, please remember that subscribing to it and/or reading it is not a requirement.

Talk with you later.

Of Interest

See "Scientists at Work" at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/categories/scientists-at-work>. Story ideas all over the place.

See "The end of the general trade publishing concept" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-end-of-the-general-trade-publishing-concept/>. I published a link to the original article a day or two ago. I'm publishing this one so you can see PG's take.

See "Six Things Writers Need To Stop Worrying About" at <http://jakonrath.blogspot.com/2019/07/five-things-writers-need-to-stop.html>. Yes, this is a repeated link. All writers need to see this.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 500 words

Writing of The Ark (novel or something)

Day 1..... 3196 words. Total words to date..... 3196

Day 2..... 1441 words. Total words to date..... 4637

Total fiction words for the month..... 9052

Total fiction words for the year..... 344246

Total nonfiction words for the month... 11450

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 161840

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 506086

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5

Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Atlas Obscura](#), [J. A. Konrath](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Quotes of the Day Expanded

October 25, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day (Expanded)
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day (Expanded)

Quote 1: “What does it mean to write awesomely? At the very least, it means giving your readers more than a by-the-numbers story.” James Scott Bell

“More than a by-the-numbers story.” I like that. it’s a great analogy. No great painting was ever created on a by-the-numbers canvas. Of course, Mr. Bell stopped too soon.

So how do you give your readers more than a by-the-numbers story? Easy. “By the numbers” comes from the conscious mind.

If you trust what you’ve absorbed over the years about storytelling, tap into your subconscious, and just write what comes, you’ll give readers something truly unique, something that’s truly from your essence.

Note: You won’t believe what you’ve written is adequate, much less really good. That’s because you’re with your own voice 24/7/365, so it’s boring to you. Your readers don’t have that problem.

Quote 2: “A day of bad writing is always better than a day of no writing.” Don Roff

I’m not sure what a day of “bad” writing is, unless it’s a day when you struggle to force your story and characters to remain true to your preplanned outline, character sketches etc.

(Yes, I’ve been there, albeit in a different lifetime years ago. Most often, any struggles to remain true to an outline or even to write an outline in the first place stopped me cold.)

If you WITD and are able to resist your conscious mind intervening you will probably never experience a day of “bad” writing.

Of course, life might still intervene with illness or side trips or just not being in the right mood or any number of other situations. Any of those might cause you to experience a day of “little” writing or a day of “less” writing than you expected to get done.

Either of which is still eminently better than a day of no writing.

Quote 3: “Make writing your priority.” David Farland

Short of advocating Heinlein’s Rules and WITD, this is probably the best tip any professional writer ever put out there.

Perhaps this would be more accurately stated as “make that-you-write a high priority.” Depending on your personality and your personal situation, maybe your children come first on your list of priorities, or your wife, or your family as a whole.

But never allow sitting at your desk staring off into space become a higher priority than actually making the keys move beneath your fingertips and putting words on the page.

Which brings me back, probably not for the last time, to Heinlein’s Rules. But if you want to be a writer, really only the first two matter.

However you number and align your priorities, if you want to be successful as a writer You Must Write (Heinlein’s well-duh Rule Number One). And in what’s really a corollary to Rule 1, You Must Finish What You Write (Heinlein’s Rule 2, which frankly I’ve been falling off of lately).

Then comes Rule 3, easy-peasy and natural as falling off a log in a river full of rapids if you WITD: You Must Not Rewrite. In other words, don’t be so unsure of your skills and untrusting in yourself to allow your conscious mind to second-guess your creative subconscious. Just sit down at the keyboard and get on with it.

Everything else you can hire out if you want to: Covers, Submitting or Publishing, etc. But you have to do the actual writing yourself if you want to be a writer.

About Rule 4: Every professional fiction writer I know who’s also an indie publisher occasionally falls off Rule 4: You Must Put It On The Market (meaning you must submit or publish what you’ve written).

Dean Wesley Smith is no exception to this, despite owning a medium-sized publishing company with several employees and despite having an “in” at several major magazine markets for his short stories.

And I’m no exception to it. I currently have a sizeable backlog of short stories I’ve written that only certain friends and patrons have read. At one point I even had three novels I’d finished but hadn’t yet published.

When the excitement of writing takes priority, it's easy to let Rule 4 slide. And that's all right, at least up to a point. It kind of shows where your priorities are.

Talk with you later.

Of Interest

See "Lifetime Original Christmas Movies" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/lifetime-original-christmas-movies/>. Some good writing advice.

See "Write Awesomely" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/10/write-awesomely.html>. I included this one mostly for the seed of the idea in the quote of the day.

See "A Sales Rep With No Regrets" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/a-sales-rep-with-no-regrets/>. See PG's very interesting take.

See "Library ebook lending surges..." at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/library-ebook-lending-surges-as-uk-turns-to-fiction-during-lockdown/>. Again, see PG's take.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 790 words

Writing of **The Ark** (novel or something)

Day 1..... 3196 words. Total words to date..... 3196

Day 2..... 1441 words. Total words to date..... 4637

Day 3..... 3284 words. Total words to date..... 7921

Total fiction words for the month..... 12336

Total fiction words for the year..... 347530

Total nonfiction words for the month... 12240

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 162630

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 510160

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5

Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: A Free Boot Camp for Writers

October 27, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Ralphie May's Boot Camp
- * The novel is coming along
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Having a dedicated space is a signal to yourself that writing is not an idle hobby that you peck away at between household chores or doom-scrolling Twitter sessions. Ideally, there should be no Twitter allowed in this space. It is a place you go to work.” Kim Bullock

That “no Twitter allowed” recommendation is why I also advocate a dedicated writing computer.

This is kind of a special edition of the Journal.

If you want to learn a LOT about writing in a short time, spend the time (not quite 2 hours) to watch comedian “Ralphie May’s Stand-up Boot Camp.” This isn’t a series of jokes. It’s a master’s class on craft. It transfers easily to writing.

This is actual advice to young comedians about what they should do if they want to become professional comedians. A LOT of great writing advice is included. And if you happen to be (or want to be) a comedian, hey, you’ll get double the value out of this.

See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZjO38yRrf04>. You’re writers, so I shouldn’t have to tell you to expect some colorful language.

If you have any questions about anything you hear in the class, email me.

Just a few of the many things I got out of the video...

- * Always keep in mind that your job is to keep improving, to keep moving moving forward.
- * To do that, write every day and don’t be afraid to take chances and be inventive. You’re a human being. You aren’t one-dimensional so don’t BE one-dimensional.
- * Write everything that interests you. Write short stories, poems, novellas, novels, and all of that in every genre that interests you.

- * Be true to yourself. Write true. It will show through your writing and readers will reward you.
- * Don't plagiarize. Accusation is conviction.
- * Your job is not to save the world or to convince anyone of anything. Your job is to entertain.
- * Find (or make) your own success. Maybe success is a lot of money. Maybe success is only having a creative outlet. Or maybe it's anything in between. Be inventive.
- * Don't be afraid to fail, because you will. You can't please everyone.
- * Don't depend on any reader [he said 'the audience'] for verification or absolution. Readers exist to receive (to be entertained), not to give.
- * Multiple revenue streams rule.
- * Know your audience. People can't laugh when they're inhaling. (I'm not sure exactly why this stuck out for me as a writer, but it did. Maybe it goes to the old saw about never harming a pet or a child in fiction. Maybe it goes to not setting out to intentionally offend others with your personal views. Just tell your characters' story, not yours.)

The novel is coming along, though a little more slowly than I'd like. Thus far I've had two "good" days and two not so good. On the days when I wrote less, I was cycling and checking facts from other SF novels I've written (like facts about a wonderful garment called the stipulesuit or how windows are constructed to withstand the pressures of space travel).

All of that said, I expect the writing to pick up now that I'm enjoying myself again.

Talk with you later.

Of Interest

See "IP Earnings" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/ip-earnings/>.

See "Don't Hold Out..." at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/dont-hold-out-for-publishing-to-make-you-feel-seen-heres-another-goal-instead/>. Especially read PG's take.

See "18 Major Book Publishers Always Open to Submissions" at <https://www.authorspublish.com/18-major-book-publishers-always-open-to-submissions/>.

See "Do Writers Need A Room of Their Own?" at <https://writerunboxed.com/2020/10/26/do-writers-need-a-room-of-our-own/>. If you're in a hurry, you can skip down to the bold entries.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 600 words

Writing of **The Ark** (novel or something)

Day 1..... 3196 words. Total words to date..... 3196
Day 2..... 1441 words. Total words to date..... 4637
Day 3..... 3284 words. Total words to date..... 7921
Day 4..... 1606 words. Total words to date..... 9527

Total fiction words for the month..... 13942
Total fiction words for the year..... 349136
Total nonfiction words for the month... 12840
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 163230
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 512366

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Ralphie May](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#), [Writer Unboxed](#)

The Journal: A Writing Tip

October 28, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * A Writing Tip
- * The writing has slowed a bit
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“For reasons of high aesthetic principle, I do not write on a computer. Writing on a computer makes saving what’s been written too easy. Pretentious lead sentences are kept, not tossed. Instead of sitting surrounded by crumpled paper, the computerized writer has his mistakes neatly stored in digital memory. P.J. O’Rourke (via The Passive Voice)

A Writing Tip

If one or more of your characters in your novels or short stories read, have them mention other real writers whose work YOU read, especially those who aren't already as widely known as Shakespeare or Hemingway or Rita Mae Brown. It couldn't hurt, right?

I've had a realization, or maybe an epiphany: as writers, we do not live in a zero-sum world. If a reader enjoys my books, that doesn't automatically mean he won't enjoy yours. There is no competition, really, but the potential for complementary relationships is endless. Maybe if a reader enjoys one of my books, he will also enjoy one that I mention in one of my stories.

So this is a new rule I've instituted in my own writing. In every novel and most short stories I write from now on, I'm going to mention at least one other real author and/or the title of one other real book or story. I figure doing so will add one more layer of depth to my character and reveal one more bit of his or her personality.

Why? Because when I'm reading, if an author I've never heard of is mentioned by name in the story, I most often look online to see whether the author is real.

That sometimes leads me to purchase one of the author's books if only to see what sort of things the character in the story reads. And if the title of a specific work is mentioned and I'm able to find it online, I most often buy the book outright.

I've already done this in a few of the novels I've written. I've mentioned the names (and sometimes even the title of a specific work) of a few different authors. Sometimes they're personal friends or acquaintances, and sometimes they're folks I haven't met even virtually.

This morning I received a nice email from one of the latter, bestselling thriller author Kevin Tumlinson. Kevin wrote that he was "surprised and delighted" at finding mention of his name as a thriller author in my own Blackwell Ops 4 novel.

Of course, kindness is its own reward and I don't enter into this endeavor with any expectations. But it could always come back around. For example, if Kevin were to mention me or one of my books in his next novel, I would immediately be "introduced" to his vast readership. And as I wrote earlier, it couldn't hurt.

Of course, once I announced I expected my own writing to pick up, life things happened and took the place of my writing time. So I guess I won't say anything like that again. From now on, I'll just post my numbers below and not worry about any dramatic announcements. (grin)

Talk with you later.

Of Interest

See Kevin Tumlinson's "Wordslinger Podcast" at <https://www.kevintumlinson.com/podcast>.

See FREE "Kobo Book Bundle for NaNoWriMo Participants" at <https://kobowritinglife.com/2020/10/27/kobo-book-bundle-for-nanowrimo-participants/>. Of

course, you don't have to participate in NaNoWriMo to get and read these books. NOTE: If you don't have a Kobo .epub reader, you can download a free Kobo app for your computer toward the bottom of the page.

See "Don't Destroy Your Writing Career" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/david-farlands-writing-tips-dont-destroy-your-writing-career/>. I should have included this one a couple of days ago when I expanded on a quote from it.

See "Making a Fortune" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/making-a-fortune/>. GREAT advice and a great reminder.

See "Tips for Distant Settings" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/10/tips-for-distant-settings.html>.

See "More Job Openings at Amazon" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/more-job-openings-at-amazon/>. There's an Amazon warehouse about an hour away in Tucson. If I were younger, I would hire on in an instant.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 680 words

Writing of The Ark (novel or something)

Day 1..... 3196 words. Total words to date..... 3196

Day 2..... 1441 words. Total words to date..... 4637

Day 3..... 3284 words. Total words to date..... 7921

Day 4..... 1606 words. Total words to date..... 9527

Total fiction words for the month..... 13942

Total fiction words for the year..... 349136

Total nonfiction words for the month... 13520

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 163910

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 513046

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5

Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Kevin Tumlinson](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Kobo](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#), [Wordslinger Podcast](#)

The Journal: A Writing Secret

October 29, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * A Writing Secret
- * The Link Between Poetry and Novels
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Less is more. My first drafts [sic] went into phenomenal detail about absolutely everything. ... A sense of place is good. Overwhelming readers is not. I had to keep reminding myself to make sure everything related to the plot and characters.” Terry Odell (See my vehement disagreement in the Topic below.)

“As a writing instructor, I find that most of the time when writers teach classes, we focus on teaching people how to write, not how to be a writer. They're distinct skill sets.” Dave Farland

“There are rare writers who are solitary creatures who manage to go into their attics and pump out manuscript after manuscript, but those are about as rare as unicorns.” Dave Farland

I reckon I'm a unicorn. (grin)

Topic 1: A Writing Secret

Here's a writing secret for you. And you don't even have to give me the special handshake.

I should have mentioned this yesterday when I featured in “Of Interest” the Kill Zone Blog post from which I took today's first quote.

Ready? Here you go: Every word of your story or novel should come through the physical senses of the POV character and be accompanied by his or her opinions.

It took me awhile to “get” this after I first heard it. But it sounded right, so I just stuck with it until eventually the little light came on.

How does this relate to the first quote of the day?

If you tell the story, including the description of any settings, through the senses and opinions of the POV character, it's practically impossible to write too much description. You don't have to think your way through it. (Mic drop.)

Your POV character is living the story. If the POV character notices (sees, hears, smells, tastes, touches or feels physically or emotionally) something in the setting, it's germane to the story. Period.

Likewise, if he notices something in the setting, chances are he'll have an opinion about it.

POV characters are exactly like you, me and every other human: We each experience settings differently depending on our phobias, past experiences, memories, etc. and we each have different opinions of those settings.

To one POV character, the smell of pipe smoke (part of the setting) is a stench (opinion), but to another it's an aroma. Maybe a dimly lighted room (part of the setting) fills one POV character with a sense of fear or forboding (opinion). It will leave another feeling warm and soft. The sound of distant sirens (part of the setting) will make one POV character feel safe and protected (opinion); it will make another feel annoyed, and maybe give another flashbacks. And so on.

If, on the other hand, we — the writers — add descriptions of the setting (author intrusion), it will almost always be too much. Why? Because we are external to the story. We, the writers, are not part of the story. We're outsiders.

Note this: Too much description has nothing to do with the number of words, the length of paragraphs, or the time spent describing a particular setting. Too much description is the direct result of description coming from the writer instead of through the POV character.

Now, because we are very fortunate, and because we have acquired and are willing to hone the requisite skills, the characters have invited us to record their story.

But they didn't invite us because they're stupid. They aren't. They invited us because they aren't physical beings and therefore have no fingers with which to manipulate the keys on a keyboard. If they had a physical presence complete with fingers, we would all be out of a job. Then again, there would be a lot fewer info dumps and other author intrusions in novels.

Topic 2: The Link Between Poetry and Novels

In today's "Of Interest" I've linked to Garry Rodgers' post in TKZ. I found it very instructive, but like many of Garry's posts, it's long, so settle in and enjoy.

I suspect not everyone knows I made my bones as a poet. I published the first-ever full-length poetry collection (a little over 100 pages) as an ebook (*Lessons for a Barren Population*, 1999, Hardshell Word Factory). That was nominated for the Book of the Year award at Frankfurt Book Fair. Later I also received other major nominations for my work, most notably including *Beyond the Masks* (poetry collection, nominated in 2006 for the National Book Award).

When I started writing fiction full time in 2014, I soon realized how much my experience as a poet helped me. In any dialect, English is an accentual-syllabic, metrical language. As writers,

we should at least be aware of the flow and emotion inherent in the rhythms of the language itself. (Yet another reason to read your work aloud. While you're at it, go ahead and emote. grin)

Reading and studying poetry or songs can improve the rhythm of your writing in prose. To help, I even created an audio course called Poetry Techniques for the Fictionist, Course 10 at <https://stonethreadpublishing.com/audio-lecture-series/>.

To date, hardly anyone has taken it. Writers tend to have (and nurture) a disconnect among literary genres. Hence fictionists believe they can learn little if anything from poets (and vice versa).

And the disconnect extends to commercial fiction genres as well, so that those who write Mystery don't believe they can learn anything about writing from those who write SF and so on (and again, vice versa).

If you fall into any of those shutter-minded categories, trust me folks. You're missing a bet.

Talk with you later.

Of Interest

See "How Understanding Songs Benefit[s] Novel Writers" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/10/how-understanding-song-forms-can-benefit-novel-writers.html>.

See "The truth is" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-truth-is-2/>.

See "A Guide to Conquering Your Demons with 5 Mathematical Sci-Fi Books" at <https://bookriot.com/mathematical-science-fiction-books/>.

See "Learning to Write vs Becoming a Writer" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/learning-to-write-vs-becoming-a-writer/>. Yes! What Dave Farland said! I could have taken a quote of the day from almost every paragraph of this post. Don't miss it. (If the page loads with problems, scroll down.)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1020 words

Writing of The Ark (novel)

Day 1..... 3196 words. Total words to date..... 3196
Day 2..... 1441 words. Total words to date..... 4637
Day 3..... 3284 words. Total words to date..... 7921
Day 4..... 1606 words. Total words to date..... 9527
Day 5..... 2881 words. Total words to date..... 12408

| | |
|---|--------|
| Total fiction words for the month..... | 16823 |
| Total fiction words for the year..... | 352017 |
| Total nonfiction words for the month... | 14540 |
| Total nonfiction words for the year..... | 164930 |
| Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... | 516947 |
| | |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... | 5 |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... | X |
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... | 13 |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 50 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 214 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Book Riot](#), [David Farland](#), [Harvey Stanbrough](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Quanta Magazine

October 30, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quanta Magazine
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Not a lot to talk about today, but I wanted to get the “Of Interest” items out to you.

But before I do that, I strongly recommend a free subscription to Quanta Magazine’s free newsletter. Did I mention it’s free?

To find the subscription form, click the link to the first article in “Of Interest.” Then click the small menu icon to the right of the search icon in the upper right corner. When the new page loads, enter your email address under Newsletter on the right and click Subscribe.

(By the way, it’s FREE.)

Quanta has articles on Physics, Mathematics, Biology, and Computer Science, as well as categories for “All Articles” and “All Topics.” This magazine is invaluable for all writers, but especially for SF and Fantasy writers.

But even if you aren’t a SF or Fantasy writer, knowledge is knowledge, am I right?

The place is chock full of story ideas and story segments. All you have to do is extrapolate a little, or write what you find (albeit in your own words) if you're working on a present-day or near-future story.

Quanta also hosts the Abstractions Blog at <https://www.quantamagazine.org/abstractions/>. And yes, it's also free.

Talk with you later.

Of Interest

See "The Most Famous Paradox in Physics Nears Its End" at <https://www.quantamagazine.org/the-black-hole-information-paradox-comes-to-an-end-20201029/>.

See "Little Free Library Launches Read in Color Diversity Initiative" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/little-free-library-launches-read-in-color-diversity-initiative/>. Frankly, re the OP, I'm sad to note that the Little Free Library apparently has been politicized by the folks who started it.

See "Some Fun Thoughts..." at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/some-fun-thoughts/>.

See "The History and Psychology of Clowns Being Scary" at <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/the-history-and-psychology-of-clowns-being-scary-20394516/>. I'm personally fine with most clowns, but that Burger King guy freaks me right the hell out. I've had nightmares that feature that guy. If the government ever opens hunting seasons on clowns, Burger King's gonna need a new mascot.

See "Debating the Electoral College" at <https://getpocket.com/explore/item/debating-the-electoral-college>. Story ideas abound.

See "NaNoWriMo: Last Minute Advice" at <https://kobowritinglife.com/2020/10/29/nanowrimo-last-minute-advice/>. Offered without comment, except please be very careful of what advice you take about writing.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 350 words

Writing of The Ark (novel)

Day 1..... 3196 words. Total words to date..... 3196

Day 2..... 1441 words. Total words to date..... 4637

Day 3..... 3284 words. Total words to date..... 7921

Day 4..... 1606 words. Total words to date..... 9527

Day 5..... 2881 words. Total words to date..... 12408
Day 6..... 2819 words. Total words to date..... 15227

Total fiction words for the month..... 19642
Total fiction words for the year..... 354836
Total nonfiction words for the month... 14890
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 165280
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 520116

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Kobo](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Quanta Magazine](#), [Smithsonian Magazine](#), [The Electoral College](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Halloween, COVID-19 and a Great Writing Day

October 31, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Happy Halloween!
- * Another Perspective of COVID-19
- * A great writing day
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“I feel shy of saying this, because to non-writers it sounds so lazy—but if, seven days a week, you can cut out two hours for yourself, when you are undistracted and on-song, you will soon have a book.” Hilary Mantel

“Writing is a long game and you have to be patient with yourself and your material. A great deal happens in the dark, as it were; work goes on half-consciously. You have to trust this process is happening.” Hilary Mantel

“It’s hard to accept, but part of growing up in the craft is to know that not everything you write matters.” Hilary Mantel

“No matter how great a [word processing] program is, someday it will go away. Word is a perfect example. I could make Word sing, now it’s a boat anchor. I’ve shifted to LibreOffice which is acting similarly to Word of two decades ago.” Allynh in a comment on TPG’s post about Scrivener

Happy Halloween! We live in the country with no small children about, so we’ll be passing a quiet evening. We didn’t even buy candy to eat ourselves while pretending it was for children.

(But with the USMC Birthday coming up soon, I know there’s a cake in the offing. grin)

Here’s a pic of the creepy Burger King clown I don’t like. (They didn’t call him a “clown,” but a “mascot.”) I understand from various sources he’s now been retired.



Another Perspective of COVID-19 (from The Passive Voice)

“An estimated 20 million people died in World War I. World War II killed an estimated 70–85 million people.

“The Spanish Flu infected approximately 1/3 of the world’s population and killed an estimated 50 million people in 1918, far more deaths than were caused by World War I....

“There are still an estimated 21 million cases of Typhoid fever and 200,000 deaths worldwide each year. AIDS/HIV, the cause of which was discovered in 1983, has killed an estimated 25–40 million people world-wide.

“Without minimizing the suffering, deaths and disrupted lives involved with Covid (currently 1.8 million deaths world-wide according to internet numbers), the first twenty years of the 21st Century have been a walk in the park compared to the first twenty years of the 20th Century.” TPG in response to the OP “Let’s Polarize Together” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/lets-polarize-together/>.

Wow. I had a great day of writing yesterday. I added over 4800 words. That’s what happens when you’re writing into the dark and just letting the characters tell you the story instead of trying to “figure out” what’s gonna happen next. Just sayin’.

And I have two other novels I started earlier. Once I use this one to get myself fully back, I’ll either move back into one of those, write the sequel to this one, or write something entirely new. Feels good, my friends.

Talk with you later.

Of Interest

See “Hilary Mantel on How Writers Learn to Trust Themselves ” at <https://lithub.com/hilary-mantel-on-how-writers-learn-to-trust-themselves/>. (Thanks to Kobo Writing Life)

See “December Workshops...” at <https://www.deanwesleymith.com/december-workshops-2/>. Dean asks a question, in case you want to chime in.

See “Winning NaNoWriMo with Scrivener” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/winning-nanowrimo-with-scrivener/>. I know folks who use Scrivener and folks who don’t. One fact remains: If you want to “win NaNoWriMo,” you have to write. I recommend reading the comments too.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 560 words

Writing of The Ark (novel)

Day 1..... 3196 words. Total words to date..... 3196
Day 2..... 1441 words. Total words to date..... 4637
Day 3..... 3284 words. Total words to date..... 7921
Day 4..... 1606 words. Total words to date..... 9527
Day 5..... 2881 words. Total words to date..... 12408
Day 6..... 2819 words. Total words to date..... 15227

Day 7..... 4828 words. Total words to date..... 20055
Day 8..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for the month..... 24470
Total fiction words for the year..... 359664
Total nonfiction words for the month... 15450
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 165840
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 525504

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Hilary Mantel](#), [Kobo Writing Life](#), [LitHub.com](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: A Great Motivator

November 2, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Topic: A Great Motivator
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Write about what you know, and what do you know better than your own secrets?” Raymond Carver



Topic: A Great Motivator

This will be a little rattled and fragmented, but I think the advice is there and sound, so bear with me.

One of the articles I linked to recently contained some good advice on writing, but it also offered some advice that I thought was not so good. One of the things the author thought was less than productive was using a daily word count goal.

Whether you use word counts as a goal or not is strictly up to you. Whatever works for you is fine, but I personally recommend setting a daily word count goal. I know others use weekly or monthly word count goals, but really everything boils back down to how much you can get done in a day.

I could never use “write a novel in a month” as a goal. Too overwhelming. But I’ve written back to back novels in as little as two weeks each, and I’ve often written a novel in a month. I did that with a daily word count goal.

But back to more long-range goals for a moment:

I could say my weekly goal is to write 15,000 words. I don’t care for that. It’s far too easy to wake up on the last day of the week with only a few thousand words written because, after all, I have a whole week to reach my goal.

So if my goal was 15,000 words per week, then I’d have to do some math. How many days during the week will I (plan to) write? Five, with weekends off? Then I’ll need to write 3000 words per day on those five days. Seven? Then I’ll have to average 2143 words per day for those seven days. (The average is what’s really important.)

Or I could say my monthly goal is to write 60,000 words. That’s fine, but again I’d have to do some math to break it into smaller, more attainable chunks. I literally don’t know anyone who can sit down and write 60,000 words. But I know several people who can write 3000 words per day for 20 days a month. (Or 3000 words per day for 30 days a month, for a total of 90,000 words.)

Having a daily word count goal is a great motivator and a great way to learn to discipline yourself. Its sole purpose is to drive you to the chair when you might not get there otherwise. And when you DO get there, it's a way to make sure you Keep Coming Back (my first mantra).

Because if you have a goal to attain, you can't reach it unless you sit down and make an attempt in the first place.

And say during a break something catches your attention and you're tempted to scratch the rest of the day and do something else. Maybe you've written 1200 words or 2600.

If you have a daily goal it will be there in the back of your mind goading you to go back to the computer and knock out the remaining words before stopping for the day. That's how useful it is.

There are a few keys to be aware of:

1. Don't just type words for the sake of hitting a word count. Put in your mind that your goal is whatever number of "publishable words of fiction."

2. Set your goal a little beyond your comfort zone. It's easy for me to type 2000 words of publishable fiction in a day. So I set my daily goal at 3000 words. I know I can go over and above that, and I often do. But I have to stretch myself to get to 3000 words. And until I do, the day doesn't feel complete.

3. On the other hand, be realistic. You want to reach a little and make yourself stretch, but don't set your goal so high that you will seldom or never reach it. My goal is 3000 words per day, but a 1000 or 2000 word goal is just as useful. Whatever stretches you a little.

4. Maybe most important, your daily word count goal is important only as an average, and only over writing days, meaning days that you actually sit down and write.

5. Figure out a personal formula to attain your goal. I never consciously think about the need to write 3000 words in a day. Here's what I do:

a. First I read back over what I wrote in the previous session (either yesterday or earlier the same day) and allow myself to touch the story as I go. (This is the "cycling" I talk about. I don't consciously "look" for things to fix. I just fix whatever pops out at me as I'm reading.)

b. Cycling gets me back into the flow of the story. It also gets me excited about wanting to find out what happens next. When I reach the blank place in the page, I just continue the story. When I look up again, I've added a few to several hundred more words or so.

c. That's when my personal formula kicks in. It's difficult for me to think about writing any four-digit number of words, but it's easy to think about writing any three-digit or two-digit number of words.

So if I look up at the end of a session to see that I've only written 843 words, it's easy to write another 20-some to get past 1000, usually during the same session (before a break). If I've written 1252, it's easy to come back in the next session because I know I only need to write 800-some to get past 2000. And so on.

The story grabs me, and I almost always exceed what I expected to write in a given session.

Note: "Grab" and "sag" are not the same thing. If a story doesn't grab me when I write the opening, I don't write it. I move on to something else. If the story does grab me, I write it. There will still be times that it sags. Those are the times when I rely on my other mantra to slog through: Just Write the Next Sentence.

I write the next sentence, then the next and the next. Soon, the story grabs me again and off I go.

Let's look at a real-time example:

Since I started my current novel back on October 22 (11 days ago yesterday), I've had only 9 writing days (again, as of yesterday). Over those 9 days, I wrote 27,134 words of publishable fiction.

For various reasons, I fell short of my daily goal on four of those days and exceeded it on the other five. But 27134 divided by 9 is 3015 words per day. That's my average.

Sometimes life happens on writing days. Maybe a family emergency crops up. Or you'll be called away while you're writing. Or the words just won't flow like they usually do. Or you decide to take some time off.

For me, every day is a potential writing day, so on days when something else comes up, I don't worry about taking a little time off. In other words, I write whenever I can because I know there will be days when I can't.

Reaching to attain your daily goal is important, but as I wrote earlier, maintaining your average is even more important.

To do that, strive on every writing day to reach your daily goal. Some days you won't reach it (see Days 2, 4, 5 and 6 in "Writing of The Ark" below). Some days you'll reach it, but barely (see Day 1). Some days you'll meet it solidly (see Days 3, 8, and 9), and every now and then you'll blow it out of the water (Day 7).

The secret is to love what you do, love the story you're telling, and remember it isn't "your" story. Your characters are the ones living it, so let them use your fingers to tell it.

Talk with you later.

Of Interest

See “HOLIDAY WORKSHOP HALF-PRICE SALE” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/holiday-workshop-half-price-sale/>.

See “Giving an Old Book New Life” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/11/giving-an-old-book-new-life.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1350 words

Writing of The Ark (novel)

Day 1..... 3196 words. Total words to date..... 3196
Day 2..... 1441 words. Total words to date..... 4637
Day 3..... 3284 words. Total words to date..... 7921
Day 4..... 1606 words. Total words to date..... 9527
Day 5..... 2881 words. Total words to date..... 12408
Day 6..... 2819 words. Total words to date..... 15227
Day 7..... 4828 words. Total words to date..... 20055
Day 8..... 3614 words. Total words to date..... 23669
Day 9..... 3465 words. Total words to date..... 27134

Total fiction words for October..... 28084
Total fiction words for November..... 3465
Total fiction words for the year..... 366743
Total nonfiction words for November... 1350
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 167190
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 533933

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Election Day

November 3, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Today Is Election Day
- * Another great day of writing
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“The cat sat on the mat is not the opening of a plot. The cat sat on the dog’s mat is.” John LeCarre

“The thing I like best about being a writer is the escape it provides.” Yer Uncle Harv

Today is election day. I know, old news. But if you live in the United States, this is probably the most important election day of your life.

Today the citizenry and the electoral college will determine the future direction of our nation: either to remain a constitutional democratic-republic or to move farther and faster toward socialism. It really is all up to you.

As a Marine, my job was (and is) to support and defend the constitution, which in part guarantees your right to vote. As a citizen of this nation, my privelege and responsibility is to exercise that right.

As soon as my local polling place opens, I’ll go cast my vote.

Note that this is not a political post. I’m not suggesting how you should vote. That’s none of my business. But if you haven’t exercised your right and responsibility to vote, I strongly urge you to do so. Please.

Yesterday was another great day of writing. The novel is running, so I expect the same today.

Others will spend the day watching election returns. I’ll check in from time to time, but with votes cast, I also know it’s out of my hands so I don’t plan to agonize over it. I plan to write. We’ll see.

The thing I like best about being a writer is the escape it provides.

Talk with you later.

Of Interest

See “Location and Dialog as Character Description” at <https://fourknightspress.com/f/location-and-dialog-as-character-description>. Nailed it.

See “The Dos and Don’ts Of A Great First Chapter” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/11/the-dos-and-dontsof-a-great-first-chapter.html>. Just so you know, I’m not advocating that you rewrite. Some of the rest of the post is pretty good. Take the “Don’ts” with a tablespoon of salt.

See “Vintage Death Rites That Seem Creepy Today” at <https://www.suecoletta.com/vintage-death-rites-that-seem-creepy-today/>.

See “Branding 101” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/branding-101/>. See PG’s take.

See “21 Themed Calls for Submissions” at <https://www.authorspublish.com/21-themed-submissions-calls-for-writers/>.

See “1872 Monument” at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/1872-monument>. Seemed appropriate.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 380 words

Writing of The Ark (novel)

Day 1..... 3196 words. Total words to date..... 3196
Day 2..... 1441 words. Total words to date..... 4637
Day 3..... 3284 words. Total words to date..... 7921
Day 4..... 1606 words. Total words to date..... 9527
Day 5..... 2881 words. Total words to date..... 12408
Day 6..... 2819 words. Total words to date..... 15227
Day 7..... 4828 words. Total words to date..... 20055
Day 8..... 3614 words. Total words to date..... 23669
Day 9..... 3465 words. Total words to date..... 27134
Day 10... 4361 words. Total words to date..... 31495

Total fiction words for November..... 7826
Total fiction words for the year..... 371104
Total nonfiction words for November... 1730
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 167570
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 538674

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Atlas Obscura](#), [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Dan Baldwin](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Sue Coletta](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: A New Writer Resource

November 5, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * A new writer resource
- * I haven't written
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“I truly believe subscribing to MasterClass and getting a wide exposure to A-List resources can do a lot for you as a writer.” Garry Rodgers

A lady named Carol Briggs emailed me yesterday with a breath of fresh air.

Carol is a self-described youth services librarian and educator. In her email, she asked, on behalf of a young student named Anna, whether I'd be willing to add Theater Seat Services to my Writer Resources page on my website.

You can find the link by first clicking <https://harveystanbrough.com/writer-resources/> and then clicking on the Helpful Organizations link. (It's also on a couple of other pages.)

If you ever want to recommend a writer resource, please do so.

Probably like many of you, I haven't written for a couple of days. Frankly, I'm glad the presidential election is almost over for four more years. By the time this goes out, it might well be completely over.

I will escape into my novel today and tomorrow.

My youngest son and his girl will visit this weekend, but I plan to write early on those days. I hope I can finish this one soon so I can jump into the next one.

My next novel will be something completely different for me. I already have the main players in mind, though not any sort of plot, of course. Frankly, I can hardly wait to write it so I can find out what happens.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “What MasterClass Can Do For A Writer” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/11/what-masterclass-can-do-for-a-writer.html>. You don’t want to miss this. I didn’t see the URL for MasterClass in the article. That URL is <https://www.masterclass.com/>.

See “Dead Children’s Playground” at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/dead-children-s-playground-2>. Story ideas abound.

See “How to Write the Beginning of a Book” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/how-to-start-a-novel/>.

See “A Sensible and Compassionate Anti-COVID Strategy” at <https://imprimis.hillsdale.edu/author/jaybhattacharya/>. A wealth of information on COVID, disease in general, and society for writers.

See “My Cynical View of Titles and Covers” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/11/my-cynical-view-of-titles-and-covers.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 350 words

Writing of The Ark (novel)

Day 10... 4361 words. Total words to date..... 31495

Total fiction words for November..... 7826

Total fiction words for the year..... 371104

Total nonfiction words for November... 2080

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 167920

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 539024

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5

Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Atlas Obscura](#), [David Farland](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [MasterClass](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: A Conundrum

November 8, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Digital Marketing Assistance
- * Karen Riggs
- * Odd. At roughly the 2/3 point
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Over at The Passive Voice today, among other articles, was one titled “Should You Hire a Social Media Assistant?” See <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/should-you-hire-a-social-media-assistant/>.

The article was written by Barbara Linn Probst as a guest post for Jane Friedman. If this topic interests you, I also encourage you to read the comments.

For one digital marketing and/or virtual assistant possibility, see <https://www.pub-craft.com/>. I'm not recommending them, only mentioning them. I encourage you to key “digital marketing” and/or “virtual assistant” into a search engine and see what's out there.

The Sierra Vista (Arizona) Herald/Review recently wrote an article featuring our very own Karen Riggs. You can see the article at https://www.myheraldreview.com/a/socoac/new-author-makes-dreams-reality/article_e5068d9a-1ee0-11eb-870f-dbde80d1621c.html.

Congratulations to Karen on a good article.

I had a slightly lighter day of writing yesterday, but a good day before that. And here's an odd conundrum: At roughly the 2/3 point (I think) of this novel, I'm considering not publishing it.

I have a feeling this one might only be me exploring the characters and the world in which they exist in preparation for writing Book 2, which I would publish.

Anybody else out there ever have this happen to them?

At 37,000 words, no significant “major” story problems have developed yet. I hasten to add that the characters and world are endlessly interesting (at least to me) and the writing thus far is peppered with minor problems. No real-life character can continue to breathe without experiencing those.

So I'm thinking this might be the first novel I've ever written in which the major story problem crops up only near the end of the novel. If then. (And I'm not obsessing over any of this. I write into the dark, trusting my subconscious and trusting the characters to tell the story that they, not I, are living.)

DWS has said many times that Kris Rusch will sometimes (or often) write a short story or novella or a series of either as a way to explore the world and characters before she sits down to

write the actual novel or novel series she has in mind. I find myself wondering whether she's ever done the same with a novel.

I'm also reminded of JRR Tolkien's famous Middle Earth books. The Hobbit was a story in itself, but its primary purpose was to explore and set-up the story world and characters, whereas the truly earth-shaking problems of the overall story didn't occur until Book 2, The Fellowship of the Ring. Hmmm.

If you have any thoughts on my conundrum, please leave a comment on the site so we can all benefit from it. In the alternative, email me so I can at least benefit from your experience. And thanks in advance.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Build and Manage Series Pages in the Kindle Store" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/build-and-manage-series-pages-in-the-kindle-store/>.

See "How to Talk to a Lawyer" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-to-talk-to-a-lawyer/>.

See "5 Ways To Sell Your Book On Your Own Author Website" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/5-ways-to-sell-your-book-on-your-own-author-website/>.

See "City Break-Ups" at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/what-happens-when-sister-cities-break-up>. Possible story ideas.

See "The Digital Reader" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-digital-reader/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 520 words

Writing of The Ark (novel)

Day 10... 4361 words. Total words to date..... 31495

Day 11... 3312 words. Total words to date..... 34807

Day 12... 2142 words. Total words to date..... 36949

Total fiction words for November..... 13280

Total fiction words for the year..... 376558

Total nonfiction words for November... 2600

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 168440

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 544998

| | |
|---|-----|
| Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... | 5 |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... | X |
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... | 13 |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 50 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 214 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Atlas Obscura](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Digital Reader](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: My (Our) Beginning-Writer Anti-Scam Efforts

November 9, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * My (Our) Beginning-Writer Anti-Scam Efforts
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

I dropped in on my Facebook account this morning just to see what was going on. In a writing group (Arizona Writers) several days ago, I'd responded to a question from a new author who'd just finished her book.

Other apparently beginning writers and-or writers who have bought into all the most prevalent myths were telling her how much it costs to self-publish and talking about traditional publishers.

I wrote "Self publish. ALWAYS keep control of your intellectual property (IP) copyright and it will pay you for your lifetime plus 70 years."

She replied with another question: "[D]o you have to pay for the copyright? I dont mind paying I just don't know if it's a thing lol."

My response: "NO. Absolutely not. You own the copyright the instant the work is 'in fixed form.' You CAN pay a fee to have your copyright registered with the US Copyright Office, but that isn't necessary either. I usually register only the first novel in each series and any major standalone novels I write. I recommend buying a copy of The Copyright Handbook by NOLO press. Then just browse it now and then. Copyright is property just like your house is property and it has real value."

But even just scratching the surface of copyright like that almost exhausted me because I knew it probably would do no good.

Still, in what I know is probably a losing battle, I went back and added this comment:

“[Author Name] if you don’t mind me saying so, you are ripe for scammers. Please, never pay ANYTHING to ANYONE to publish your book. If you have to, hire a good cover designer, but that’s it.

“I recommend AGAINST hiring an editor. Why allow any conscious mind to dally with what you created with your creative subconscious? That’s always a bad idea. Have a friend read for typos and possibly wrong-word usages (waste/waist, etc.) and then slap a cover on the book and publish it.

“For ease of use and wide initial coverage, I recommend draft2digital.com for ebooks, and they’ll even guide you through setting up a paper edition.

“Good luck. I also recommend visiting my Journal at <https://hestanbrough.com>. Type Topic into the Search box and you’ll find tons of FREE and useful information. And I don’t scam people.”

And then I thought I’d share all of this with all of you.

PLEASE, if you know any writers similar to the author above, tell them about my Journal. Most visitors to the Journal never hire me as a mentor. Most visitors to the Journal are not patrons.

But even if new readers of the Journal never hire me as a mentor, etc. and even if they only skeptically browse the tons of free writing advice I’ve offered over the years in topics, at least we might help them avoid a scammer or two, and that will be more than worthwhile.

And for goodness’ sake, tell them about [The Copyright Handbook](#) (NOLO Press) so they can understand the value of their intellectual property.

Thanks.

As it turned out, I didn’t write yesterday at all. I will rectify that today.

Tomorrow is the 245th birthday of the United States Marine Corps. I stand by my oath. To any other Marines or other military brothers or sisters out there, Semper fi.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

Unfortunately, I saw absolutely nothing of interest this morning.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 540 words

Writing of The Ark (novel)

Day 10... 4361 words. Total words to date..... 31495
Day 11... 3312 words. Total words to date..... 34807
Day 12... 2142 words. Total words to date..... 36949

Total fiction words for November..... 13280
Total fiction words for the year..... 376558
Total nonfiction words for November... 3160
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 169000
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 545558

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [copyright](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: A New Use for Reverse Outlines

November 10, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Happy Birthday
- * Topic: A New Use for Reverse Outlines
- * The Value of Cliffhangers
- * Tomorrow
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“The faster the action, the more the writer should slow down the description.” Debbie Burke

Yes. In the heat of battle, the POV character will notice far fewer aspects of the setting, but he will focus on that one aspect (or those few aspects) with a heightened sense of awareness because those aspects are crucial, as if time has slowed almost to a crawl.

Happy birthday and Semper Fi to any Marines who might be reading this. For us, today is a combined celebration of Veterans Day, Memorial Day, and the birth of our Corps 245 years ago today.

And to all my brothers-in-arms and sisters-in-arms everywhere in the Army, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard who took an oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States, I offer my annual birthday toast:

May your days be vibrant,
your evenings calm,
your heart safe and warm at home.
Semper Fi

Later today I will have a slice of cake and a shot of Who Hit John both in celebration and in memoriam to those who've gone on before.

Topic: A New Use for Reverse Outlines

I got back into writing yesterday. But first I created my reverse outline. I use one for every novel and series, but I usually wait until I've written a few chapters and know the story is going somewhere.

For this one, I kept putting it off. I waited until I was almost 37,000 words in. (grin) So it took a little over four hours just to create the RO. I also did a little writing today, but not much.

Note: If I may indulge in a "do as I say, not as I do" moment, not only do I recommend you create and use a reverse outline, but I recommend you start building it as close to the beginning of writing your novel as possible. Four hours is a very long time to spend backpeddling. (grin)

For those not familiar with the concept of a reverse outline, it isn't something you write in advance and then adhere to with your critical, conscious mind.

In my reverse outlines, I list all the players, the major settings (as they occur in the story) and any other major information I might need to refer back to later in the story. Below that, each time I finish a chapter or major scene, I add a very brief synopsis of that chapter or scene to the RO.

If you need the correct spelling of a character's name (or a place name), physical characteristics, etc. it's a lot easier and less disruptive to quickly refer back to your reverse outline than to search through your manuscript for the necessary information.

For a great deal more (and more thorough) information, please see

* "On Reverse Outlines" at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-journal-on-reverse-outlines/> and

* "The Reverse Outline (RO) Revisited..." at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-journal-the-reverse-outline-ro-revisited-and-shared-worlds/> and

* "Yet Another Use for a Reverse Outline" at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-journal-yet-another-use-for-a-reverse-outline/>.

As always, comments and questions are welcome. I prefer comments directly below the post on the website because those help with search engine rankings. But if you'd rather offer comments or questions anonymously (vs. in public on the website), feel free to email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

This time creating a reverse outline brought a new benefit to the table. It provided a good overview of what I'd already written, and in that way it helped ease the conundrum I mentioned a couple of days ago. It also refreshed my memory of the overall story and helped me focus.

Topic: The Value of Cliffhangers

In "Of Interest" today, Debbie Burke of TKZ talks about ways to speed up the pace of your story. I agree with some of her advice, but not her tip on cliffhangers.

There are at least five different categories of cliffhangers, and several types within each category. To learn them I recommend [WVG Publishing's course on Cliffhangers](#).

Today is the last day of the 1/2 price sale (use the code HolidaySale), meaning you can get the Classis workshop on Cliffhangers for only \$75. (Or simply buy a good book on cliffhangers.)

Tomorrow or the next day, I'll present a free session right here on The Essential Elements of a Story. This will be especially valuable to those of you who want to (or do) trust your creative voice and write into the dark.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "10 Tips for Bringing a Scene to Life" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/10-tips-for-bringing-a-scene-to-life2020-update/>. To this post I would add, "focus down on details." Doing that will bring life to the story and pull the reader more deeply (and quickly) into the scene.

See "Before It's Too Late – Six Tips to Speed Up the Pace" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/11/before-its-too-late-six-tips-to-speed-up-the-pace.html>.

See "Last Day for Half Price Holiday Sale" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/last-day-for-half-price-holiday-sale/>.

See "Why Authors Should Know Their Target Audience" at <https://www.thebookdesigner.com/2020/09/why-authors-should-know-their-target-audience/>.

See "How To Find Your Target Audience, Part One" at <https://www.thebookdesigner.com/2020/11/how-to-find-your-target-audience-part-one/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 840 words

Writing of The Ark (novel)

Day 10... 4361 words. Total words to date..... 31495

Day 11... 3312 words. Total words to date..... 34807

Day 12... 2142 words. Total words to date..... 36949

Day 13... 1344 words. Total words to date..... 38293

Total fiction words for November..... 14624

Total fiction words for the year..... 377902

Total nonfiction words for November... 4000

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 169840

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 547742

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5

Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Book Designer](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: The Essential Elements of a Story

November 11, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Topic: The Essential Elements of a Story
- * Hit another minor snag
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“The greatest threat to freedom is the absence of criticism.” Wole Soyinka (the first African writer to win the Nobel Prize in Literature)

How very apt. Thanks to PG for the quote.

Topic: The Essential Elements of a Story

Disclaimers

1. In the following, when you see “story,” know that the advice applies to a short story, novella, or novel. A short story is about one event. A novella or novel is about more than one event. That’s the only difference.
2. When you read “he,” “him,” or “his,” know that those pronouns are meant to be inclusive of both genders. If you allow yourself to get wrapped around the “he or she” wheel, you will miss the point.
3. This is an awareness article. You don’t have to study this structure or even refer back to it, though you can if you want to. You should only read and understand it, [ask me any questions to gain clarity](#), and then put the whole thing out of your mind as you’re writing. The elements will come to the fore as necessary if you trust your creative subconscious.
4. Though this is designed as a primer to writing into the dark, you will use the same structure if you use an outline and plot everything in advance. You’ll just have to do it at least twice.

Want to try writing into the dark? Here you go.

In the beginning,

1. You must have a character.
2. The character must have a problem. (This can be anything from an untied shoelace to an ice-covered walk to having forgotten his car keys. It doesn’t have to be [and usually isn’t] “the” problem of the story.)
3. And the character must exist within a setting.

This is not the story. This isn’t even the opening of the story. This is only a starter to get you to the keyboard to write an opening for the story.

Once you have a character with a problem in a setting, Sit down, put your fingers on the keyboard, and Go.

After that, all stories have an amazingly small number of essential elements, but they are essential regardless of what genre you’re writing:

Opening

- * Hook
- * Setting description (all five senses filtered through the POV character and delivered with his opinions of the setting)

- * The micro-story of the opening
- * Action
- * Cliffhanger

Every Major Scene or Chapter

- * Hook
- * Describe the setting to pull the reader into the scene
- * The micro-story of the major scene or chapter
- * Action (in action/adventure, thriller, crime etc. genres, each successive action scene should be for higher stakes)
- * Cliffhanger

Ending

- * Hook
- * Describe the setting to pull the reader into the scene
- * The micro-story leading to and including the final major climax
- * Denouement (tells the reader subliminally the story is over. For a series, the denouement of each story can contain a cliffhanger, hinting that the story continues.)

Notice the repetition? That's because these are essential elements: the hook, description of the setting, the micro-story of the scene or chapter, and the cliffhanger.

Notes

1. Any description (and in fact, every word of the story) must come through the physical and emotional senses of the POV character. The description is delivered with the POV character's opinion of the setting.

a. By "the physical senses of the POV character" I mean what he sees, hears, smells, tastes and physically feels.

b. By "the emotional senses of the POV character" I mean what he senses or how he feels mentally and emotionally.

c. By "the POV character's opinion" I mean this: If you and your significant other walk into a setting, you will each have a different opinion. To you, perhaps, the lighting is dim and warm. To YSO, it's forboding. To you, the room is cold; to YSO, it's comfortable or warm. To you, it smells of a sweet aroma; to YSO, it reeks of a stench. Etc. Every POV character will likewise have an opinion of the setting. In the story, the POV character's opinion matters. Yours or YSO's does not.

2. Use all five of the POV character's physical senses at least once in every major scene (again, delivered with his opinion). This alone will improve your writing dramatically. (Most writers use only the sense of sight.)

3. The hook pulls the reader into the story or major scene/chapter. The cliffhanger propels him to the next one.

4. Yes, to add suspense you can make the reader wait. For example, you can write a cliffhanger at the end of Chapter 2, then switch gears and not write the hook it leads to until Chapter 4 (or 5 or 6, etc.) But every intervening major scene or chapter should also have its own hook and cliffhanger.

5. As a general rule, always introduce a character (complete with name and physical description) the first time you introduce him. (No, withholding a character's name strictly to build suspense and absent of any necessary reason is not a good idea. All it will do is alienate the reader.)

That's it. Go forth and write.

If you feel I've omitted anything important, please read the article again to be sure the omission isn't actually included but in different words. And please remember these are bare-bones "essential" elements. However, they are also everything you need.

Hit another minor snag in my writing. I like facts to make sense, but I had the personnel quarters (basically an efficiency apartment) originally set at 10 x 10. But when I started adding furniture I quickly realized that was too small.

So I went up to the house and took some measurements of furniture. Then I platted out a room. I ended up with 300 square feet (20 x 15), so now the folks living on The Ark are a lot more comfortable. (grin) And then I took the afternoon off because of the birthday. (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "How to Start Off a Story" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/how-to-start-off-a-story/>.

See "Emotional Truth and Storytelling: Why It Works and How" at <https://www.janefriedman.com/emotional-truth-and-storytelling/>. (Thanks to PG for the link.)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1020 words

Writing of The Ark (novel)

Day 10... 4361 words. Total words to date..... 31495
Day 11... 3312 words. Total words to date..... 34807
Day 12... 2142 words. Total words to date..... 36949
Day 13... 1344 words. Total words to date..... 38293
Day 14... 2355 words. Total words to date..... 40648

| | |
|---|--------|
| Total fiction words for November..... | 16979 |
| Total fiction words for the year..... | 380257 |
| Total nonfiction words for November... | 5020 |
| Total nonfiction words for the year..... | 170860 |
| Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... | 551117 |
| | |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... | 5 |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... | X |
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... | 13 |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 50 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 214 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Jane Friedman](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: A Change to the Journal

November 13, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Yesterday's Journal
- * You'll notice I've switched
- * Authors in My Novels
- * The writing slowed again today, but
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

The Journal that went live on Nov 12 I actually posted on Nov 11. Not sure why it didn't go out until the 12th. Anyway, I thought it was an important one.

Frankly, I'm surprised I got such a small response on that one. (Thanks, Patrick.) I thought everyone would find it useful if not illuminating.

Mark it up to reader taste, I suppose. Who knew reader taste worked for writing advice as well as fiction? (grin)

You'll notice I've switched the Journal back to a later posting time. This is an experiment. Posting it earlier was interesting, but it cost me extra work and I often delayed including items "Of Interest" until the following day.

After the Journal was long-since posted for the day, I'd write fiction. Then I had to update my fiction numbers on the boilerplate version of the Journal and my spreadsheet. If I forgot to do that, I'd have to play catchup later.

Then on the day of the next posting, I'd update my nonfiction numbers for that day and put the thing online. Like I said, it was a fun experiment, but also annoying. And my fiction accounting was always at least one day behind.

So from here on out, those of you who follow the progress on my fiction numbers will see same-day figures. Today, for example, you'll see figures from Days 15, 16, and 17 (calendar dates Nov 11, 12, and 13).

I write most of the Journal the day before (rarely) or first thing in the morning while I'm checking online sources, sipping coffee, and waking up. That won't change. But posting the Journal later will also enable me to include links I might have otherwise missed until the day after.

If you receive the Journal via RSS, nothing will change. You'll still receive it right after I post it online. But if you receive the Journal via email, it won't arrive in your inbox until early to mid-evening, depending on where you live.

Of course, if you're hungry for my nonsense, you can always check the website at <https://hestanbrough.com>. The new edition usually should be available by 5 p.m. Arizona time.

Note: Arizona doesn't obey the annual Daylight Savings Time silliness, so at this time of year that would be 4 p.m. in California, 6 p.m. Central, and 7 p.m. along the east coast.

The Journal will go out live via email an hour later, at 6 p.m. Arizona time to be sure I have time to finish my fiction writing for the day and post the Journal.

NOTE: If you have issues with receiving the Journal later, please let me know. I've already encountered a few issues: Most notably, it seems to consume more of my time when I let it sit on my desktop all day.

So after all that, I might go back to the way it was. It's all about trying new things, right? (grin)

Authors in My Novels

Awhile back I mentioned I'd received a nice email from an author whose work I mentioned in one of my Blackwell Ops novels. Many of my characters are readers, and I saw no reason not to mention an actual author name and genre (and maybe even the title of a specific book) in my fiction.

The idea is that every little bit of passive advertising helps. Maybe someone who's reading one of my novels will look up an author name or title to see whether it's a real person or book. (I do that often.)

In my current novel, the XO of a generation ship (The Ark) has an extensive library along one wall of his office. He probably has another library in his personal quarters. (I haven't had the opportunity to visit there yet, shadowing one or more of my characters.)

The idea is, the XO is a reader. He will spend the rest of his life reading the books in that library during his down time. Subliminally, they bear a certain importance since he must have culled them from among many more books he left back on Earth.

During an official visit, another character has noticed the XO's office library contains works by several authors whose work I enjoy reading, including a few who subscribe to this Journal. Because why not?

I rolled out a couple of hours early this morning at 1 a.m. after going to bed tired last night at 7. Today should be a good day of writing, the third in a row.

The writing slowed again today after just over 2000 words. But after a break, as I looked at it again, I realized why. It's either finished or very close. My 51st novel. I have to admit, that feels really good. Tomorrow I'll read back a bit (a final cycling pass) and see whether it's done. Turns out it's also my first-ever romance novel. (grin) SF/Romance. Who knew?

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Publishing 70 Books In One Year" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/publishing-70-books-in-one-year/>.

See "Stuck! A Writer's Nightmare" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/11/stuck-a-writers-nightmare.html>. Not all writers. If this sort of stuff plagues you, try trusting your creative voice and writing into the dark.

See "Women and Crime Writing: We've Always Been Detectives" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/women-and-crime-writing-weve-always-been-detectives/>. And see PG's take.

See "26 Real Animals That Shouldn't Exist, But Do Anyway" at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/real-animals-that-should-not-exist>. Want to write realistic aliens? Take some hints from these creatures. Or your dog. Or your cat. In modern parlance, they are "otherly abled."

See "What Is the Geometry of the Universe?" at <https://www.quantamagazine.org/what-is-the-geometry-of-the-universe-20200316/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 940 words

Writing of The Ark (novel)

Day 10... 4361 words. Total words to date..... 31495
Day 11... 3312 words. Total words to date..... 34807
Day 12... 2142 words. Total words to date..... 36949
Day 13... 1344 words. Total words to date..... 38293
Day 14... 2355 words. Total words to date..... 40648
Day 15... 4311 words. Total words to date..... 44959
Day 16... 4884 words. Total words to date..... 49843
Day 17... 2335 words. Total words to date..... 52077 (Done?)

Total fiction words for November..... 28509
Total fiction words for the year..... 391787
Total nonfiction words for November... 5960
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 171800
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 563587

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 5
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 50
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Atlas Obscura](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Quanta Magazine](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: A Diary of Days and an Epiphany That Might Help

November 14, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Topic: A Diary of Days and an Epiphany That Might Help
- * Why I'm telling you all of this
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“And that’s why I don’t outline and plot novels in advance. My characters and their stories don’t like to be forced into submission.” me

Topic: A Diary of Days and an Epiphany That Might Help

You know the slump I was in? Totally my fault.

It had nothing to do with COVID-19 or the political season or me quitting cigars, though mostly privately I used all of those as excuses. (Publicly I used quitting cigars as the excuse.)

My slump began on May 10, one day after I finished my 50th novel. (Turns out, that fact is significant.) The slump didn't end until I started writing *The Ark* on September 22 over four months later. For a prolific fiction writer, four months is an eternity.

In an attempt to snap myself out of it and end the slump, I *reached*:

1. First, I decided to indulge in learning Affinity Publisher. I'd bought the program awhile back, but during the slump I bought the professional tutorial/workshop and created a publication as I studiously followed along.

As always, gaining that new knowledge was a good thing, but I did it for the wrong reason. Remember, I kept touting a secret "big new project" I had in mind? It was a publishing project, not a writing project. I was using my learning frenzy to avoid writing new fiction. How crazy is that if I'm a fiction writer?

Note: By the way, I still have that project in mind, but it's on the back burner. Once I'm firmly entrenched in my fiction writing (my number one priority) I'll devote part of my day to bringing that project to fruition. Once all the mental building blocks are in place, I'll announce that here and everywhere else I can think of.

2. All of June and July, I wrote no fiction. In August, I reached again. I went back to my Blackwell Ops world and started a new novel in that series. As is the pattern of that series, I came up with a new protagonist/operative and a new target and I was off and running.

But again I was doing it for the wrong reason. I was doing it to Write Something, not to enjoy listening as my character told me his story. In fact, I became a "plodder," reading and re-reading what I'd written and trying to figure out why this happened and what would happen next. When I realized what I was doing, I shelved that one shortly over 8000 words in. It's a good storyline though, so I will probably return to it eventually. (Fortunately, I saved the original un-plodded draft. I threw out the one I over-thought.)

3. In September I finally started writing again, sort of. You know that sound your car engine makes when it turns over but doesn't quite start? That was me.

I wrote a short story ("The Worlds") to explore a new technique. That was fun. Then I screwed up, reached again and started a new novel tentatively titled *Body on the Beach*. Less than 2800 words in, I realized I was re-telling a novel I wrote a long time ago (*The Implications*). I was hedging my bets, trying to stay on "safe" ground. So I shelved *Body on the Beach*. And I can promise, that one won't be back.

4. Then, still in September, I entered into a frenzy of writing new short stories. I wrote five more stories in quick succession (“Five Tight Indians,” “At the Moment,” “Wild Dogs and Rabbits” (recast for a contest), “An Inch and Three-Sixteenths,” and “Turnaround”). I reasoned that if I wrote enough of them, one or two would beg to be expanded into a novel. Hey, it happens.

But I wasn’t having fun. I was forcing it. Even as I wrote the short stories, I was reaching for a novel, so it didn’t work. And that’s why I don’t outline and plot novels in advance. My characters and their stories don’t like to be forced into submission, no pun intended. Whether you realize it yet or not, yours probably don’t either.

I should add that as I wrote those stories, I practiced different techniques and my writing improved. Practice is always valuable, so I don’t regret writing those, but they did nothing to lead me out of the slump.

5. In October, I finished “Turnaround” at just under 6,000 words. Then, on October 22 I hit upon a borrowed idea and started writing *The Ark*. And 23 calendar days later it was finished at around 52,000 words. During those 23 calendar days, life intervened. So only 17 were writing days. So finally I’m back.

Today and maybe tomorrow I’ll run through *The Ark* a final time, allowing myself to touch it as I go, then I’ll ship it out to my first readers. (*The Ark*, the first novel in what I suspect will be a long series, is an SF/Romance novel. If you’d like to be a first reader for it, please email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.)

Since today and tomorrow I’ll only be cycling, I won’t call those writing days, but I’ll update the final word count on the Journal when I’m finished.

So why am I telling you all of this?

Because as always, I hope you won’t forget, as I did, to keep the writing fun. Don’t allow your goals to become golden.

That is why I slumped. I forgot, a long time ago actually.

And not only did I forget, I instructed my own creative subconscious to shut down. Hence the slump.

Ever since I finished my 25th novel, I held a long-term goal in my mind of doubling that and writing 50. For the next 24 novels, I was quietly telling my subconscious *all I had to do* was reach and finish Novel 50.

So reaching my 50th novel wasn’t only a goal in itself. It became the shiny, golden be-all end-all for me. More importantly, it became the be-all end-all for my subconscious. In other words,

Writing my 50th novel became “important.” In reality, of course, that novel was no more important than any other. What’s important and what isn’t is up to the reader, not me or you.

But because I'd made the number "50" a golden, magical goal, my fiction writing career almost died. My subconscious simply did what I told it to do. When I reached my magical number, it shut down. Six years is not a long-lived career as a fiction writer.

Your only real job as a writer is the very first part, the story idea: Come up with a character with some minor problem to get yourself to the keyboard. Drop the character into a setting (describe it using all five of the character's physical senses, whatever emotional senses he'd feeling and his opinions) and then sit down at the keyboard and Just Write the Next Sentence.

At that point, you stop being The Writer and you become The Recorder. From then on, your only task is to listen as the character tells you his story and put it on the page for him.

Good luck. I hope this will help some of you. Even better, I hope you don't need the help.

I'll be back in a couple of days to finalize the numbers on The Ark. And thanks in advance to any of you who want to be first readers for the novel that broke the slump.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "A Neighborhood Story" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/11/a-neighborhood-story.html>. A nice read AND a writing lesson.

See "Narrative structure of A Song of Ice and Fire..." at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/narrative-structure-of-a-song-of-ice-and-fire-creates-a-fictional-world-with-realistic-measures-of-social-complexity/>. A great story and a little about structure.

See "6 Sci-Fi Writers Imagine the Beguiling, Troubling Future of Work" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/6-sci-fi-writers-imagine-the-beguiling-troubling-future-of-work/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1310 words

Writing of The Ark (novel)

Day 10... 4361 words. Total words to date..... 31495
Day 11... 3312 words. Total words to date..... 34807
Day 12... 2142 words. Total words to date..... 36949
Day 13... 1344 words. Total words to date..... 38293
Day 14... 2355 words. Total words to date..... 40648
Day 15... 4311 words. Total words to date..... 44959

Day 16... 4884 words. Total words to date..... 49843
Day 17... 2335 words. Total words to date..... 52077 (Done)

Total fiction words for November..... 28509
Total fiction words for the year..... 391787
Total nonfiction words for November... 7270
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 173110
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 564897

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 6
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 51
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Missed It By That Much, and Cycling

November 15, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Missed it by that much
- * A new app for authors
- * Because one writer asked
- * Yesterday's cycling session
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“But why write stories that don't engage you? It's like cooking a feast that you wouldn't eat.”
David Farland

“If you're not learning, you're standing still.” FS Blog

“[Stephen King] weds an imaginative plot with characters you can almost touch.” James Scott Bell

Missed it by that much

Note that in today's Quotes and in "Of Interest" James Scott Bell, praises Stephen King as a writer and even mentions that "Mr. King is a well-known pantsner," by which he means King writes into the dark.

(I'm not sure why plotters have this burning need to use such a derogatory term for those of us who trust ourselves and our creative subconscious. Would they want to be called "plodders"?)

Anyway, it's a good article for the most part. From the article:

"So all of that good, deep backstory comes out of King as he writes. ... He thought of a character with a bat, then his imagination went into overdrive to personalize it."

So far, so good. Bell almost gets it. Then:

"[A] voice from the memory chamber echoed in King's mind: 'Besbol been bery-bery good to mee.' Wait. That was Chico Esquela, right? Yeah, and that's something unique this character might have said."

Ah! Dang it! Missed it by *that* much!

King wouldn't have stopped and thought (conscious mind) "That's something unique this character might have said." Again, he writes into the dark, duh.

So what **would** have happened? As Bell himself wrote earlier in the same paragraph, "He thought of a character with a bat, then his imagination went into overdrive to personalize it."

And no, I didn't leave a comment to correct Bell or call him out on it. Wouldn't have done any good.

There's a new app out there for book lovers and for authors (hint, hint). To check it out, visit <https://booksniffer.com/> and click the Authors: Get Registered Here logo on the right. Thanks to Karen R. for the tip.

Because one writer asked about the difference between "cycling" and "editing."

Editing is done with the conscious mind. When I work as a copyeditor, I focus on every word, every sentence and paragraph, and every bit of punctuation as I read (slowly and usually aloud) through the work. When I edit, I'm *looking for* (conscious mind) obvious errors to correct like misspellings, wrong word usages, or a comma where a period should be. Otherwise I make recommendations on pacing, etc. if any recommendations occur to me.

Cycling is accomplished by the creative subconscious mind. Anything I do while cycling is automatic and comes from the subconscious.

As I'm reading through The Ark, for example, I'm just reading and enjoying the story. Just as if someone else had written it and I'd picked it up in a used book store.

As I read (on the computer) my fingers rest on the keyboard. I don't "look for" anything. If an obvious error pops out at me, I fix it. (Again, if it pops out at me. I'm not looking for them.) If the character chimes in with a better word or adds a sentence etc. I allow him to use my fingers on the keyboard.

I hope this explains the difference.

In yesterday's cycling session, I got through about a third of The Ark, and it was a great deal of fun. I was relieved. Frankly, I'm cycling through the whole thing (not my usual practice) because I had my doubts about this book. Most of those doubts ended when I wrote the ending a couple of days ago and realized it matched the beginning. The remainder evaporated as I read. It's a good story.

As I was cycling, my character corrected me through a few minor flaws and one major one. When I was through for the day, we (the character and I) had added 1675 new words. If that seems like a lot, that was 22000 words into the story.

I expect to finish cycling, run a spell check, and get the book out to first readers today. But I already have ideas bouncing around in my head for book 2 in this series. If one of those ideas grabs me, I'll skip out of cycling through The Ark, write for awhile, then return to cycling tomorrow.

I'm posting this early again today. I've added "Cycling" to the count below for this book.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Study with Integrity" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/study-with-integrity/>. This is SO good.

See "Deep Backstory" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/11/deep-backstory.html>.

See "Go ahead, call her a spoiled celeb..." at <https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/books/story/2020-11-11/cazzie-david-essayist-on-no-one-asked-for-this-pete-davidson-nepotism>. Okay, part of the problem is she needs to get out of her own head a little. If you stick with it, there's some about writing, some story ideas.

See "The Feynman Technique..." at <https://fs.blog/2012/04/feynman-technique/>.

See "Six Things Writers Need To Stop Worrying About" at <http://jakonrath.blogspot.com/2019/07/five-things-writers-need-to-stop.html>. Haven't mentioned this for awhile and it seemed appropriate today.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 780 words

Writing of The Ark (novel)

Day 10... 4361 words. Total words to date..... 31495
Day 11... 3312 words. Total words to date..... 34807
Day 12... 2142 words. Total words to date..... 36949
Day 13... 1344 words. Total words to date..... 38293
Day 14... 2355 words. Total words to date..... 40648
Day 15... 4311 words. Total words to date..... 44959
Day 16... 4884 words. Total words to date..... 49843
Day 17... 2335 words. Total words to date..... 52077 (Done)
Cycling... 1675 words. Total words to date..... 53752

Total fiction words for November..... 30184
Total fiction words for the year..... 393462
Total nonfiction words for November... 8050
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 173890
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 567352

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 6
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 51
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [FS Blog](#), [J. A. Konrath](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [LA Times](#),
[Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Quotes and The Ark

November 16, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * One more note on The Ark
- * My internet connection
- * Early feedback on The Ark
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Many great projects go through a stage early on where they don’t seem very impressive, even to their creators. You have to push through this stage to reach the great work that lies beyond.” Paul Graham (thanks to Phillip M. for the tip)

“Keep away from people who try to belittle your ambitions. Small people always do that, but the really great make you feel that you, too, can become great.” Mark Twain

“The most exciting phrase to hear in science, the one that heralds new discoveries, is not ‘Eureka’ but ‘That’s funny...’ Isaac Asimov

“Semper aut discere, aut docere, aut scribere dulce habui.” (I always took delight in learning, or teaching, or writing.) Bede

All quotes above taken from <http://paulgraham.com/quo.html>.

One more note on The Ark before I move on to the next novel. There might be a lesson here for others. As I wrote to a friend, “It was a really weird feeling when I finished [The Ark]. I felt like it was just slowing down (as they sometimes do) and then I realized nope, it was a romance and it was almost at the end.”

The writing had slowed a few times before and I’d simply written the next sentence, then the next, and the writing picked up again. I figured this was no different.

So this time again I wrote the next sentence, then the next and the next. And the realization came over me that I’d reached the end. The story had come full circle to the beginning. I wrote maybe two more sentences and it was done.

By the way, here’s the quote that I’ll add as the epigraph at the beginning of the book:

“[E]ither a nuclear confrontation or environmental catastrophe will cripple the Earth at some point in the next 1,000 years. However, by then our ingenious race will have found a way to slip the surly bonds of Earth and will therefore survive the disaster.” Stephen Hawking

I’ve used an epigraph in only a few of my novels, but this one seemed perfect for The Ark. If it looks familiar, I used a similar quote as a Quote of the Day in the October 21 post. Anyway, I’ve found that epigraph also refocuses me on the direction of the series I’ve entered into with The Ark.

My internet connection is spotty at best recently. My ethernet connection to the modem at the house is failing, and WiFi is extremely weak because of the distance (about 100 yards) and the Hovel itself (3-foot thick walls). So if I disappear for a day or two, that’s why.

I was shocked but very pleased to receive feedback already from one of my first readers. Russ J. who wrote, “I just finished breezing through The Ark, and absolutely loved it! ... I started it because I couldn’t fall asleep last night, thinking that if I just read for a while I might be able to, but having begun it I couldn’t put it down.”

He did find one mistake, a typo, which I quickly corrected. Thanks, Russ! But now I have to get over myself and write the next one. (grin)

Once my internet problems clear, I'll probably move the official posting time for the Journal back to an earlier time of day. I'm in the habit of getting it out early, and delaying reporting of my fiction numbers to the next day isn't a big deal. And I've found pushing the Journal to the end of the day puts unnecessary pressure on my fiction writing.

Plus I've gotten input on when I release the Journal from only one person, who basically said she doesn't care when it comes as long as it does. (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Early Work" at <http://paulgraham.com/early.html>. Thanks to Phillip M. for the tip. I'll be exploring Paul Graham's website further.

See "Save Time on Social Media" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/11/save-time-on-social-media.html>.

See "The Limits of the Viral Book Review" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-limits-of-the-viral-book-review/>. From PG's take, "PG is, unfortunately, reminded of the precursors to mass movements and hatreds generated by Hitler and Mussolini over 70 years ago."

See "Here's How Lenny Kravitz Creates..." at <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/331038>. Again, thanks to Phillip M. for the tip.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 730 words

Writing of (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for November..... 31622

Total fiction words for the year..... 394900

Total nonfiction words for November... 8780

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 174620

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 569520

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 6

Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 51

| | |
|---|-----|
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 214 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Entrepreneur.com](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [PaulGraham.com](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: The Journey Home: Part 1

November 17, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * The Journey Home: Part 1
- * I have great first readers, and about genres
- * Another thing about The Journey Home: Part 1
- * Update on the Journal
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

The Journey Home: Part 1

Well, I sat down yesterday morning and started my next novel, The Journey Home: Part 1. It will be the second book in The Ark series. It will feature the main characters from the first book, but I have a feeling a different POV character will take charge not too far in.

With around 800 crewpeople aboard The Ark and 200,000 repops (repopulation passengers), I shouldn't have a shortage of characters. (grin) Should be a really fun ride.

I've already gotten very good input from a second first-reader. At this point, though, having started Book 2, I'll save her input in a folder until I've received the rest, then consider all of them one after the other.

I was again heartened that like the first first-reader who responded, she read The Ark in one sitting. The finished product came in at just under 53,000 words, after all.

She asked me one question that I thought I should discuss here: Is this really a romance?

In truth, I don't have a clue. It certainly has a romantic element, but whether it touches enough romance-reader rails, I don't know. And I'm not overly worried about it.

As authors (a writer being a writer and an author being a person who has written) we put on our publisher hat and take our best stab at genre. The Ark is definitely SF. I think the subgenre is romance, but what do I know? (Again, I don't.)

So in the absence of further guidance, I'll label this one SF/General and SF/Romance when I publish it. Of course, that's subject to change.

Another thing about The Journey Home: Part 1

In the fledgling Chapter 2, in an attempt to allow readers to read the books in any order, I rehashed the layout (dimensions, etc.) of The Ark. Not sure whether I'll keep that, and I probably won't know until I've finished the book and cycled back through the whole thing.

If I decide later to make this a true series, I might cut that stuff and effectively "force" readers to read the books in order. Something to think about (but not while you're writing).

Update on the Journal

I've decided to go back to sending out the Journal (via MailChimp email) earlier in the day.

The earlier "deadline" is better for me because it helps me compartmentalize my non fiction-writing tasks. When the Journal is out, I can focus on fiction the rest of the day. The earlier deadline is also easier for me to ignore on days when I have little or nothing to say.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Your Character's Central Question" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/writing-tip-your-characters-central-question/>. To read and absorb into your subconscious. Not to consider consciously as you write.

See "50 Handy Expressions About Hands" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/50-handy-expressions-about-hands/>.

See "Does the ACLU Want to Ban My Book?" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/does-the-aclu-want-to-ban-my-book/>. See PG's informed and informative take.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 510 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 1 (novel)

Day 1..... 3373 words. Total words to date..... 3373

Day 2..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for November..... 34995

Total fiction words for the year..... 398273

Total nonfiction words for November... 9290

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 175130
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 573130

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 6
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 51
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: One Reverse Outline Template

November 18, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * In response to John Gilstrap
- * Yesterday
- * Topic: One Reverse Outline Template
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“It’s easier to fool people than to convince them that they have been fooled.” Mark Twain

“If I’ve started a story in the wrong spot, I generally won’t realize it until I’m around page fifty or so.” John Gilstrap

“I do not romanticize the act of writing. I don’t talk about the anguish I suffer in creating. I do not have a fear of the blank page, writer’s block, all those things that we hear about writers.”
José Saramago

“As I write this, I realize that I have discovered for the first time why I can write the last one-third of a book in thirty days or so. At that point, I’m no longer writing—I’m merely reporting what I see.” John Gilstrap

In response to John Gilstrap’s article and the second quote above in “Of Interest” today, I left this comment:

“Yes! Over all my 50+ novels, I’ve understood it is the characters, not I, who are living the story. While they’re off having wonderful adventures, I’m sitting alone in a dim room with a cigar in the ashtray and my fingers on a keyboard.

“Only thing is, the characters don’t have physical fingers. And that’s where I come in. I am simply the Recorder, the mechanism through which they put down their story as it unfolds. I am also the very fortunate guy who gets to see, hear, smell, taste and touch the story first.”

Yesterday I started with a lot of admin work. At the beginning of this 52nd novel, I finally thought to set up a template for my reverse outline. I shared it below so you could more plainly see what I’m talking about when I talk about reverse outlines.

Then I moved over to the novel. A good day, but not a great day. Today I am thankful I have another one. I’m one day closer to turning 68, and like many of us, wondering why I’m not still 28.

Topic: One Reverse Outline Template

This is one reverse outline template. Yours might vary. Yours might have more or fewer major divisions. As you might imagine, the most important parts are the character names, the place names, and the chapter synopses. Feel free to copy/paste this one for your own use.

I add character (even minor character) and place names as they appear name by name, place by place, and then write a synopsis of each chapter AFTER I’ve written each chapter. Hence, reverse outline.

After I set up the template, since I’m working with a series right now, I opened the notes for The Ark, then saved it with the filename “a The Journey Home 1 Notes.” This saves me a lot of time reinventing the wheel since many of the same characters will appear in Book 2.

Note the “a” before the filename. That’s to be sure the actual manuscript (which also has an “a” before the filename) and the notes for that manuscript appear together and at the beginning of my “Writing” folder.

I also kept the older character and place names from Book 1 in case a character in this book needs to refer back to any of them. Remember, the reverse outline is for your use only, a quick reminder of names, places and attributes so you won’t have to search back through the current (or previous, in the case of a series) novel.

Then I skipped over to my business computer for a moment and wrote what’s above and pasted the template below. (Though the actual template has 1-30 for chapter numbers because that’s what I expect for this novel.)

Reverse Outline Template

a TITLE Notes [this is the filename]

EPIGRAPH

(If any)

THE PLAYERS (+AGE and whatever else)

THE PLACES (plus distinguishing characteristics and whatever else)

OTHER SIGNIFICANT GENERAL DETAILS

THE CHAPTERS

1 A brief synopsis of significant events from Chapter 1, what happened, who was involved, etc.

2 A brief synopsis of significant events from Chapter 2, what happened, who was involved, etc.

3 Etc. for as many chapters as you have.

SPECIFIC DESCRIPTION OF ONE OR MORE MAJOR PLACE(S)

SPECIFIC DESCRIPTIONS OF MAJOR AND NECESSARY MINOR CHARACTERS

DESCRIPTIONS OF MAJOR SPECIFICS (uniforms, areas, etc.)

NOTES TO SELF (thoughts, descriptions of as-yet unnamed characters, etc.)

That's it. As always, any thoughts or comments are welcome.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Chapter One” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/11/chapter-one.html>. Not what it sounds like and chock full of tidbits.

See “20 Poetry Markets Open for Submissions” at <https://www.authorspublish.com/20-poetry-markets-open-for-submissions-in-november-2020/>.

See “Olive Oatman...” at <https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/81424/retrobituaries-olive-oatman-pioneer-girl-who-became-marked-woman>.

See “The Gentle Genre” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-gentle-genre/>. Anyone else ever heard of the “Gentle” genre? I’ve heard of and read some of the books, but never heard of the genre.

See “Determining Your Character’s Emotional Range” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/determining-your-characters-emotional-range/>.

See “Why Odd Couples and Opposites Make For Great Crime Fiction” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/why-odd-couples-and-opposites-make-for-great-crime-fiction/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 810 words

Writing of **The Journey Home: Part 1** (novel)

Day 1..... 3373 words. Total words to date..... 3373

Day 2..... 3312 words. Total words to date..... 6685

Total fiction words for November..... 38367

Total fiction words for the year..... 401585

Total nonfiction words for November... 10100

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 175940

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 577525

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 6

Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 51

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [John Gilstrap](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [MentalFloss](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: A Note About Consistency

November 19, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Today (a forewarning regarding content)
- * Yesterday
- * Topic: A Note About Consistency
- * A Personal Note (this is the content I warned you about)

- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Repetition does not transform a lie into a truth.” Franklin D. Roosevelt

“No writer I know thinks they write enough on any given day or week or month or year. It is a broken record almost every writer repeats over and over and over and over and over.” Dean Wesley Smith

“Characters are not created by writers. They pre-exist and have to be found.” Elizabeth Bowen

Yes! What she said! And the same goes for the story the characters are living in their alternate dimension.

Today, I’m a little annoyed, and as Shrek said, “Better out than in, I always say.” So at the very bottom of this edition of the Journal, I’ve added a plainly labeled personal note that expresses my personal displeasure at a certain type of subhuman. It has nothing to do with writing (or politics). Thus forewarned, if you are easily offended, I suggest you skip it.

Yesterday I went back and recast one of the scenes I wrote the day before. The conflict at the heart of the scene just didn’t work, so I tossed it and recast it. The scene works much better now, but I struggled to get my 3000-word daily count. (grin) So tomorrow, with that scene behind me and with the clarification it brings, the novel should run smoothly for awhile.

Words to a writer are like nails to a carpenter. Never be afraid to throw out a bent one (or a box of bent ones) and grab a new handful. In the end, you’ve lost nothing of value. (Ahem, speaking smugly: it’s looking pretty good that I’ll get at least 50,000 words this month, and no sweat. [grin])

Topic: A Note About Consistency

Now and again my first readers mention something they see as a flaw but that really isn’t. I’m grateful they mention those things anyway, but of course I don’t make changes I don’t agree with, and I NEVER force something on my characters for any reason. When I say it’s their story and not mine, I mean it. I’m only their recorder. My job is to allow them to tell their story through my fingers.

One of my readers mentioned recently that in a particular training center on Earth, a character was using military time (the 24-hour clock), so that reader wondered whether the clock on The Ark should also be the 24-hour version for consistency. The answer is no, it shouldn’t.

Thing is, that character used military time because that’s what he’s used to. And he’s in charge of the place where he used it, so he required everyone else there to use it too. But that was just

him and only in that place, not the overall story. In fact, if I remember right, each time he used it, he also took pains to translate it to “civilian” time for the benefit of the students.

For consistency, that particular character would continue to use the 24-hour clock. In fact, I’m sure he does because it’s part of who he is. Some folks on The Ark probably will too, but definitely not across the whole ship.

Aboard The Ark, a generation ship, the bridge crew and a few others (maybe 100 people in total) have a military rank structure, primarily for accountability purposes. For example, if something goes wrong, it’s ultimately the CO’s responsibility. If a weapon is stolen from the armory, it’s the Armory Officer’s responsibility, and so on.

But The Ark is also carrying around 700 non-ranked crewpeople (cleanup crew, wait staff, et al) and 200,000 repops (repopulation passengers), all civilian. Trying to get all of them to use military time would be a headache of colossal proportions. And trying to force former military personnel to use the 12-hour a.m./p.m. clock on the bridge for example, well, that just wouldn’t be realistic.

For a more personal example, my cell phone is set to the 24-hour clock because that’s what I’m comfortable with. But if I’m talking with my wife or children or a neighbor about something that’s going to happen five hours after noon local time, I say “5 p.m.” not “1700.”

Same with the characters in my story. I wouldn’t dream of trying to force on them something they aren’t used to, for consistency or any other reason. It just wouldn’t be realistic. Besides, it’s their story. Really.

Now, if

* a character was wearing a brown jacket when he walked into a room, but a blue jacket when he walked out (and he hadn’t changed the jacket),

* or if a character had intense, ice-blue eyes but another character commented later that she loved his trusting brown eyes

* or if he packs his boots in the bottom of a duffel but minutes later is wearing them on the front porch as he leaves with his packed duffel or

* in the description of a generation ship the main deck has “four lounges” but later in the story it has only one

those would be a consistency issues. (grin)

So that’s the key: Consistency issues are always writer mistakes. They never come from the characters themselves.

A Personal Note

to any person or persons who drive shopping carts full of toilet paper through the checkout in my local Walmart and to whichever members of management and/or cashiers are allowing that practice:

May you and your families need much more toilet paper than you've hoarded. May you have the seemingly endless trots and be literally driven across the room by the force of escaping bodily gasses every time you get out of your chair. And may the toilet paper you're hoarding to the detriment of the rest of us shred upon use, render you miserable, and leave you with a disgusting, sticky bottom so it will at least match your personality.

Yes, troglodyte, your family is just as special and perfect and deserving of a participation trophy as are the rest of the families in America. Which of course means it is no more so.

Stop being a selfish jerk. Or at least take enough pride in yourself and your egocentric actions to wear a mask that reads "Yes, I'm Special" when you go out in public so I know to whom specifically I should flash the internationally recognized one-finger symbol to indicate my annoyance and displeasure. Because YOU, my fine-feathered enemy, are breathing air you fall far short of deserving.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Beware of False Suspense" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/writing-tip-beware-of-false-suspense/>. Just in case you might get something out of it.

See "Are You a Writing Success or an Imposter?" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/11/are-you-a-writing-success-or-an-imposter.html>.

See "50 Juicy Questions To Ask Your Characters" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/50-juicy-questions-to-ask-your-characters/>. I include this for those of you who still do character sketches, etc. I advocate just writing the story and letting the characters and their personalities unfold as the story is revealed. You know, like in real life.

See "Apple Slashes App Store Fees..." at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/apple-slashes-app-store-fees-for-smaller-developers/>. See PG's take.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1160 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 1 (novel)

Day 1..... 3373 words. Total words to date..... 3373
Day 2..... 3312 words. Total words to date..... 6685
Day 3..... 3292 words. Total words to date..... 9977

| | |
|---|--------|
| Total fiction words for November..... | 41599 |
| Total fiction words for the year..... | 404877 |
| Total nonfiction words for November... | 11260 |
| Total nonfiction words for the year..... | 177100 |
| Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... | 581977 |
| | |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... | 6 |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... | X |
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... | 13 |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 51 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 214 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Challenges

November 21, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Challenges
- * Later today
- * My own writing
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“The private detective of fiction is a fantastic creation who acts and speaks like a real man. He can be completely realistic in every sense but one, that one sense being that in life as we know it such a man would not be a private detective.” Raymond Chandler

“The surest sign that intelligent life exists elsewhere in the universe is that it has never tried to contact us.” Bill Watterson

“Light travels faster than sound. This is why some people appear bright until you hear them speak.” Alan Dundes

Dean has issued another challenge for writers. It's a good one, and this isn't one he's charging for. He won't be involved. It's just basically an idea of something you can do to challenge yourself.

You can see it in “Of Interest.” Be sure to read the “So How Would This Help You?” section. All true. (You can also do this in electronic only, since they’re short stories, though I do recommend also compiling them into collections and putting the collections in both ebook and paper.)

I won’t be taking part in this particular challenge personally because

1. I already have well over 200 short stories out there, and
2. I’m deep into writing novels right now. I’ll be setting my own challenge and goals for 2021 soon. Of course, I’ll announce those here, and you should feel free to jump in.

The purpose of a challenge (especially a writing challenge) is to reside in the back of your mind and drive you to the keyboard. If you want to be prolific, challenges are essential.

If you want to be a writer but not necessarily prolific, challenges are still essential. They will help get you to the keyboard on days when you could go but otherwise might not. Challenges keep you and your fingers from getting lazy.

And no, I’m not saying that people who don’t write fiction are lazy. I’m saying that people who profess to want to write fiction and don’t are lazy. Or making excuses. Or something.

Don’t worry about it. Just go write something.

By the way, if you’re one who enjoys writing Christmas stories (I’m not) and if you haven’t already started, now’s the time. If my calendar is correct, you could challenge yourself right now to write a 5-story collection (one a week) and publish it electronically just before Christmas. Then you could have the paper copy out before New Years Day.

Of course, you could also publish the stories stand-alone as ebooks. At the end, you would have 6 new publications with your name on the cover. Just sayin’.

Here are a few prompts:

- * How would people aboard a space ship celebrate Christmas in space?
- * How did one family in Tombstone Arizona celebrate Christmas in the 1880s?
- * How does the crew of a cargo ship celebrate Christmas at sea in the middle of the Pacific? Or on Lake Michigan?
- * What is your most memorable Christmas as a child? (Write it in 1st or 3rd person and turn it into a story.)
- * What is your most memorable Christmas as an adult? (Same thing.)

Okay, that's enough. You guys take over.

Later today we'll celebrate "Friendsgiving" with our neighbors, who are hosting a large get together.

My own writing is going well. See "Writing of The Journey Home" in "Numbers" below. I expect another good day today. (In fact, today I should slam past 50,000 words on the month. If you're participating in NaNo, you should be at 35,000 words or better right now.)

By the way, there's a lot of good information and story ideas in "Of Interest" today. Do yourself a favor and click through on the links that interest you. I like to think I'm not wasting my time sharing them.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "A Challenge For Everyone for 2021..." at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/a-challenge-for-everyone-for-2021/>. This is not something he's charging for or will monitor. Just a challenge he's issuing.

See "No one will ever see..." at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/no-one-will-ever-see-books-like-this-again/>. And see PG's take.

See "What is the Serial Killer Gene?" at <https://www.suecoletta.com/what-is-the-serial-killer-gene/>.

See "Scientists Uncover the Universal Geometry of Geology" at <https://www.quantamagazine.org/geometry-reveals-how-the-world-is-assembled-from-cubes-20201119/>.

See "Scientists Find Vital Genes Evolving in Genome's Junkyard" at <https://www.quantamagazine.org/scientists-find-vital-genes-evolving-in-genomes-junkyard-20201116/>. S.T.O.R.Y. I.D.E.A.S.

See "The Importance of Writing Challenges" at <https://www.authorspublish.com/the-importance-of-writing-challenges/>. And remember that NaNo isn't the only (or best) challenge out there. If you've followed me very long, you know you can create your own realistic challenges.

See "A Challenge For Everyone for 2021..." at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/a-challenge-for-everyone-for-2021/>. This is not something he's charging for or will monitor. Just a challenge he's issuing. Read "So How Would This Help You?" All true.

See "A Close Reading of the Best Opening Paragraph of All Time" at <https://lithub.com/a-close-reading-of-the-best-opening-paragraph-of-all-time/>.

See “A Space Without Answers” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/11/a-space-without-answers.html>.

See “The Case of the Autographed Corpse” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-case-of-the-autographed-corpse/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 780 words

Writing of **The Journey Home: Part 1** (novel)

Day 1..... 3373 words. Total words to date..... 3373
Day 2..... 3312 words. Total words to date..... 6685
Day 3..... 3292 words. Total words to date..... 9977
Day 4..... 3794 words. Total words to date..... 13771
Day 5..... 4482 words. Total words to date..... 18253

Total fiction words for November..... 49875
Total fiction words for the year..... 413153
Total nonfiction words for November... 12040
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 177880
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 591033

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 6
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 51
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [LitHub.com](#), [Quanta Magazine](#), [Sue Coletta](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: One Writer’s Process

November 22, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Topic: One Writer’s Process
- * Yesterday, I stopped writing

- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“In Greek tragedy, they fall from great heights. In noir, they fall from the curb.” Dennis Lehane (via The Passive Voice)

Topic: One Writer’s Process

A few days ago, bestselling thriller writer and author John Gilstrap talked in the KillZone blog about his process. It was very informative. Dean Wesley Smith often also talks about his process, or his day, mostly to keep his blog streak alive.

On John’s post, I was struck by all the commenters who mentioned that it was interesting to read about another writer’s process. So now that I’ve pretty much settled into writing again, I thought I’d share mine with you.

My process has certain benchmarks but it’s also a little erratic. Yesterday my pre-fiction-writing “admin time” took a little over 3 hours. This morning it will take a little less than an hour, closer to my norm.

Whatever time I rise, usually between 2:30 and 4 in the morning, I turn on the coffee pot, let the chihuahua out and grab a treat for him, then feed the kitten. (She recently turned 9 years old. Can you believe it? But she’s still my kitten and she still sleeps snuggled up next to me with her head on my left arm.)

When the coffee’s ready, I fill my 24 ounce mug and head out to the Hovel, about 150 feet or so from my house. It isn’t a rough commute. A space of one’s own, so to speak.

I turn on my business computer, which has Internet, then power up my writing ‘puter (a 13” HP that *doesn’t* have Internet), both with separate huge screens attached, turn on the exhaust fan in the east window of the south wall to expel smoke from my cigars, then go back and sit at the business computer.

There I compose a new edition of the Journal while intermittently checking for (and usually reading) all the items you’ll see in that day’s “Of Interest” section. I don’t always read all of certain entries that I know will be good: John Gilstrap (on TKZ), Sue Colette, David Farland. I also browse articles in The Passive Voice and read those that interest me personally. Finally, I most often check Neil Gaiman’s and JA Konrath’s blogs just in case they’ve put up something new.

When the Journal is composed, I update the numbers on my spreadsheet, transfer those to the end of the Journal, update the tags, then post the Journal (usually before 4 or 5 a.m.). Then I copy-paste the finished blog post from HESTanbrough.com to a Word doc for posterity (grin) and

delete all the particulars from the Notepad (.txt) document I use as the template/boilerplate for the Journal and it's ready to go for the next day.

That's usually the first hour of my day.

Then I write, right?

No, not quite. Then I open my Spider Solitaire app (still on my business computer) and play a few games until I grow tired of it. That usually occurs from a half-hour to an hour after I start.

Note 1: If, while I'm in "admin time," an idea occurs for the next day's Journal, I sometimes go ahead and write that, or part of it. I wrote much of this post yesterday.

For example, as I wrote most of this post it was Nov 21. I'd just filed the Journal and then played a few games of Spider. As I did, this "process" idea occurred to me, so I came back to my Journal template and typed most of this. So although I rolled out at 4 yesterday, it's currently a little after 7 a.m. and I'm ready for a break for breakfast. So I'll finally move to the writing 'puter at around 8 this morning.

No matter when I start my day, I usually wrap up at close to 3 p.m. Yesterday because of the get together, I had to cut off at 1. It was an interesting challenge to reach my daily goal of 3000 words with the abbreviated day, but I made it with a half-hour to spare.

When I do finally move over to the writing 'puter, put my fingers on the keys, and read over a little (sometimes only a paragraph or two) of what I wrote the last time I was sitting there.

If I didn't cycle through the previous session immediately after I wrote it, I cycle through it at this time, correcting any typos that pop out at me and allowing my characters to make any other changes they want. Most often they add more material.

Whichever I do gets me back into the flow of the story. When I reach the blank space, I write whatever comes.

Note 2: If at the end of the previous section I ended a chapter and added the next chapter head, and if I have in mind how that chapter will start but don't want to write it until the next session, I usually type a few words in ALL UPPERCASE and then apply a green highlighter to them to make them stand out.

When I get back for the next session, that gives me a jump-start. I unhighlight the words, retype them (or something similar inspired by them) in regular sentence case, and then type the next sentence and the next and the next. And I'm off and running for the day.

Through all of those subprocesses, of course, I take breaks, usually around 15 minutes at a time.

Note 3, on taking breaks: Despite the unquestioned wisdom of taking a break roughly every hour, I usually keep typing until I've reached the end of a scene. I seem unable to stop, and I

don't want to stop, especially for the sake of a fake deadline like "1 hour". I usually finish the scene, even if the scene spans more than one chapter.

My chapters usually are around 1200–1500 words. (Not a suggestion, just a fact.) Sometimes my scenes are about the same. Other times the scenes are double or triple that. So it isn't unusual for me to have a 2 or 2.5 hour session in the chair.

On this point more than any other in writing, though in public I advocate taking a break of at least a few minutes about once every hour, in private I say Do whatever works for you.

Obviously this works well for me. I love being in my chair, and I love racing to record what my characters are living, usually in real time as they're living it. I consider myself more than fortunate that they invited me long ago to descend from my stupid authorial ivory tower (from which I "controlled" them and where I thought I was supposed to be) and into the trenches of the story to run through it with them, albeit with me only trying to keep up. (grin) There is no greater adventure.

If you trust and never forget that the characters, not you, are actually living the story and it is therefore their story, not your story, you can't go wrong. If you're on a podium or in that ivory tower as the capitalized Writer (a "calling," not a profession) demote yourself to Recorder and have fun for a change.

That's my process. Feel free to tell us (me and your fellow Journal readers) about yours in the comments. I too have always enjoyed hearing about other writers' processes.

Yesterday, I stopped writing at 12:30. If I'd had until 3 (my usual stopping time) I probably would have cleared close to 5000 words again. But all told, it was a pretty good day.

And this morning, I got to the Hovel at 3, and will be writing on the novel before 4. So as I wrote at the start, "admin time" fluctuates, at least for me.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Promises to Keep" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/david-farlands-writing-tips-promises-to-keep/>.

See "A Problem I Am Just Starting to See" at <https://www.deanwesleymith.com/a-problem-i-am-just-starting-to-see/>.

See "Everything Was Fake but Her Wealth" at <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/everything-was-fake-but-her-wealth-4621153/>.

Character and story ideas.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1340 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 1 (novel)

Day 1..... 3373 words. Total words to date..... 3373
Day 2..... 3312 words. Total words to date..... 6685
Day 3..... 3292 words. Total words to date..... 9977
Day 4..... 3794 words. Total words to date..... 13771
Day 5..... 4482 words. Total words to date..... 18253
Day 6..... 3379 words. Total words to date..... 21632

Total fiction words for November..... 53254
Total fiction words for the year..... 416532
Total nonfiction words for November... 13390
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 179230
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 595762

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 6
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 51
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Smithsonian Magazine](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Maybe A Valuable Lesson on Writing Series Novels

November 23, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Maybe A Valuable Lesson on Writing Series Novels
- * On Writing
- * My own writing
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Maybe A Valuable Lesson on Writing Series Novels

In fact, this might be a good lesson for writing short stories in series too, if you're into that.

I haven't published The Ark yet. I'm waiting for all the input to get back from my first readers.

But I discovered a valuable lesson on writing series novels yesterday.

Around 23,000 words into the first sequel (*The Journey Home: Part 1*), one of my characters thought it would be a good idea to give those assigned to the crew of *The Ark* a personal communication device. It would be implanted behind and above the left ear on the temporal bone during the final physical exam at familiarization training just before they boarded the shuttle for transport to the generation ship.

The personal comm device would work any time the crewperson was not dressed in a stipplesuit, a latest-generation space suit, which they rarely are. When they're wearing a stipplesuit, the suit blocks the signal from the personal comm device and replaces it with the suit's own comm device.

I agreed, but of course, that presented a problem since the familiarization training and transport to *The Ark* all happened in the first book. So I had to go back through the manuscript for *The Ark* and make a few tweaks. The story will be better and more magical for the change, so I didn't mind.

But that was the lesson: Don't publish the first book in a series until the second manuscript is finished and back from the first readers. So be forewarned. (grin)

I should also say I wish I'd learned that lesson before publishing the first book of my previous SF series. Sometime in the future I'll be going back to update the first and second book of that series. Then maybe I can move ahead with Book 3 on that one as well.

On Writing (excerpted from an email to a friend)

Recently a friend admitted she was having trouble with her critical mind. It told her what she was writing was not good, the story was going off the rails, all that.

I had exactly the same problem with the two false starts I had back in September, and I succumbed both times. I stopped writing. At least one of those novels will never be written.

And I encountered the same problem on the first novel I finally finished after my "break".

Several times as I was writing *The Ark*, the critical mind accosted me. I was constantly second guessing myself, thinking there wasn't enough action, etc. All critical mind stuff. Even this late in my writing career. Even on my 51st novel.

And I almost quit again. But after being away for a few days, I finally read back over some of it as *Just a Reader*, and it seemed fine. I felt the writing and story were actually good. And that's what made me know I could Just Trust my creative subconscious and write. And from that point forward, that's what I did. I finished *The Ark* days later.

I hope I'm finally safe in saying I'll never go back to listening to my critical-mind self-doubt. I reminded myself the stories aren't "important." They're only a few minutes' or hours' entertainment for someone, and for me first.

The next day, I started Book 2 and you see what's happened. I'm having a ball writing The Journey Home: Part 1 and I look forward to getting back to it each day because I let the story be fun again.

Now when I stop at the end of my day because I'm too tired to keep tapping the keys, I'm a little angry with myself. I want to keep letting the story unfold, but I'm forced to wait until the following morning. (grin) It feels like I'm being punished for having too much fun.

So just blow off the bullshit critical mind and have fun with your writing. That's the whole point of writing fiction in the first place. And hey, if writing stories isn't fun, find something fun and do that instead.

My own writing is going great because I'm having fun. Check the numbers below. I see absolutely no reason to slow down unless life intervenes.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Gratitude & Goals..." at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/11/gratitude-goals-and-balloons.html>.

See "The Tennessee Solution to Disappearing Book Reviews" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-tennessee-solution-to-disappearing-book-reviews/>.

See "How Being Bullied Affects Your Adulthood" at <https://getpocket.com/explore/item/how-being-bullied-affects-your-adulthood>. Maybe some help with characters? Usually I try not to put up the "get pocket" link, but I was afraid Slate might have a paywall so this time I did.

See "Open-Minded People Have a Different Visual Perception of Reality" at <https://qz.com/997679/open-minded-people-have-a-different-visual-perception-of-reality/>. This should be all writers, shouldn't it?

The Numbers

The Journal..... 810 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 1 (novel)

Day 1..... 3373 words. Total words to date..... 3373
Day 2..... 3312 words. Total words to date..... 6685
Day 3..... 3292 words. Total words to date..... 9977

Day 4..... 3794 words. Total words to date..... 13771
Day 5..... 4482 words. Total words to date..... 18253
Day 6..... 3379 words. Total words to date..... 21632
Day 7..... 4550 words. Total words to date..... 26182

Total fiction words for November..... 57804
Total fiction words for the year..... 421082
Total nonfiction words for November... 14200
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 180040
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 601122

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 6
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 51
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Quartz](#), [Slate](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Find Your Passion

November 24, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Farewell and welcome
- * Topic: Find Your Passion
- * Goal talk
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“When you're too focused on making money you lose touch with the person you want to be.”
Anonymous from an article I read

“Staying home for the entire year was sort of a vacation for me, and I had more time to write.”
Kay DiBianca

Farewell to subscriber “canyonwhispers” and welcome to Ellen in the Phillipines. Glad to have you with us. If I can ever help in any way with your writing career, email me.

Topic: Find Your Passion

Soon after October 19, 2014 when I started writing the story of Wes Crowley, I realized I'd found my passion.

I enjoy visiting with friends and relatives. I enjoy watching old movies on television and a few TV shows. I enjoy camping and stargazing and planet watching and a lot of other things.

But my passion is telling stories. Especially longer stories, in the form of novels.

You've often heard me talk here about setting priorities. That isn't difficult for me. It shouldn't be difficult for you either.

Unless my house is on fire, my number one priority is whatever novel I'm working on at the time. Which is to say, watching and listening to the characters as I and they run through the trenches of the story. I'd love to write 24/7 if I could.

But barring that one event, recording stories for my characters is my passion and therefore my number one priority.

Your results might vary even if you're a fiction writer. I know one novelist whose true passion appears to be traveling to exotic locations. She puts out one or two novels a year (having plotted them in advance) and takes at least a couple of weeks off once or twice a year so she and her husband can travel. Nothing wrong with that.

I know other novelists who write primarily so they can feed other habits about which they are passionate, like gaming or whatever else. It was one of those who asked me recently, "What do you do to relax?"

When I met him with a blank stare, he said, "You know, to get away from the writing for awhile."

Finally I saw what he was getting at. I laughed. "I write to get away from everything else. Writing is what I do to relax. It's my escape from my age and infirmities and this ridiculous, bass-ackward world and, you know, everything else."

And that's true. I write to forget all those things and a lot more. I write to forget that I've been out of the Marine Corps much longer than I was in. I write to transport myself out of all that. I write so I won't sit around fretting over silly crap that I can't directly affect. At least not in any legal way. (grin)

Human beings most often project their own opinions and life experiences and passions onto others. We assume those we're with or those to whom we're talking feel the same way we do about certain things.

And I'm no different. I often assume other writers are as passionate about writing as I am. Certainly, they don't have to be (and again, there's nothing wrong with that), and I know that intellectually.

But it's difficult for me to understand why someone who professes to "love" telling stories can't manage even an hour on many days to follow that passion. Likewise, it's difficult for me to understand why any novelist would actually expect writing a 60-or 80- or 100-thousand word novel to take months, or even years.

It's difficult for me to imagine anyone who truly loves to write turning out only one or two novel per year. Just my perception as derived from my experience with my own passion.

Because of that four-month slump, this year has been a horrible writing year for me but I still managed to turn out six novels thus far, plus a handful of short stories.

As Kay DiBianca wrote in a comment on [yesterday's TKZ post](#) "Staying home for the entire year was sort of a vacation for me, and I had more time to write."

YES! That's exactly it.

More than anything, I'm stymied when I hear a writer use words in a conversation or in an email that indicate he or she finds writing a chore. That writing is something they have to "push" themselves to do. The only thing I can figure is they think being a writer is some sort of romanticized calling or something.

To me, there's a simple answer for that one. Hey, if writing and telling stories isn't something you're passionate about, drop it and find something you ARE passionate about. Then go do that.

I won't even say I "wish" everyone felt the way I feel about telling stories. But I do hope everyone feels about something the same way I feel about writing. There is no substitute for experiencing the deep internal burning of true passion, and there's no better feeling in the world than pursuing that feeling.

Have you given any thought to your 2021 goals? That time is rapidly approaching. I'll be doing a post here soon on setting goals. Stay tuned.

Then again, you don't have to wait or stick to a calendar. It's always good to remember that a new week/month/year begins with each new day.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Two New Classes... Two New Storybundles" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/two-new-classes-two-new-storybundles/>.

See “The Perfect Word – Eight Qualities to Look For” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/11/the-perfect-word-eight-qualities-to-look-for.html>. If you’re still wrapped around individual words, a good post. If you’re not, a good post to read and forget as it seeps into your subconscious.

See “One in Four Books Is Purchased in the USA During the Holidays” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/one-in-four-books-is-purchased-in-the-usa-during-the-holidays/>.

See “Institutional customers have ‘moved wholeheartedly to digital formats’...” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/institutional-customers-have-moved-wholeheartedly-to-digital-formats-association-university-presses-survey/>.

See “Resonance in Settings” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/david-farlands-writing-tips-resonance-in-settings/>. This is what we used to call “intertextuality.”

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1000 words

Writing of **The Journey Home: Part 1** (novel)

Day 1..... 3373 words. Total words to date..... 3373
Day 2..... 3312 words. Total words to date..... 6685
Day 3..... 3292 words. Total words to date..... 9977
Day 4..... 3794 words. Total words to date..... 13771
Day 5..... 4482 words. Total words to date..... 18253
Day 6..... 3379 words. Total words to date..... 21632
Day 7..... 4550 words. Total words to date..... 26182
Day 8..... 3326 words. Total words to date..... 29508

Total fiction words for November..... 61130
Total fiction words for the year..... 424408
Total nonfiction words for November... 15200
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 181040
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 605448

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 6
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 51
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Take Your Time

November 25, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Topic: Take Your Time
- * "That" and other words of interest
- * Great writing day
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

"Inspiration exists, but it has to find you working." Pablo Picasso

"My goal is to live my life in such a way that when I die, someone can say, she cared." Mary Kay Ash (thanks to Sam T. for the tip)

"In 1977, I wrote my autobiography. Since I was dealing with my favorite subject, I wrote at length and I ended with 640,000 words." Isaac Asimov (my friend Sam T. said this one reminded him of me)

"Live your life so that when you're all alone, you're still in good company." Anonymous in The Lubbock Avalanche-Journal newspaper, Lubbock, Texas, c. 1964/5

Topic: Take Your Time

Be forewarned, I'm in a satirical, cynical, fun-loving, finger-wagging mood today. But with a lesson. With that in mind, read on.

I've read several novels in which the characters are apparently capable of quantum movement.

As I understand it (and I am often wrong) the term "quantum motion" is most often applied to describe a quirk of quarks, which are teewinesy subatomic particles, when quantum physicists note that those particles have moved mysteriously from one place to another without having physically crossed the intervening space.

Such motion should appear only in SF or fantasy novels, but even then the movement should be noted by the author as being the result of some kind of "beam me up" technology in SF or of fantastic magic in fantasy.

Unfortunately, that is not always the case. At least one time in a heaving-bosom romance novel, Heathcliff was talking with Matilda in the drawing room with a balcony off to one side, and then

suddenly, either in the same sentence or the very next one, he was standing on the balcony looking out over the moors as he continued his heart-felt plea.

Yet neither he nor Matilda ever so much as walked thoughtfully or otherwise toward the heavily draped windows overlooking the balcony. Nor did either of them draw the drapes to reveal the door to the balcony. Nor did either of them consider (to the reader's knowledge) going outside, turning the doorknob, or actually stepping onto the balcony. They were just suddenly there.

All that melodramatic BS was to say this: When you're writing a scene, take your time.

You have a POV character, so allow him to express his POV. As he moves into or through a setting or from one setting (the drawing room) to another (the balcony), the POV character sees, hears, smells, touches and maybe tastes various bits of the setting. Slow down and let him put those things on the page through your fingers on the keyboard.

If you do, you will eventually be rewarded by a reader commenting that she "felt she was in the scene with the characters" or some such thing. If you don't, the next time the reader is at a water cooler, she'll be discussing how stymied and lost she felt while reading "some book" instead of praising the storyline by "Author Name."

Quantum physics, even as it applies to quarks and other subatomic particles, is theoretical. It definitely does not apply to human beings or other whole creatures, which are made up of Carl Sagan's billions and billions of subatomic particles, all gathered in one place.

Be careful out there. Take your time.

If you'd like a less-cynical take on this topic, please see "Take Your Time" at <https://harveystanbrough.com/pro-writers/take-your-time/> and "Take Your Time (Revisited)" at <https://harveystanbrough.com/pro-writers/take-your-time-revisited/> and "Take Your Time: Part 3" at <https://harveystanbrough.com/pro-writers/take-your-time-part-3/>. I stand by anything I wrote there that makes sense. (grin)

"That" and other words of interest

In today's "Of Interest" is a link to a post titled "That's That." I've included it for any of you who might find it useful.

Toward the end of the post, the author asks whether readers of the post are confused by when to use "that" and when to omit it.

I'm not. I write how I write, and on cycling I often take out some instances of "that" and leave others alone.

Here are a few guidelines for "that" enthusiasts:

1. Use “who” when referring to people (or job titles) and use “that” at all other times when talking about non-human creatures or inanimate items. (Unless you have personified a non-human creature as I have my kitten. Feel free to us “sho” then also.)

2. Any uses of “that” that occur when not describing people or other creatures or items are not extraneous, but dependent on how specific you want to be.

3. “That” is never simply interchangeable with “which,” which is a whole other ball of ugly that has to do with even finer specificity. If you’re confused about its use, look it up. But check at least a few sources as some of them get it wrong.

I’m not sure I’ve ever had a day of writing like I had yesterday. Over 6000 words on the day. I believe that’s my personal best. I celebrated a little. Today is a new day, and the novel continues to run.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Norwich Keyboard” at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/norwich-keyboard>. A story idea, perhaps.

See “13 Ways to Boost Your Creativity” at <https://www.authorspublish.com/13-ways-to-boost-your-creativity/>. She omitted the number one way to boost creativity and strengthen your writing: Sit down and write.

See “Noble Volunteers” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/noble-volunteers/>. Read PG’s take. Story ideas and knowledge.

See “Audible bows to pressure...” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/audible-bows-to-pressure-and-changes-returns-policy/>.

See “That’s That” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/11/thats-that.html>.

FOR FUN see “Walmart Thanks Government” at <https://babylonbee.com/news/walmart-thanks-government-for-completely-obliterating-their-small-business-competition>. This is satire. Just for funsies. (grin)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 900 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 1 (novel)

Day 1..... 3373 words. Total words to date..... 3373

Day 2..... 3312 words. Total words to date..... 6685

Day 3..... 3292 words. Total words to date..... 9977
Day 4..... 3794 words. Total words to date..... 13771
Day 5..... 4482 words. Total words to date..... 18253
Day 6..... 3379 words. Total words to date..... 21632
Day 7..... 4550 words. Total words to date..... 26182
Day 8..... 3326 words. Total words to date..... 29508
Day 9..... 6033 words. Total words to date..... 35541

Total fiction words for November..... 67163
Total fiction words for the year..... 430441
Total nonfiction words for November... 16100
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 181940
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 612381

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 6
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 51
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Atlas Obscura](#), [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Babylon Bee](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Silliness and Dystopia

November 26, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Happy Thanksgiving
- * Ridiculous "Are You Kidding Me?" Joke of the Day
- * Today will be an abbreviated writing day
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

"It is difficult to free fools from the chains they revere." Voltaire

Happy Thanksgiving. I hope you and yours will enjoy a thoughtful, peaceful Thanksgiving day.

Ridiculous "Are You Kidding Me?" Joke of the Day

Disclaimer: I'm not offering an opinion here—political, philosophical or otherwise—only food for thought.

Today over on TKZ you'll find "True Crime Thursday – How Not to Cook Thanksgiving Dinner" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/11/true-crime-thursday-how-not-to-cook-thanksgiving-dinner.html>. I dived right in, expecting to read something about an actual true crime. Or maybe about something that was truly a crime: you know, a bad thing one person does that risks or causes harm to another.

But as I read the post, I thought, "Wow. This is a true crime? How very silly." Then I clicked through to the original article and saw why the men were charged: "Getting too close to and messing around with Yellowstone's hot springs are no-nos and can be dangerous."

Ah, got it. Funny. Even laughable if it weren't so frightening, and I'm not talking about the men's actions.

In my world, a "no-no" is an arbitrary rule levied on children to keep them safe before they are able to reason. As I understand it, in the absence of possible risk or harm to a second party, under our Constitution government's role is to butt-out and leave people to accept the responsibility for their own actions.

So my writer's mind wonders whether those men might as easily have been applauded for their ingenuity. Certainly they would have been in the long-ago past when adult human beings strived to be self-sufficient.

But also as a writer, I wonder how many illogical and unconstitutional restrictions any government might levy on its citizenry with the byline (and excuse) of "Keeping You Safe."

Any author who wishes to write an Orwellian 1984-style dystopian novel might well open with the event at Yellowstone National Park of three men who are locked up and then fined and sentenced to two years' probation for the dastardly crime of attempting to cook their supper in a way that might have caused them personal harm but caused neither risk nor harm to anybody else.

In a related note, I am acquainted with a woman who was a small child on Java when the Japanese invaded the island during World War II. The invaders herded all the women and children into an interment camp with the excuse that they were doing so "for their own safety." In later years, the same woman published the illegal diary her mother kept and wrote with passion about that loss of personal freedom.

Today that woman lives in a cottage in a senior home inside the United States. In a blog post around a year ago, she vividly applauded that institution's decision to lock down the campus, not allowing anyone to leave for any reason, "for our own safety."

As I wrote at the beginning, I'm not offering an opinion here, only food for thought.

Today will be an abbreviated writing day, so I'd better get to it. (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "The Super Writers' Bundle" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/pi-the-writers-bundle/>. Not a recommendation, just letting you know it's out there.

See "Who is this Story about, really?" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/david-farlands-writing-tips-who-is-this-story-about-really/>.

See "The Monster Publishing Merger" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-monster-publishing-merger-is-about-amazon/>. Don't miss PG's take. Afterward, there are two other posts about the merger.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 600 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 1 (novel)

Day 1..... 3373 words. Total words to date..... 3373
Day 2..... 3312 words. Total words to date..... 6685
Day 3..... 3292 words. Total words to date..... 9977
Day 4..... 3794 words. Total words to date..... 13771
Day 5..... 4482 words. Total words to date..... 18253
Day 6..... 3379 words. Total words to date..... 21632
Day 7..... 4550 words. Total words to date..... 26182
Day 8..... 3326 words. Total words to date..... 29508
Day 9..... 6033 words. Total words to date..... 35541
Day 10... 3847 words. Total words to date..... 39388

Total fiction words for November..... 71010
Total fiction words for the year..... 434288
Total nonfiction words for November... 16700
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 182540
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 616828

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 6
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 51
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Passion vs. the Critical Mind

November 27, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Lest anyone misunderstand
- * I'm learning how to walk
- * The novel is writing itself
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Lest anyone misunderstand my recent post about passion, my intention was not to dissuade anyone from writing. My intention was to describe my own passion and to suggest you follow yours, whatever it may be. Nothing wrong with that.

However, I also rail here regularly about the (evil) power of the conscious, critical mind and various ways it can stop you from writing. So let me add this to my previous post on passion: If you decide to stop writing because you feel telling stories isn't your passion, that's fine. But as I mentioned in the original post, that would mean finding something you ARE passionate about and doing that instead.

If you "decide" (conscious mind) to stop writing but do NOT move from writing to your presumably true passion, probably your critical mind is using my post as an excuse to stop you from writing. Only you can know for sure, so if you stop writing, I suggest you check in with yourself and be sure of the reason.

Around 50 years ago, the Marine Corps taught me two new ways of walking. When we were on the "Marine Corps bus," which meant marching in formation to wherever we were going, I learned to pick up my feet, take a 30" step and contact the ground with the back of my heel to end that step and begin the next one.

But at all other times, I learned to keep my feet as close as possible to the ground. The purpose was not to move quietly. That was only a valuable fringe benefit. The purpose was to feel with the toes of my boots for tripwires, which were in use in combat environments in Southeast Asia.

I learned that lesson so well that it became my normal way of walking. Which is fine in boots or dress shoes or tenny-go-fasters (athletic shoes). Not so much for open-toed flip-flops.

So now, at the ripe old age of 68, I'm learning to walk all over again, focusing on picking up my feet. I'm not afflicted with any sort of paralysis or disease. I'm just tired of getting sand in my sandals and having to kick it out. (grin)

How does this relate to writing? Shrug. I don't have a clue. I just wanted to share.

The novel is writing itself, as it should. I know now (far too early) how I think it will end. I hate knowing this early. Anyway I expect to finish it in the next few days. I'm looking very forward to writing Book 3.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "The True End of Trade Publishing" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/the-true-end-of-trade-publishing/>.

See "Cheyenne Mountain Nuclear Bunker" at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/cheyenne-mountain-nuclear-bunker>. This place appears in at least one of my stories.

See "Writers' Police Academy Online's December 2020 Schedule" at <https://leelofland.com/writers-police-academy-onlines-december-2020-schedule/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 490 words

Writing of **The Journey Home: Part 1** (novel)

Day 1..... 3373 words. Total words to date..... 3373
Day 2..... 3312 words. Total words to date..... 6685
Day 3..... 3292 words. Total words to date..... 9977
Day 4..... 3794 words. Total words to date..... 13771
Day 5..... 4482 words. Total words to date..... 18253
Day 6..... 3379 words. Total words to date..... 21632
Day 7..... 4550 words. Total words to date..... 26182
Day 8..... 3326 words. Total words to date..... 29508
Day 9..... 6033 words. Total words to date..... 35541
Day 10... 3847 words. Total words to date..... 39388
Day 11... 4704 words. Total words to date..... 44092

Total fiction words for November..... 75714
Total fiction words for the year..... 438992
Total nonfiction words for November... 17190
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 183030
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 622022

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 6
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13

| | |
|---|-----|
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 51 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 214 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Atlas Obscura](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Bradbury, and the Novel Is Finished

November 28, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * About Bradbury's Quote
- * The novel is finished
- * I'm a lucky guy
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“When I started writing seriously, I made the major discovery of my life—that I am right and everybody else is wrong if they disagree with me. What a great thing to learn: Don't listen to anyone else, and always go your own way.” Ray Bradbury (thanks to Phillip M.)

About Bradbury's Quote — I believe the only way to “not listen to anyone else” when writing is to trust and listen only to that innermost part of yourself: your creative subconscious. If you write in any other way, you are of necessity listening to everyone else.

Some would say I learned to write by listening to Dean Wesley Smith. But I didn't.

All I learned from Dean was to trust myself and my creative subconscious, which I've fed over the years with the mechanics I've learned about language and the techniques I've learned about writing.

Focus the conscious mind to learn mechanics and techniques and to absorb the world. Then unleash the creative subconscious and allow it to apply what you've learned.

The Journey Home: Part 1 is finished. It came in at 30 chapters and about half-past 47000 words. When it ended, the day was still young. So I took a break, then cycled back through the last few chapters, ran the spell check, and sent it out to my first readers.

Today will probably not be a fiction-writing day. I'll go through The Ark and apply my first readers' recommendations that I agree with. Then, with a little luck, I'll find some appropriate artwork, create covers for The Ark and The Journey Home: Part 1, and publish The Ark.

At over 79,000 words of publishable fiction (so far) this month, I believe I have "won" NaNoWriMo. (grin) If I can do it, you can do it. A new month begins on December 1. Or a new 30-day period begins tomorrow.

I'm a lucky guy. Sometime today I'll get to meet Sheriff Joe Arpaio at a book signing in Tombstone. Not an inappropriate setting for the modern-day Wyatt Earp.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Children of Quarantine" at <https://www.thecut.com/2020/11/covid-19-pandemic-kids-mental-health.html>. The article is rife with story ideas. Personally, maybe someone should have asked this question before locking everyone down.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 360 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 1 (novel)

Day 1..... 3373 words. Total words to date..... 3373
Day 2..... 3312 words. Total words to date..... 6685
Day 3..... 3292 words. Total words to date..... 9977
Day 4..... 3794 words. Total words to date..... 13771
Day 5..... 4482 words. Total words to date..... 18253
Day 6..... 3379 words. Total words to date..... 21632
Day 7..... 4550 words. Total words to date..... 26182
Day 8..... 3326 words. Total words to date..... 29508
Day 9..... 6033 words. Total words to date..... 35541
Day 10... 3847 words. Total words to date..... 39388
Day 11... 4704 words. Total words to date..... 44092
Day 15... 3516 words. Total words to date..... 47608 (done)

Total fiction words for November..... 79230
Total fiction words for the year..... 442508
Total nonfiction words for November... 17550
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 183390
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 625898

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 7
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

| | |
|---|-----|
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... | 13 |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 52 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 214 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Cut](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Don't Be Dismayed. Have Fun.

November 29, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Topic: Don't Be Dismayed, Be Determined. And Have Fun.
- * Yesterday by 9 a.m.
- * Today
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Every day is another chance to make it happen. That’s why I don’t wait until Monday.” a United Parcel Service (UPS) ad

“Execution beats luck.” from the FS.blog newsletter

“Nothing other people do is because of you. It is because of themselves. All people live in their own dream, in their own mind; they are in a completely different world from the one we live in. When we take something personally, we make the assumption that they know what is in our world, and we try to impose our world on their world.” Don Miguel Ruiz

Topic: Don't Be Dismayed, Be Determined. And Have Fun.

Owing in part to a recent conversation with another writer, one who had made the conscious decision to take a break from writing, I experienced another revelation.

More than once over the years, when Dean Wesley Smith hit a minor writing slump, so did I. I'm honestly not sure, but that might even have been part of the reason for my own recent major slump. I hasten to add, I'm not blaming anyone but the guy in the mirror. It's certainly no fault of Dean's. As far as I know, Dean only barely knows I exist, if he knows at all. But I had tied myself to him so completely, especially in execution, meaning hitting daily goals and so on, that when he expressed in his blog that something had slowed him down, I allowed it to slow me down as well.

The most recent example I can think of, I signed up for both the ongoing Licensing Transition course and the Shared Worlds course. I don't regret having signed up for either one and I've already learned a great deal.

But the last lesson in the Licensing Transition course went up in February 2020, and the last lesson in Shared Worlds went up back in March. Both of those courses were originally intended to run for a year. Then the virus hit and they both went off the tracks. In fact, he still hasn't finished the initial novel he was writing as part of the Shared Worlds class.

And soon after he apparently hit a wall, my own writing fell apart. But I only wrote all that to lead to this: As narcissistic as this might sound (it isn't, I promise), I want to say it anyway. If any of you have tied your own production to mine in that way, please PLEASE snap out of it.

I'm competitive, meaning I'm always trying to improve over who I was yesterday. On the other hand, I would absolutely love it if all of you had a better, more productive writing year than I've had this year. For one thing, if you let me know about it, I would use that to drive my own productivity. I wouldn't be trying to "beat" you, but your winning attitude would drive me to strive harder to beat my own personal best.

In fact, other than providing me with a kind of personal diary, that's the whole reason for this Journal. My own daily word counts are not to say "Haha, look what I did." I record them partly to celebrate with fellow writers. But more than that, I record them to provide a stimulus, to urge you to know you can do the same or better yourself within the constraints of your own life.

Following Dean's blog and his daily word counts is a large part of why this Journal exists. Without even knowing it, he encouraged me by the example he set. In addition to teaching me it was all right to trust myself and my creative subconscious, Dean taught me if he could do it, there was no reason I couldn't do it too.

And that's what I hope you take away from reading this Journal.

Yesterday by 9 a.m. I had applied the wonderful input of my first readers to The Ark (Russ, Robert, Karen, Tony and Mike, take a bow); written up a promo doc (I forgot earlier); found a great piece of cover art and designed a cover; and published the thing to D2D and Amazon. Feels good to be back in the game.

When I finally broke down and went to Deposit photos to look for art, I was prepared to shell out \$8 to \$12 per photo for a few cover pics. But when I clicked to download one, it just downloaded. And I realized I'd already paid for a subscription there earlier (!) and forgot about it.

So instead of \$8 to \$12, my cover photo cost less than a dollar for a standard license. Not too shabby. And I can still download a bunch more before my subscription runs out. (grin) It was a little like an early Christmas. And the cover turned out well, I thought. That's it on the left.

Anyway, if you shop with Amazon and would like to buy The Ark, you can find it live at <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08P91LND5>.

If you shop at Apple or B&N or Kobo or other places, click <https://books2read.com/u/me7nZZ>.

And I've decided to launch The Journey Home: Part 1 on December 15 if I have things ready by then.

Still not doing paperbacks yet. (Not a recommendation, just me.) Too busy writing. I might just wait and let whichever of my heirs take over my IP do all that after I'm gone.

Today I'll put myself back on The Ark as my friends there soar out into the galaxy. I'll wander among them, unseen, until I stumble upon the idea for the next story. Then I'll write it.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "What it's like inside..." at <https://thepointsguy.co.uk/news/secret-crew-rest/>. Invaluable info if you have a character who's on a long flight.

See "Try Writing Sprints to Overcome Writing Setbacks" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/11/try-writing-sprints-to-overcome-writing-setbacks.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 990 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 2 (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for November..... 79230
Total fiction words for the year..... 442508
Total nonfiction words for November... 18540
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 184380
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 626885

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 7
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 52
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [FS Blog](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Points Guy](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Critical Mind vs. Creative Mind

November 30, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Nobody noticed
- * Deposit Photo
- * Started The Journey Home: Part 2
- * Topic: On Specificity and the Critical Mind vs. the Creative Mind
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

I forgot to add the cover for The Ark to yesterday's post. Oops. On the other hand, apparently nobody noticed so no big deal. Anyway, you can see the cover and read a description at <https://stonethreadpublishing.com/the-ark/>. I think it's a great cover, one of my better ones. (Later I'll be revising the description sales copy, but for now it will do.)

Deposit Photo is currently running a series of "cyber Monday" flash sales. If you're interested in great cover art at a discount, visit <https://depositphotos.com/home.html>.

Yet again, I'm a lucky guy. Yesterday, within minutes of sitting down at my writing 'puter and glancing over the reverse outline from The Journey Home: Part 1, a new epigraph and an opening scene occurred to me and I wrote them down, around 300 words total. Then I went up to the house for breakfast.

I made a breakfast burrito and brought it and a glass of water back to the Hovel with me, played a couple games of Spider as I ate (I had only one free hand), then wrote this. Then I moved over to the writing 'puter again to see what the day would hold.

A good first day on the new novel. I can hardly wait to get back to it today.

Topic: On Specificity and the Critical Mind vs. the Creative Mind

Awhile back, a friend wrote to me, "I often find I double up on preposition[s] and can usually (almost always) get rid of one of them."

Then s/he offered a few examples:

- * "I went out to the car" instead of I went to the car.
- * I looked up into her eyes.
- * I tucked myself up under the staircase.

I thought I'd talk a little about those examples this morning. Prepositional phrases always go to specificity. Most often, they enable the reader to see something he might not otherwise have seen.

If the character is inside a structure and "the car" is parked outside that structure, then "I went out to the car" is fine. If both the character and the structure is outside, "I went to the car" would be better.

Similarly, if the POV character is significantly shorter (or taller) than the woman in the scene, then "I looked up (or down) into her eyes" would be appropriate. If their eyes are on roughly the same level, then omitting "up" (or "down") would probably be better.

The third one is a little more difficult. Unless the POV character physically moved "up" (onto a box, etc.) after he was under the stairs, the sentence is probably just as descriptive without "up".

I believe this writer writes into the dark. If so, s/he simply transfers to the page what the POV character sees, hears, smells, tastes and feels as s/he moves through the setting with the POV character.

So deciding which example above to use becomes easier. Basically, you just write what you see. Or better put, what you see comes out through your fingertips automatically.

The real problem my friend and I uncovered was that s/he was "looking for" prepositions and prepositional phrases (hence, engaging the conscious mind) during cycling.

Don't do that. Don't ask your conscious mind to double-check what your creative subconscious has put on the page.

If you write into the dark, when you cycle you should remain in the creative subconscious and "just read" for pleasure. If something pops out at you (usually a wrong word or misspelling, but maybe a missing part of the setting description, etc.) correct it. But if it pops out at you in the first place, that's your creative subconscious catching something, not your conscious, critical mind actively looking for something to catch.

If you do NOT write into the dark, hey, whatever works for you is fine. But be careful out there and ask yourself what matters and what doesn't.

My friend sent me another example: "I found 'she nodded in the direction of the recorder.'"

To which I responded,

"Is 'she nodded in the direction of the recorder' something that might trip-up the reader? If I allowed my conscious, critical 'fix-it' mind to intrude, I might rewrite that line to 'she gestured with her chin toward the recorder.' But really, what significant difference would it make in what the reader sees in his or her mind?"

Maybe food for thought. And thanks to my friend for the topic.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “How To Explode Your Email List” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/11/how-to-explode-your-email-list.html>. I suspect these are invaluable tips. Don’t be Harvey; grow your email list.

See “DIY Book Covers Have Come a Long Way...” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/diy-book-covers-have-come-a-long-way-how-to-create-professional-quality-covers-with-design-apps/>. Note: If you want to design your own covers, that’s wonderful. But study covers that sell in your genre and mimic them (style, art, fonts, etc.).

See “Finding Stories” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/finding-stories/>. Gems.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 830 words

Writing of **The Journey Home: Part 2** (novel)

Day 1..... 4955 words. Total words to date..... 4955

Total fiction words for November..... 84185
Total fiction words for the year..... 447463
Total nonfiction words for November... 19370
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 185210
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 632675

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 7
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 52
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Deposit Photo](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [StoneThread Publishing](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: A Really Good Day

December 1, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * A really good day yesterday
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“We know the human brain is a device to keep the ears from grating on one another.” Peter De Vries

“I write when I'm inspired, and I see to it that I'm inspired at nine o'clock every morning.” Peter De Vries

“We all learn by experience, but some of us have to go to summer school.” Peter De Vries

Oof. December 1 already. I had a really good day yesterday to close out November with over 84,000 words of publishable fiction.

I think this is also the first time I've ever gone over 10,000 words on a novel in only the first two days. And the thing is, I could've written at least one more session. I only stopped because it was 3 p.m., my usual quitting time. I won't do that again. As long as the words keep coming, I'll keep putting them on the page.

Also, please remember, this isn't a “just get it down,” sloppy first draft. I've written every word, then read over it all (cycled through) correcting whatever pops out as me as I go. Then when I get to the white space, I start again, just writing whatever the characters give me. I cycle back through each chapter as I write it.

In only the first 10,000 words of this story, my characters have already thrown me three pretty severe curve balls, things I would NEVER have thought of if I was trying to control the story instead of letting the characters tell it as they're living it.

What wonderful fun! To think, a few years ago I was one of those who thought writing was such drudgery.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Audiblegate 2: The Emperor's New Clothes Policy” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/audiblegate-2-the-emperors-new-clothes-policy/>.

See “Knives Out! Every Writer Needs Sharper Tools” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/12/knives-out-every-writerneeds-sharper-tools-2.html>. I would

add, and having learned something new, get out of your own way and let your creative subconscious create.

See “9 Literary Magazines Seeking Volunteer Readers...” at <https://www.authorspublish.com/9-literary-magazines-seeking-volunteer-readers-why-you-d-want-to-participate/>.

See “Rattlesnake Ranch” at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/rattlesnake-ranch>. I live in St. David, about 8 miles south of Benson. This “ranch” is actually nearer the village of Dragoon, some 20 miles east of Benson. I’d never heard of it. I have no affinity for rattlers, but I might check this out sometime.

See “3 Proving Questions for Big Ideas” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/david-farlands-writing-tips-3-proving-questions-for-big-ideas/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 400 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 2 (novel)

Day 1..... 4955 words. Total words to date..... 4955

Day 1..... 5068 words. Total words to date..... 10023

Total nonfiction words for December..... 400

Total fiction words for November..... 89253

Total fiction words for the year..... 452531

Total nonfiction words for November... 19370

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 185210

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 637741

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 7

Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 52

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Atlas Obscura](#), [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [David Farland](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: BookExpo Is No More

December 2, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * BookExpo is no more (!)
- * Mentorships and first readers
- * Call for topics
- * Another really good day
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Back in the late 1990s or early 2000s, my Writing Realistic Dialogue & Flash Fiction won fifth place (1st Honorable Mention) for the Book of the Year Award in the Education Category at BookExpo New York. Not too shabby, given that there were well over 25,000 entries in that category, including dozens from the “Big Five” publishers.

Today, BookExpo is no more. See the first item in “Of Interest.”

I haven't mentioned for a while the professional mentorships I offer. All of them cost considerably less than you'd pay for most good writing courses, and I can pretty well guarantee I will provide more information than you can find elsewhere.

And did I mention the craft mentorships are one-on-one, tailored to your own writing? These aren't one size fits all video or audio lectures. They're you and me talking in real time via email and/or telephone.

To see the mentorships I offer on the craft of writing, see <https://harveystanbrough.com/the-writing-craft-mentorships/>.

To see the pre- or post-writing mentorships (Clearing Out the Myths, Inventory and Sales, and Licensing), visit <https://harveystanbrough.com/non-writing-mentorships/>.

Especially during this very prolific time, I'm issuing another call for first readers. Mostly because I don't want my current first readers, who are excellent, to feel overwhelmed.

If you'd like to read my stories free, I'm always looking for first readers, especially females. Not because I want to be politically correct (it's much easier to just be honest), but because I want to get input from female readers as well as male readers.

If you're interested, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com. In my response, I'll explain what I need from a first reader and we'll go from there. Those selected as first readers for a series will receive all the books in the series free, including those for which they did not serve as first readers.

It's also been a while since I've issued a call for topics. I can't know what you need or want to learn unless you tell me.

I know a lot about writing really good fiction. If there are certain aspects of storytelling that stump or puzzle you, or aspects with which you're having difficulty, email me and suggest a topic (or topics) at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

Or just ask me a question about writing. I'll respond personally, and if I believe your question would interest others, I'll turn it into a topic in this Journal. Without mentioning your name, of course, unless you give me permission.

I had another really good day of writing yesterday and set a new personal best. I wrote until I was beginning to enter a mental fog and was unable to continue. I was exhausted when I went to the house, but it was a very good exhaustion. (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "BookExpo and BookCon Are No More" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/bookexpo-and-bookcon-are-no-more/>. This is incredibly bad news, but it runs hand in hand with recent news of traditional publishing eating itself. And see PG's take.

See "North American Booksellers Join Pubeasy in Record Numbers" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/north-american-booksellers-join-pubeasy-in-record-numbers/>. You and I, as independent publishers, are North American booksellers. Something to think about. I haven't made application yet, but I will. If the cost isn't prohibitive, this might be the spark I need to put my backlist in paper.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 570 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 2 (novel)

Day 1..... 4955 words. Total words to date..... 4955

Day 2..... 5068 words. Total words to date..... 10023

Day 3..... 6513 words. Total words to date..... 16536

Total fiction words for December..... 6512

Total fiction words for the year..... 459044

Total nonfiction words for December... 970

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 186180

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 645224

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 7

Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 52

| | |
|---|-----|
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 214 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Personal Best](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: On the Split Infinitive...

December 3, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Topic: On the Split Infinitive and Other Inane Rules
- * I'd spend more time
- * What It Takes to Have a Really Good Day
- * Another personal record-setting day
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“And all dared to brave unknown terrors, to do mighty deeds, to boldly split infinitives that no man had split before—and thus was the Empire forged.” Douglas Adams, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*

“When I split an infinitive, God damn it, I split it so it stays split.” Raymond Chandler

“Making English grammar conform to Latin rules is like asking people to play baseball using the rules of football.” Bill Bryson

“Remember to never split an infinitive. The passive voice should never be used. Do not put statements in the negative form. Proofread carefully to see if you words out. And don't start a sentence with a conjugation.”

William Safire

Topic: On the Split Infinitive and Other Inane Rules (Tongue-in-Cheek)

One of my first readers pointed out, casually, almost in passing, a “dreaded” split infinitive. Hence the quotes above.

Yep, I use split infinitives at times. When one occurs in dialogue, it's easy to simply blame it on the foibles of human speech. (Or maybe I should have written “I blame it on....”)

But when the construction occurs in so-called narrative, I use the same excuse because Every Word in a story comes from one character or another. In a good story, nothing comes from the writer. (Now there's a quotable line for you.)

Intellectually, I've always felt the split-infinitive rule was silly and had no practical rationale, like so many other "rules."

How many writers out there still hyphenate "year old" in every instance because some unthinking instructor (or style manual) told them to? And without providing a practical reason to do so?

For that matter, how many writers out there will not allow even a waitress in a truck stop in the deep south to end a sentence with a preposition, (as I did in the second sentence above this one)? (We've all heard the old "Where ya'll from?" joke.)

Or won't allow that waitress-character or any other character to begin a sentence with a conjunction? Or won't write any other kind of sentence fragment? Even in dialogue?

How many just wondered how any character could end a sentence with a preposition WITHOUT that sentence being in dialogue?

I'd spend more time playing with the above (I wrote it this morning) but I have a stupid doctor appointment early this afternoon and I'm hoping to have another really good writing day. Maybe I'll return to it in the future, especially if I get questions or comments.

What It Takes to Have a Really Good Day

I actually wrote the following yesterday.

I keep talking about "a really good day" of writing. And as I've said, these are not "just get it down" sloppy first draft days of writing. When I stop for the day, I've cycled through the words I've written (usually chapter by chapter) and "corrected" anything that pops out at me as I Just Read for Pleasure.

There are writers out there who are much more prolific than I and who also use the creative subconscious method of cycling. My point is, you can do this too.

If you love the story you're telling, and more importantly if you love running through the story with your characters, just trying to keep up, the story itself will take you away.

Not everybody will write 6,000 words in even a really good day. Some will write only a thousand, or only two or three thousand. Everything depends on how long you can remain in the chair or keep coming back to the chair in a given day.

But you can extend that amount of time (and improve your storytelling ability) with practice. Every word and sentence and paragraph of fiction you write is practice on the writing craft.

Especially if you're continually learning between projects, taking in information with your conscious mind and allowing it to seep into your subconscious.

Likewise, every additional quarter-hour or half-hour or hour you spend in the chair is practice. And your word count (of publishable fiction) will improve. Meaning you can tell more stories in a week or month or year. Meaning you can publish more stories, increasing the size of your IP inventory and creating additional streams of income.

So all of that goes to the physical aspect of writing: spending time in the chair, your fingers moving across the keyboard.

Then there's what I call the Determination aspect. As Mr. Heinlein wrote, if you want to be a writer, you must write. But if you want to be a prolific writer and have even one "really good day," you have to be determined and keep coming back. Naturally, it's easier to be "determined" if you love what you do.

Just sayin', this isn't an exclusive swimmin' hole. The water's fine, and everyone is welcome. You don't even need a bathing suit.

As I mentioned earlier, I wrote the above yesterday during a break. Turns out it was timely. I set a new personal record yesterday for the second day in a row, with well over 7,000 words. I'm stoked.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Infinitive Quotes" at <https://www.azquotes.com/quotes/topics/infinitive.html>. Just one example. There are others.

See "Just Be Safe" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/just-be-safe/>. For what it's worth to you. I offer no opinion and link to this only to notify you of Ben Bova's death.

See "Is Speed Reading Efficient for Writers?" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/12/is-speed-reading-efficient-for-writers.html>.

See "A Brief Observation" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/a-brief-observation/>. A great post. I only wish The Journal was on The Passive Guy's list of websites to visit daily, or at least on his list of Google Alerts. Sigh.

See "The Beat Goes On" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-beat-goes-on/>. Again, for what it's worth.

See "Audible Returns and Indie Author Royalties..." at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/audible-returns-a-detailed-discussion/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1000 words

Writing of **The Journey Home: Part 2** (novel)

Day 1..... 4955 words. Total words to date..... 4955

Day 2..... 5068 words. Total words to date..... 10023

Day 3..... 6513 words. Total words to date..... 16536

Day 4..... 7467 words. Total words to date..... 24003

Total fiction words for December..... 13980

Total fiction words for the year..... 466511

Total nonfiction words for December... 1970

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 187180

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 653691

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 7

Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 52

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [A to Z Quotes](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Pro Writers Writing](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: A Dreary Cautionary Tale

December 4, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * A Dreary Cautionary Tale: Save Your Work
- * I also looked on the bright side
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“We have described our use of artificial intelligence (AI) to provide you with valuable personalized advice.” from the Terms of Service of a corporation with which I’m acquainted

A Dreary Cautionary Tale: Save Your Work

As you know, I always try to share the bad as well as the good, the setbacks as well as the accomplishments. Not to put too fine a point on it, but if you're as stupid as I am, you need to hear this:

***Save. Your. Work.
Often, and in More Than One Place.***

When I first started writing this post (yesterday, on December 3), I could barely breathe. Here's what happened:

Yesterday, while beginning the writing day with a cycling session, I decided to recast the first few paragraphs of Chapter 15. I highlighted those first few paragraphs, then wrote three quick new paragraphs to shoot the timeline forward by a few weeks.

All well and good.

But I experienced that tingly little feeling in the back of my mind that told me maybe my critical, conscious mind was trying to intrude. I *always* pay attention to that little alarm. So I cut the three paragraphs and pasted them into a Notepad .txt document for safekeeping.

Then I figured I'd go back to the original version.

To do that, I would close the "flawed" document without saving it, then open the version I saved at the end of the day on December 2, go back to Chapter 15 and start cycling through again. Simple, right? I've done it lots of times.

So I did that. Only when I opened the document again: I found I *hadn't* actually saved the document the day before.

So at 24,000 words into the novel, I hadn't saved it after a record day of 7,467 words. That's typically two days' work for me. Gone.

For a little while, as you might imagine, this was a big deal, a major, severe disruption. When I opened the document, it went only through the opening paragraph of Chapter 13. The word count is right at 19,000 words.

(Yes, I'm aware of the discrepancy between the work being 19,000 words two days ago and only 24,000 words one day later after writing over 7,000. It has to do with cycling, deletions, etc. that have also been lost.)

As you might imagine, I was almost ill. For a long while it was literally an effort just to breathe.

So originally I set out to recreate Chapters 13 through 16. I figured my reverse outline would help at least a little in that regard, providing cues for what happened to whom when. (Yeah, I saved that. Go figure.)

*But a reverse outline is just that: A Reverse Outline.
Its purpose is to remind you of what happened for reference,
not to rebuild a manuscript or otherwise guide you into the future.*

Literally within a minute or so of moving to the writing 'puter and looking at the manuscript, then my reverse outline, I realized I can't simply refer to the reverse outline and rebuild what I'd written. Why? Because I tried and it felt like "work."

That's when I realized using the reverse outline in that way is exactly the same as using a regular outline. Duh. It actively invokes the conscious, critical mind.

And I really can't do that. If I do, I'll be bored to tears and the story will sound contrived, because it will BE contrived. And it will suck canal water from all 48 contiguous states.

So instead, I deleted what I'd written in the reverse outline for Chapters 13 – 15. Then I went to the beginning of the manuscript and started reading through, allowing myself to touch it as I went: cycling.

I got through the entire 19000 words (see the word count for Day 5 below) and frankly, I already feel a lot better. I'm basically home free. Crisis averted.

The over 7500 words I wrote on December 2 are still gone. I'll just mark that up to practice, then move ahead today, writing into the dark.

I still hate that I was stupid enough to lose such a large part of the original story. Now the story will be a little different than it would have been. And it will take me a little longer to write this novel than it would have taken had I saved my work and not cost myself these extra two or so days.

But hey: Them's the breaks. Be careful out there.

I have to add, I also looked on the bright side. This manuscript I messed up is Book 3 of a series. I lost only 7500 words, and I lost only two or three days of writing time. Out of a 50,000 word (or so) novel (and a 150,000 words (or so) series, that isn't bad, especially the way I've been writing lately.

Also, Books 1 and 2 are already written. Book 1 is published, and Book 2 will be published later this month. And even with this setback, Book 3 will be published in January at the latest.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Math for Writers" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/david-farlands-writing-tips-math-for-writers/>. Selling all rights to your IP for a novel to a publisher is like handing over the deed to

your house if the publisher agrees to publish your book. Except the IP is potentially worth a great deal more than your house.

See “Needing a Reader and Copyeditor...” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/needing-a-reader-and-copyeditor/>. If some of this sounds contradictory with his recommendation to use a first reader and a copyeditor, just take from it what you read between the lines. Also, I personally recommend at least two first readers: one male and one female. They provide different points of view and sensibilities.

See “The Ultimate Guide to Social Media for Writers 2020” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-ultimate-guide-to-social-media-for-writers-2020/>. I’ve all but abandoned social media.

See “How to Reduce Your Workload with a Facebook Auto Poster” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-to-reduce-your-workload-with-a-facebook-auto-poster/>.

See “Five Mistakes That Even Experienced Social Media Managers Make” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/five-mistakes-that-even-experienced-social-media-managers-make/>. See PG’s take on this one. I wonder if any of those “mistakes” is included as good advice in one of the other articles?

See “#DisneyMustPay” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/disneymustpay/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1030 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 2 (novel)

Day 1..... 4955 words. Total words to date..... 4955
Day 2..... 5068 words. Total words to date..... 10023
Day 3..... 6513 words. Total words to date..... 16536
Day 4..... 7467 words. Total words to date..... 24003
Sigh. Closed without saving after Day 4..... 19000
Day 5..... 0792 words. Total words to date..... 19792 (cycling)

Total fiction words for December..... 14772
Total fiction words for the year..... 467303
Total nonfiction words for December... 3000
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 188210
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 655513

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 7
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 52

| | |
|---|-----|
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 214 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: The Writing, and Me Gripping About the Language

December 5, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * The Writing
- * Here I continue to gripe about the decline
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“There are plagues, and there are victims, and it’s the duty of good men not to join forces with the plagues.” Albert Camus

“Some people contend that the English language is a living, breathing organism wherein the definitions of words and rules should change to reflect their mass misuse. ... English should not stoop to embrace the lowest common denominator. Rather, society should step up and grant the language the respect it deserves.” Terry Fallis

The Writing

On Thursday I had an abbreviated day. I had a doctor appointment, so I was able only to work until about noon. In that time, I was able to cycle through the whole 19,000 words. But just as I got to the place where the new writing would start, I had to stop.

Friday was a different matter. I figure I’d dive right in and the novel would take off again. It didn’t work quite like that.

In the first few hours, I struggled. My conscious mind kept trying to butt in, reminding me of bits and pieces of what I’d written before (and lost), and I managed to write maybe a thousand words in those first few hours.

So I cycled back another couple of times, to specific places in the novel where earlier events had occurred. I’d presented those events only in part, so I would have to go back and address them again later.

The first situation resolved almost too quickly. When it was over, I was a little disappointed and still about halfway stuck. But after I resolved the second event, the story took off again, and the massive loss of Wednesday was finally behind me.

Getting rid of the last three chapter summaries I'd written in the reverse outline was exactly the right thing to do. In other words, trusting myself and the characters was the right thing to do, and that's the whole basis for writing into the dark in the first place.

I still wish I hadn't been foolish enough to lose those 7500 words in the first place, but since I did, I feel very fortunate that the novel is once again off and running with only one day of relative down time.

As a result, I had one of those "really good days" yesterday with over 6700 words. Back at it tomorrow.

Here I continue to gripe about the decline of our language.

In an article in a major magazine, I read that a woman walked into her "backyard." In actuality, the woman walked into her "back yard," an adjective-noun combination in which the adjective provides additional information concerning which yard she walked into.

Do some writers really not know this? Or do they just not care?

This kind of misuse, which is becoming more prevalent every day, is the difference between an adjective (backyard) and an adjective-noun combination (back yard). Children might well visit a "backyard" swing set, but they do so in the back yard.

Yes, I'm aware that if "backyard" isn't already listed as a noun in the dictionary, it probably soon will be. Why? Because it's always easier to shake your head, mutter under your breath and change the rules than it is to take the time to teach correct usage.

Witness the witless recognition of "till" (a noun that means "cash drawer" or a verb that means "turn over the soil with a plow") as an inane replacement for "'til" the truncated version of "until". Is it really that difficult to write "until" or explain that the apostrophe at the front of "'til" stands in for the "un" in until? Really?

I'm sure to many this simply doesn't matter. Whatever. It still marks a "rapiddecline" in our written language.

I don't like sloppy or uncaring work, so I didn't finish the article. Which left me to wonder whether later the same woman walked into her "frontyard".

And if she drove into town and suffered a parking mishap, I wonder whether the "backbumper" on her car was damaged. Perhaps the accident occurred because one of her "contactlenses" fell out. And if I wanted to help her find it, would I look for a "bluecontactlense" or "browncontactlense"?

Yet one more reason I enjoy escaping into my fictional world.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Christmas Star: Jupiter and Saturn...” at <https://www.wtol.com/article/weather/christmas-star-jupiter-saturn-rare-double-planet-december-solstice/269-34b0330d-2f72-4ac5-82a4-0dd966d445d7>. The original article, sent to me by Sam T., is at *The Washington Post* if you can see it past their annoying popup.

See “Reading Is More Important...” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/reading-is-more-important-than-writing/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 770 words

Writing of **The Journey Home: Part 2** (novel)

Day 1..... 4955 words. Total words to date..... 4955
Day 2..... 5068 words. Total words to date..... 10023
Day 3..... 6513 words. Total words to date..... 16536
Day 4..... 7467 words. Total words to date..... 24003
Sigh. Closed without saving after Day 4..... 19000
Day 5..... 0792 words. Total words to date..... 19792 (cycling)
Day 6..... 6788 words. Total words to date..... 26580

Total fiction words for December..... 21560
Total fiction words for the year..... 474091
Total nonfiction words for December... 3770
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 188980
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 663071

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 7
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 52
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Jupiter and Saturn](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Finding a Writing Guru/Mentor

December 6, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * A comment I added
- * An addendum
- * Not as good a day
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“We create fear or make fear go away depending on what story we tell ourselves...” Roger Martin

Here's a comment I added to Dean Wesley Smith's post in “Of Interest” today. It just felt like something I should share with you:

“At some point, a would-be writer who's looking to actually learn anything has to stop, consider the experience of the source, and assume the source probably knows what he's talking about. I've been a writer most of my life, but I was never a novelist because (I used to tell people) ‘I haven't found a cast of characters I want to live with that long.’ [That shows you how mired in the myths I was.]

“Then I found your blog, and the rest is history. Now I trust the characters to tell the story that they, not I, are living. That's the whole secret: Get over yourself and realize it's the characters' story, not yours. [Now] I love the characters, I love the stories they tell, and I've put out nine novels per year on average for the last 6 years.

“Thanks for hanging in there, Dean, and telling the truth of how to make storytelling fun.”

And here's an addendum:

When you're a beginning writer, or if you're still mired in the myths and not getting anywhere, it might be a good idea to set aside all the preconceptions about writing and publishing that are flying around out there — the blind leading the blind is an apt analogy — and Trust a successful experienced writer.

Sadly, most beginning writers (Who Know Nothing) set aside the successful experienced writer's advice if he doesn't mimic the common wisdom, i.e., the same old crap that's never worked for them before. Then they go looking for one who does, and the inane, endless cycle continues.

At the risk of “shoulding” on anyone, what the beginner or the mired writer should do is firmly latch onto and learn from that successful experienced writer *Specifically Because* that writer is saying something with which those beginning writers and those mired in the myths disagree. Robert A. Heinlein (through his unedited [Business Habits](#)), Stephen King, and Dean Wesley Smith spring to mind. Just sayin’.

I didn’t have as good a writing day yesterday, but I still met my 3000 words daily goal. Odd how that feels like a failure. I’m embarrassed to admit, I’m still aching a little (every now and then, for a few seconds) over having lost part of the story on Wednesday. Not the words, but how they were arranged. Sigh.

But as I alluded to above, I just remind myself, usually during a break on my way back to the writing ‘puter, that it’s the characters’ story. “Put your fingers on the keyboard, Harvey, trust the characters to tell you their story, and write what comes.” It works every time. Sometimes I just have to push myself over that hump.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Want Someone to Do It For Me...” at <https://www.deanwesleymsmith.com/want-someone-to-do-it-for-me/>.

See “Put Your Lead Between Opposite Characters” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/12/put-your-lead-between-opposite-characters.html>. My own characters typically make major choices several times through a novel. The choice is never forced on them by anyone outside the story, least of all me.

See “Barnes & Noble’s New Boss Tries to Save the Chain...” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/barnes-nobles-new-boss-tries-to-save-the-chain-and-traditional-bookselling/>.

See “The Nine Worst Provisions in Your Publishing Contract – Part 1” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-nine-worst-provisions-in-your-publishing-contract-part-1/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 590 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 2 (novel)

Day 1..... 4955 words. Total words to date..... 4955
Day 2..... 5068 words. Total words to date..... 10023
Day 3..... 6513 words. Total words to date..... 16536
Day 4..... 7467 words. Total words to date..... 24003
Sigh. Closed without saving after Day 4..... 19000

Day 5..... 0792 words. Total words to date..... 19792 (cycling)
Day 6..... 6788 words. Total words to date..... 26580
Day 7..... 3242 words. Total words to date..... 29822

Total fiction words for December..... 24802
Total fiction words for the year..... 477333
Total nonfiction words for December... 4360
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 189570
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 666903

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 7
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 52
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Contracts](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: On Blatant Censorship

December 7, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * I'm posting today mostly
- * That there was a glitch
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“PG suggests that a more widely recognized term for deplatforming is political censorship. What punched PG’s deplatforming button was not the criticism of Mr. Peterson’s ideas and writings, but rather the verbal lobbying directed to [Penguin Random House] to pressure the company to cease publication of Mr. Jordan’s writings.” The Passive Guy

I’m posting today mostly to get “Of Interest” out to you, and mostly the first item in that section.

I hope you will read the article, and especially The Passive Guy’s addendum to the article.

It struck me that with the omission of one word (“who”) the first sentence in the original post reads like the first line of a Stephen King novel. And it would make an excellent epigraph for any 1984- or Fahrenheit 451-style dystopian novel:

“Jordan Peterson, the Canadian psychology professor and lobster-loving life coach ... came to public attention after refusing to use the preferred pronouns of transgender people.” (Citation: The preceding quote is from an article written by Nathan Robinson, a person or per-it [my sister-in-law’s non gender term for ‘human biped’] at The Manchester Guardian. I have no way of knowing whether Nathan Robinson would prefer a particular pronoun him-, her-, them-, xe-, ze-, sie-, co-, ey- or it-self but I meant no offense with my omission of the same.)

This is not a political blog, so to avoid harming the sensibilities of any who believe they have the right to control how others think or what they believe or what particular words they use, I’ll stop now.

That there was a glitch in the novel occurred to me on Saturday night as I watched an episode of a science fantasy TV show. So on Sunday I searched for a particular word, repaired the glitch throughout the manuscript, and then did some other cycling. As of 10 a.m. on Sunday, I’d added only 1000 words to the novel. Given that, it was a relatively good writing day.

I’m always anxious to get back to the blank space and keep writing as the story unfolds. Still, the process-per-novel has to move at its own pace, so I’m doing my best to be patient. (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Publishers are not obliged...” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/publishers-are-not-obliged-to-give-bigots-like-jordan-peterson-a-platform/>. See The Passive Guy’s take. This is a very important post.

See “Mr. Know-It-All” at <https://fourknightspress.com/f/mr-know-it-all>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 410 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 2 (novel)

Day 1..... 4955 words. Total words to date..... 4955
Day 2..... 5068 words. Total words to date..... 10023
Day 3..... 6513 words. Total words to date..... 16536
Day 4..... 7467 words. Total words to date..... 24003
Sigh. Closed without saving after Day 4..... 19000
Day 5..... 0792 words. Total words to date..... 19792 (cycling)
Day 6..... 6788 words. Total words to date..... 26580

Day 7..... 3242 words. Total words to date..... 29822
Day 8..... 3342 words. Total words to date..... 33164

Total fiction words for December..... 28144
Total fiction words for the year..... 480675
Total nonfiction words for December... 4770
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 189980
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 670655

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 7
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 52
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Censorship](#), [Dan Baldwin](#), [Four Knights Press](#), [Political censorship](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Keep Coming Back

December 8, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Chatting on the phone
- * Keep Coming Back
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Is PG the only person who is tired of the phrase, raise awareness? At the moment, PG’s awareness seems to be sheltering in place.” The Passive Guy

Yup. Mine too.

I’ve never been a big phone person. I’ve always considered the telephone a necessary evil. It’s something I carry around (usually) “just in case”) but it’s also an intrusive nuisance.

However, there are a few people whose phone calls I happily anticipate and welcome when they happen.

Yesterday, I had the pleasure of talking via telephone with one of those folks, good friend and fellow prolific writer Robert S. I always enjoy those talks because in addition to both of us sharing (giddily, I'm afraid, at least on my part) our excitement about our current projects, we also theorize some what-ifs for both our current projects (but carefully) and for possible future projects.

And this morning I realized those occasional phone calls with my friend have replaced what I used to get from hobnobbing with other presenters at writers' conferences and/or with other professional writers at true writers' groups (vs. "critique" groups).

Something similar happens when I get input back from my first readers. Little realizations pop up all over the place. It truly is a wonderful life.

Yesterday too I experienced a great "keep coming back" moment. If you're unfamiliar with the term, "keep coming back" refers to your work ethic, or less nicely put, your obsession.

It means don't allow yourself to get sidetracked during breaks from your story. Keep coming back. Even when you think you're finished for the day.

That was the case for me yesterday when I'd written a little over 6000 words, then took a trip to the store with my wife. When we got back, I told her I was going to shut down my office (the Hovel). I was going to do all those little end-of-the-day things: save the novel, record my numbers, etc. And that really was my intention.

But when I got back to the Hovel, I thought I'd sit down and glance at the story. And I put my fingers on the keyboard and wrote another 1600 words. And set a new personal best (see The Numbers below) for a single day of writing without meaning to.

All because of my little mantra: Keep Coming Back.

Of course, it helps a lot that I'm super excited about the novel and the series. Folks, I'm having a ball. I hope you are too.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "10 Design Tips for a "Buy Now" Book Cover" at <https://writersinthestormblog.com/2020/12/buy-now-book-covers-for-independent-authors/>.

See "Writing the "Big" Book" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/david-farlands-writing-tips-writing-the-big-book/>. Usually "big book" means concept, not size. Here Dave talks about doorstoppers.

See "Portugal's Chapel of Bones" at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/portugals-chapel-bones>.

See “28 Themed Calls for Submissions” at <https://www.authorspublish.com/28-themed-submissions-calls-for-december-2020/>.

See “Sleuthing the Clues in Staged Homicides” at <https://leelofland.com/sleuthing-the-clues-in-staged-homicides-top-tips-from-dr-katherine-ramslund/>.

See “Five Story Collections” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/five-story-collections/>. Not for me, but interesting.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 510 words

Writing of *The Journey Home: Part 2* (novel)

Day 1..... 4955 words. Total words to date..... 4955

Day 2..... 5068 words. Total words to date..... 10023

Day 3..... 6513 words. Total words to date..... 16536

Day 4..... 7467 words. Total words to date..... 24003

Sigh. Closed without saving after Day 4..... 19000

Day 5..... 0792 words. Total words to date..... 19792 (cycling)

Day 6..... 6788 words. Total words to date..... 26580

Day 7..... 3242 words. Total words to date..... 29822 Day 8..... 3342 words. Total words to date..... 33164

Day 9..... 7614 words. Total words to date..... 40778

Total fiction words for December..... 35758

Total fiction words for the year..... 488289

Total nonfiction words for December... 5280

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 190490

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 678779

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 7

Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 52

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Atlas Obscura](#), [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#), [Writers in the Storm](#)

The Journal: On Goals vs. Dreams, a Preface

December 9, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * On Goals vs. Dreams, a Preface
- * A good-enough day
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

"I've never quite understood why, when someone doesn't like you for whatever reason, they don't just leave you the hell alone." Wes Crowley, laughing and shaking his head

On Goals vs. Dreams, a Preface

Soon I'll be writing a post on setting goals for 2021. I'll address my own goals and hope the post will help as you set yours.

In the meantime, Terry Odell's post (linked to in today's "Of Interest") has a bit to say about that as well.

In that post, she lists three "resolutions" that won't work:

- * I resolve to be a best-selling author.
- * I resolve to write three novels this year.
- * I resolve to make \$100,000 selling my e-books.

She writes that these resolutions won't work because they're dreams.

Then she goes on to explain (correctly) that dreams are "things over which you have no control, because they depend on other people."

In my opinion, she's two-thirds right. But I'll pose the question to you: How does a writer NOT have control over how many novels he or she will write in a year?

I can't imagine a scenario in which the number of words I write per any given time period or the number of finished publications I write in any given time period is a "dream," i.e., subject to the whims or demands of "other people." Even if you suffer life rolls and decide to not write for awhile, that's still a decision you make, one that is within your control.

So in my own life, I'll move the number of novels I plan to write to the Goals category. I didn't leave a comment on the OP, though I started to for the benefit of other readers. But I couldn't

write anything there that wouldn't sound argumentative. Plus, chances are it would do no good. Perhaps here, it will.

I had a good-enough day yesterday. I expect the novel probably will wrap sometime in the next few days.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Oh, the Questions! by Virginia McCullough" at <http://heartwarmingauthors.blogspot.com/2020/12/oh-questions-by-virginia-mccullough.html>. Thanks to Sam T for the link.

See "Dreams, Goals, and a Gift" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/12/dreams-goals-and-a-gift.html>.

See "Bookshop.org: meet the man taking on Amazon" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/bookshop-org-meet-the-man-taking-on-amazon/>. Check out PG's take.

See "The Nine Worst Provisions in Your Publishing Contract – Part 2" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-nine-worst-provisions-in-your-publishing-contract-part-2/>.

See "Rock-Stars Selling Publishing Rights" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/rock-stars-selling-publishing-rights/>. Again, see PG's very short take.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 420 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 2 (novel)

Day 1..... 4955 words. Total words to date..... 4955
Day 2..... 5068 words. Total words to date..... 10023
Day 3..... 6513 words. Total words to date..... 16536
Day 4..... 7467 words. Total words to date..... 24003
Sigh. Closed without saving after Day 4..... 19000
Day 5..... 0792 words. Total words to date..... 19792 (cycling)
Day 6..... 6788 words. Total words to date..... 26580
Day 7..... 3242 words. Total words to date..... 29822
Day 8..... 3342 words. Total words to date..... 33164
Day 9..... 7614 words. Total words to date..... 40778
Day 10... 4264 words. Total words to date..... 45042

| | |
|---|--------|
| Total fiction words for December..... | 40022 |
| Total fiction words for the year..... | 492553 |
| Total nonfiction words for December... | 5700 |
| Total nonfiction words for the year..... | 190910 |
| Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... | 683463 |
| | |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... | 7 |
| Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... | X |
| Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... | 13 |
| Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... | 52 |
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 214 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Heartwarming Authors](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: I Was Astonished: A Little More on Goals

December 10, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * I Was Astonished: A Little More on Goals
- * Another fairly good day
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“What’s the worst thing that could happen if it doesn’t work?” Elaine Viets

I Was Astonished: A Little More on Goals

As read the other comments on Terry Odell’s post from yesterday, I was astonished. I kind’a felt like I’d been dipped in a tank of piranhas in baloney underwear. Or I’d gone wading in a Louisiana bayou filled to the banks with swamp donkeys. I finally left this comment of my own:

“I guess I’m the only one, but I don’t get how ‘Write X number of novels in a year’ is a dream instead of a goal since, as you say, Goals are within our control and Dreams are not (with which I agree).”

A Digression...

Many commenters wrote that they don't set goals because they know they can't attain them. That's a conscious, critical mind self-defeating thought in my opinion.

Or as my paternal grandmother used to say, "You can do anything if you set your mind to it." And for her, that wasn't just a feel-good mantra. It was a guiding light for her life.

Grandma Sylvia also believed in dreams. They were things for which you should hope and pray. But as she famously quipped several times, "But you have to put feet in your prayers." Meaning you have to put in the work and take steps toward what you want to achieve.

I continued my comment:

"I set goals every day, month and year that make me stretch. They're obtainable, but only if I'm disciplined enough to stick to my plan. And I always break my annual goal down into monthly and daily goals. Like eating the elephant one bite at a time."

I guess I've lived with goals for so long, the kind of thinking I encountered in the comments just doesn't compute for me. I felt like I was in Bizarro World as I read most of them.

The whole experience kind of reminded me of "The Emperor's New Clothes" or of a modern critique group that's deteriorated into a mutual-admiration society. Ugh.

Even if you're used to only writing two novels in a year (I don't know how many Ms. Odell writes, but I assume it's fewer than 3) that still doesn't mean you can't write 3 or more within a year If You Want To.

Another fairly good day of writing yesterday with a little over 5000 words. Still looking for that 8000 word day.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Holiday Stories" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/holiday-stories/>.

See "Writers in Waiting" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/12/writers-in-waiting.html>. Another post that astonished me. To her opening statement, I thought "Nope." And I added another "Nope" to every item on her list. Seriously, has the world gone crazy? Sigh. To each their own. I just don't understand.

See "5 Tips For Promoting Your Book This Christmas" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/5-tips-for-promoting-your-book-this-christmas/>.

See "'Greenlighting' a Novel" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/david-farlands-writing-tips-greenlighting-a-novel/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 510 words

Writing of **The Journey Home: Part 2** (novel)

Day 10... 4264 words. Total words to date..... 45042

Day 11... 5020 words. Total words to date..... 50062

Total fiction words for December..... 45042

Total fiction words for the year..... 497573

Total nonfiction words for December... 6210

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 191420

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 688993

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 7

Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 52

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Coming Soon: The Long-Awaited (Yeah, Right) Goals Post

December 11, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Topic: Coming Soon: The Long-Awaited (Yeah, Right) Goals Post
- * An Open Note to Loyd J.
- * A Strange Phenomenon
- * Note to my first readers
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“The last nine months have felt like one long never-ending sentence without commas or periods.” Margo T Krasne

Topic: Coming Soon: The Long-Awaited (Yeah, Right) Goals Post

I'm not pulling any punches here.

This time of year, posts on setting goals abound. But when I've read some of those recently, I felt as if I was transported back to the 1980s.

Back to a time when all a writer had control over was how many words he or she wrote in a day. Literally every other step of the process — acceptance by an agent or publisher, editing, the cover, the timeline for publication — was out of the writer's control.

That is not the world of today. It hasn't been that way since Amazon started publishing ebooks back in 2008 or so. And when Mark Coker came along with Smashwords in 2010 or thereabouts, the whole world exploded into a thing of sheer beauty for writers.

Alas, Smashwords didn't evolve — I personally wish it had — so far fewer writer/publishers use it today. Instead they go to Draft2Digital.com or StreetLib.com or any number of other, more user-friendly distributors. Many of us use several different distributors, making sure distribution channels don't cross. (What is distributed to Kobo through one distributor should not also be distributed to Kobo through another distributor.)

The point is, today the writing process has become the writing/publishing process. And today, if you want it, you have complete control over that process. "Success," depending on your definition of that word, might remain a dream, but you can much more directly influence how close you come to achieving that dream than you could before the advent of this wonderful new world.

With practice, today you can learn how to

- * write great stories or novels
- * design professional covers
- * write professional sales copy,
- * publish your work to ebooks and paper, and
- * distribute your work worldwide, in most cases much wider than it would be distributed if traditionally published

So don't let anyone tell you those things are dreams. They aren't dreams. They're goals. You can attain all of them if you want. Putting in the effort and learning is completely within your control.

AND you keep all rights to your IP so it goes on making you and your heirs money for 70 years beyond your death,

AND you make a MUCH larger percentage of the cover price on every book sold.

As to writing, as a very first, basic step, you can determine how much of your disposable time you spend at the keyboard. There might be tradeoffs. Those are choices you have to make, priorities you have to set. But it's all within your control.

Remember, I'm talking about disposable hours here, hours over which you have control. With that in mind, "I 'can't' write more than X number of minutes or hours per day" is not valid. As my mom used to say, "'Can't' never did a damn thing." The reality is that you "choose" to write only X number of minutes or hours per day.

How you use your disposable time is strictly up to you. I'll be back soon with how I plan to use mine for the upcoming year beginning on January 1, 2021.

And by the way, you don't have to be limited by a calendar either. A new 365-day time period begins with each dawn. I fully expect to begin one novel in 2020 and finish it in 2021.

An Open Note to Loyd J. (in case he drops by), who commented on a recent TKZ post:

Loyd, it's all math. I suggest determining how many publishable words of fiction you can write in an hour, then multiply that by how many disposable hours (time not spent at a job or other necessary pursuits) you can spend at the keyboard on a given day to get your daily word count. Then, to set a goal that will make you stretch a little, add 10%.

I wrote 8 novels this year, and that included 4 months (May to August) during which I wrote hardly a word of fiction. My own daily writing goal is 3000 words per day. Again, these are publishable words of fiction, not sloppy, stream-of-consciousness, just-get-it-on-paper words. I allow the characters to tell the story that they, not I, are living.

And I don't allow anyone else into my work. After I finish each session, I take a break, then read back over what I've written when I return. As I read, I allow myself to touch the writing, correcting any errors that pop out at me. When the novel is finished, I send it to a first reader who catches a few things I missed (wrong words, misspellings, and inconsistencies) and then I publish and distribute it.

My work enjoys brisk sales and a worldwide audience. I recently finished my 53rd novel.

A Strange Phenomenon

The truth of the statement Every Novel Is Different never ceases to amaze me. Yesterday, with a fairly good writing day of just over 4000 words I think *The Journey Home: Part 2* is finished. I'm calling it done. But before I send it out to my first readers (they need a break anyway) I'm going to read over the whole thing again.

I was writing along fine when I realized the story seemed to be slogging, slowing down. It felt sluggish, like it didn't matter. I've experienced that before. I wrote past the end of one of my early Wes Crowley novels by about 10 words. Would that it were always that easy.

I took the warning to heart, stopped writing, and scrolled back up to read the last few chapters. And realized I'd written past the ending.

As I've said many times, if you trust the characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living, they will always lead you through to the end. However, you won't always immediately *recognize* that end. When that happens, the writing will become sluggish, and the story will seem to slow and grind to a halt. Because the characters are trying to tell you something.

That's when it's a good idea to check in with yourself. Again, trust the characters. Scroll back a few sentences or paragraphs or pages and Just Read. The ending will become obvious.

And again, the "ending" is not the final climax of your story. The ending is the resolution that occurs immediately after the final climax or final scene.

But as I mentioned above, I'm going to read through the whole thing again. I'll Just Read (creative mind) and see whether it feels like anything is missing from the story. (I would notice that in a book by another author too, if something was missing.) I'm 99% confident I won't find anything.

Note to my first readers: I'm aware it's the holiday season, so when I do send you this thing, there's no requirement that you get it back to me quickly. I've had the joy of writing it. Publishing it is a chore I will happily delay until I receive your comments.

I still have room for more first readers. If you're interested, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "43 Embarrassing Grammar Mistakes Even Smart People Make" at <https://www.inc.com/christina-desmarais/43-embarrassing-phrases-even-smart-people-use.html>. Some great stuff here.

See "10 Markets for Literary Fiction" at <https://www.authorspublish.com/10-markets-for-literary-fiction-in-december-2020/>.

See "Year of Changes" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/year-of-changes/>. Some food for thought, some same old stuff.

See "The Talented Ms. Calloway" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-talented-ms-calloway/>. Preposterous. Especially see PG's take.

See "Nine Months of Covid" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/nine-months-of-covid/>. See PG's take. And I strongly recommend against using Booklocker or any other subsidy publisher.

See "Retention and Seduction: The Art of the Chapter Break" at <https://writerunboxed.com/2020/12/10/retention-and-seduction-the-art-of-the-chapter-break/>. Cliffhanger at the end of every major scene or chapter, hook at the opening of the next. Always.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1330 words

Writing of *The Journey Home: Part 2* (novel)

Day 10... 4264 words. Total words to date..... 45042

Day 11... 5020 words. Total words to date..... 50062

Day 12... 4381 words. Total words to date..... 54443 (done)

Total fiction words for December..... 49423

Total fiction words for the year..... 501954

Total nonfiction words for December... 75400

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 192750

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 688993

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 8

Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 53

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Dean Wesley Smith, Inc.com](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#), [writerunboxed.com](#)

The Journal: Setting Goals for 2021

December 12, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Topic: Setting Goals for 2021
- * *The Journey Home: Part 2* is finished
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Aim to write the best that you can every day, and write above that.” Joe Hartlaub

“Thinking is the great enemy of perfection.” Constantine the Great, Roman Emperor

Topic: Setting Goals for 2021

First (again) to get us all on the same page, there is difference between Goals and Dreams. Both are achievable, but Goals are within your direct control. Dreams are not.

In many of the “setting goals” posts I’ve read recently, many other writers spout that same sage advice, but oddly, few seem to actually understand it. Like another writer acquaintance who wrote, “What’s the worst thing that could happen if it doesn’t work?” after having gone dumpster-diving in the “waiting” world of the 1980s as if that’s a necessary reality today. It just isn’t so.

If she applied that same sentiment to her actual writing (and to self-publishing), she would have a lot more books out and probably be a lot more successful than she already is. Her own quote flashed right over her head. Sigh.

But to goals —

For several years, I’ve had a daily goal of 3,000 publishable words of fiction per day. That’s an average over a 30-day month. The actual writing would take place only on writing days. Non-writing days would necessarily pull the average down. So if I *averaged* 3000 words per day over a month, that would mean I wrote more than 3000 words on at least some of my writing days. ***The average is what matters.***

Had I written every day and accomplished that goal exactly, I would write 90,000 words in a month and 1,080,000 words in a year. Yet my total over even my best year (2016) was only 702,838 words, for a daily average of only 1925 words. Two hours of work. Seriously. And that year, I experienced more than one month of writing over 100,000 words. And if I remember correctly, I wrote in every month that year.

In a typical “good” month, I averaged only around 2600 words of fiction per day. Again, spread over the entire month, including non-writing days.

You might think these numbers indicate that my daily word-count goal is fine where it is, or that I should even lower it a bit, say to 2500 or even 2000 words per day. After all, that would be easier to reach on a daily basis. But that’s misleading.

A goal is something to strive for, something that drives me to the keyboard. It’s something to which I am confident I can repeatedly come close but which I am also certain I will seldom reach. If I routinely hit my daily word count — if reaching it becomes easy — my goal is too low.

And of course, given that I expect to fall at least a little short of my correctly set daily goal (again, on average), a goal that’s too low will pull down my monthly and annual totals too.

Given that I haven’t hit my annual goal of over a million words in a year yet, and given that my daily word-count goal has remained the same for over 6 years, I have to assume that goal isn’t working for me. But it isn’t too high. It’s too low. It isn’t making me reach enough.

I could simply leave the goal as-is and “be determined” to reach it. But that’s business as usual and thus far it hasn’t worked.

So I’m raising my annual goal (what I’d like to produce) from 1,080,000 words of publishable fiction per annum (3,000 WPD x 30 days x 12 months, which leaves 5 days to spare) to 1,440,000 words of publishable fiction per annum. Which means I’m raising my daily word-count goal to 4,000 words per day. Completely attainable for me. And if it seems “off” as I continue into the year, I can always adjust it up to 4500 or 5000 words per day or down to 3500.

But if I hit 4,000 words per day for a month, I will have written 120,000 words in a month. For those still locked into traditional publishing’s thinking of what constitutes a novel, that’s still 12 novels on a year. For me, it would be more like 24. But more on novel lengths later.

Even if I fall a little short of my goal, maybe I’ll still reach that magic 1,000,000 words of fiction in a year. So that is both the reason for and the sum-total of my goals: 4,000 words of publishable fiction or more per writing day.

My short-term goal is to begin and complete one more novel before 2020 is out. Completely achievable, given three factors: 1) it typically takes me around 2 weeks to write a 50,000 word novel; 2) the novels in my current series seem to resolve in around 45,000 to 55,000 words; and 3) there are currently almost 3 weeks (20 days, counting today) left in the month. And my characters in *The Ark* are currently in a story-telling fervor. Woohoo! (grin)

I won’t set a particular goal for the number of novels I’ll write in the upcoming year because a “novel” isn’t a set quantity. Also, outside of a particular series or genre, the length of novels varies greatly. Novels range anywhere from 25,000 words up to over 100,000. I’ll just say that I would like, as a kind of vague goal, to write 15 novels in 2021. I expect to exceed that, especially if I continue writing the current series for the whole year, which is entirely possible because of the nature of the series. That nature is one overall setting with hundreds of smaller settings inside it and a cast of thousands of characters from numerous cultures who are necessarily and constantly changing.

But that series aside, if I were to reach my new daily word count exactly every day for 360 days (for example), that would be fourteen 100,000 word novels or twenty-eight 50,000 word novels or fifty-six 25,000 word novels. (Many “famous” novels are in this range.) See what I mean about novels not being a set quantity?

If you’re looking for a recommendation, I recommend the same for you. To set your goals, start at the ground and work up:

1. Figure out how many words of publishable fiction you can realistically write in an hour. (For example, mine is 800 to 1200 words per hour or 13 to 20 words per minute, either of which leaves plenty of time for staring off into space.)
2. After you know how many words you can write per hour, multiply that number by the number of hours or partial hours during which you can realistically write in a day. Then,
3. to create your goal (to make you reach) add 10%. Why? To frighten yourself just a little.

I know 4000 words per day is a good goal for me because I'm a little frightened at the thought of it. If it didn't scare me a little, it wouldn't be a good goal.

Finally, as you set your goals for 2021, don't forget to set learning and practice goals also. Those can be vague or specific. My vague learning goal for 2021 is to at last learn to lay out paper books and cover spreads.

My own next "big" specific writing technique to learn, which I will practice in the upcoming 4th and successive novels of the FOH series, is writing an entire novel in 1st person POV but with multiple viewpoint characters — without confusing the reader.

One more note: Never let your goals affect your stories, by which I mean, don't let your goals add pressure to your stories. Stories are not important. They are only a few minutes' or hours' entertainment. Nothing more. As I keep trying to drive home, if you're a writer, **WHAT** you write is not important. **THAT** you write is what matters. Hence the need to set goals.

As I wrote to a friend yesterday, "None of my goals affect my stories. And the only way they affect my writing is to drive me to the keyboard." Wish me luck, as I do you. See you on the other side.

The Journey Home: Part 2 is finished

I was able to first-read my own novel yesterday and allowed myself to touch it here and there as I went in one huge cycling session. I'm pleased to report it's a good story. There was (as my characters had tried to tell me) one significant bit of missing information, a tiny slice of a scene that added maybe 50 or 100 words to the story but made a huge difference overall.

I'm glad I obeyed that little voice (my characters) when they told me something was "maybe missing" then sent me on a scavenger hunt to wait for it to pop around a corner as I read.

What a wonderful job I have! I'm a very lucky guy. And this morning, after I post this, I'll send Book 3 of the Future of Humanity (FOH) series, to my first readers. Then I'll start writing Book 4.

To those first readers: Don't feel overwhelmed. It's the holiday season and some of you are writing your own books. If you won't have time to devote to reading this, just let me know that. If you will have time, no rush at all.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Bob Dylan's Catalog Sale..." at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/bob-dylans-catalog-sale-highlights-a-tax-advantage-for-songwriters/>.

See "Getting Through It" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/12/getting-through-it.html>.

See “What happened to the ebook revolution?” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/what-happened-to-the-ebook-revolution/>. Be sure to see PG’s take.

See “Working On A Story...” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/working-on-a-story/>. Dean’s selling off some digests if you’re interested.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1640 words

Writing of **The Journey Home: Part 3** (Book 4 of the FOH series)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for December..... 49423
Total fiction words for the year..... 501954
Total nonfiction words for December... 9180
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 194390
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 696344

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 8
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 53
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Goals for 2021](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Setting Goals](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Adapted from Peter de Vries

December 13, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Free lecture on inspiration
- * My son and his beautiful girl Cathy
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“[T]he next time a traditionally-published author or agent talks about Amazon ruining the book business, some might be tempted to say that the New York book business deserves to be ruined.”
The Passive Guy

From AuthorsPublish.com, “You are invited to attend a free lecture and Q&A session with New York Times Bestselling Author Emily Colin. She’ll be giving a talk on “Taming the Wild Beast: Making Inspiration Work for You.

“The lecture is completely free. There will be an audience Q&A session at the end. Register to Attend the Free Lecture at <https://www.authorspublish.com/free-author-lecture-making-inspiration-work-for-you/>.”

Adapted from Peter de Vries, the following is in the signature of every email I send out: “I only write when I’m inspired. So I see to it that I’m inspired every morning at 3 a.m.”

My son and his beautiful girl Cathy were visiting this weekend, so on Saturday (Day 1) I wrote only a little over 1500 words on the novel, but it’s a start. (grin) And per usual, the story is running. I love this series.

Today, back to the novel.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “On Using Humor in Fiction” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/12/on-using-humor-in-fiction.html>.

See “The Unbuilt Suburb” at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/california-city-unbuilt-suburb>. Seems like an apt setting for a series of ghost stories set in a particular ghost town.

See “OPEN LETTER: Revocation – How authors and performers...” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/open-letter-revocation-how-authors-and-performers-can-reclaim-their-copyrights/>.

See “Reversion Rights Resource Page” at <https://www.create.ac.uk/reversion-rights-resource-page/>.

See “What Really Became of Captain Kidd’s Buried Treasure?” at <http://dyingwords.net/what-really-became-of-captain-kidds-buried-treasure/>.

See “I Survived An Encounter With...” at <https://leelofland.com/i-survived-an-encounter-with-the-briley-brothers-2/>.

See “Holiday Gifts: Crime Writer Research Books, and More” at <https://leelofland.com/holiday-gifts-crime-writer-research-books-and-more/>. For a crime writer, maybe a good investment. Certainly less expensive than a workshop or conference covering the same topic.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 300 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 3 (novel)

Day 1..... 1568 words. Total words to date..... 1568

Total fiction words for December..... 50991
Total fiction words for the year..... 503522
Total nonfiction words for December... 9480
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 194690
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 698212

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 8
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 53
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Atlas Obscura](#), [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [DyingWords.net](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: A Light Discourse on Punctuation

December 14, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Topic: A Light Discourse on Punctuation
- * A couple of fairly slow days
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

This is one of the greatest quotes on creativity I've ever encountered. It goes to the very heart of writing:

“Recognizing that people’s reactions don’t belong to you is the only sane way to create. If people enjoy what you’ve created, terrific. If people ignore what you’ve created, too bad. If people misunderstand what you’ve created, don’t sweat it. And what if people absolutely hate what you’ve created? What if people attack you with savage vitriol, and insult your intelligence, and malign your motives, and drag your good name through the mud? Just smile sweetly and suggest — as politely as you possibly can — that they go make their own f***ing art. Then stubbornly continue making yours.” Elizabeth Gilbert (Quote appeared in Farnam Street newsletter, <https://farnamstreetblog.com>)

Topic: A Light Discourse on Punctuation

Writers often overlook the importance of punctuation as a tool in their writerly toolbox. As I mention in [Punctuation for Writers \(2nd Edition\)](#), we are all taught how to use the various marks of punctuation in school, but we aren’t taught *why* to use those marks—why they have the effect they have—or how to use them as writers.

In other words, we’re taught how to respond to punctuation as a reader, not how to actively use it as writers. In fact, I don’t know even of any writer’s course that teaches that valuable skill. In fact, I wrote that book back in the 1990s to fill a void.

Punctuation is a tool to be actively wielded, not simply a small black mark to insert when you want the reader to “take a breath.” And other inane “rules” about regarding the use of punctuation, most of them negative.

For example, “Semicolons have no place in fiction.” Well, of course they do. But that is a very specific place, a very specific usage. The use is seldom necessary, but it (like all the other marks of punctuation) exists in order to create a certain very specific effect in the reader. So does the em dash, though writers are often told to avoid em dashes “like the plague.” Usually just before the instructor mutters something about also avoiding the use of cliché.

The wise writer actively uses punctuation to direct the reading of his or her work. In other words, you use punctuation to control the reader as he moves through your story, to more closely tie the reader’s emotional response to the character’s emotions in the scene. With the appropriate use of punctuation, you can actually create or punch-up that emotion and enhance the suspense in a sentence or scene.

Interruption, as conveyed by the use of an em dash (or “long dash” but NEVER an ellipsis), is a very strong technique for conveying character emotions and connecting them to reader emotions. An emotionally invested reader is a reader who is irretrievably engaged in your story.

This morning, as I returned to my current novel to cycle through yesterday’s last scene, the character added “can” as the last word of a sentence of dialogue just before the same character interrupted himself. And when that happened, I came over here to write this.

Here are the two versions of a quiet exchange between two characters who are standing near an electronic console and discussing that console. There are a couple of dozen other people at other consoles throughout the room:

“I’m just saying, it never did this to you, right?”

“Right.”

Varney frowned. “So what’s different? Other than me being at the station instead of you, I mean?”

“Nothing as far as I — Wait.” He cupped his hand over his mouth. “The navigation computers—one of ’em’s new, right?”

“I’m just saying, it never did this to you, right?”

“Right.”

Varney frowned. “So what’s different? Other than me being at the station instead of you, I mean?”

“Nothing as far as I can — Wait.” He cupped his hand over his mouth. “The navigation computers—one of ’em’s new, right?”

In the first version, the character might have said almost anything after “I” in “Nothing as far as I — ”

In the second version, the character was a little more specific with “Nothing as far as I can — ” In other words, he more closely controlled how the reader would fill in the blank indicated by the em dash.

Also, the “as far as” forces the reader to fill-in a one-word thought, such as “see” or “tell.” Omit the “as far as” and the reader is more likely to go with something like “think of.” But the point is, you, the writer, are controlling the reader, even the reader’s emotions and level of suspense.

You’re leading the reader through your work, making him stop where you want him to stop and for the length of time you want him to stop. And you’re doing it all with the tiny black marks we call punctuation.

Since I mentioned that the reader will stop for the length of time you dictate, just for grins here’s a quick overview:

Punctuation that will force a long pause in the reader are the period, the question mark, the colon and the exclamation mark.

Punctuation that will force a medium-length pause in the reader are the semicolon and the em dash.

The only short-pause punctuation is the comma (and in poetry, the end of the poetic line).

And the aforementioned ellipsis (...) creates a pause the length of which is determined by the context.

Diacritical marks (I call these “spelling punctuation”) do not create a pause at all. They go unseen unless they’re out of place (grin) and they aid in pronunciation. Those are the hyphen, the apostrophe, quotation marks, parens, and the en dash.

For comparison, here’s a hyphen, an en dash and an em dash: – – —

A couple of fairly slow days to start the current novel, but that’s par for the course, really. Now that I’ve gotten the minor discourse above out of my system, I move back to the writing ‘puter and see what today holds.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “How to Grow Your Mailing List with Ebook Presales” at <https://www.sfwriters.org/how-to-grow-your-mailing-list-with-ebook-presales/>.

See “Quanta Magazine” at <https://www.quantamagazine.org/>. If you’re interested in all things science (or writing SF) I recommend a free subscription to their newsletter.

See “An Idea For Balance for the New Year” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/an-idea-for-balance-for-the-new-year/>.

See “Tips to Create a Series Bible” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/12/tips-to-create-a-series-bible.html>. Wow is this ever an important post!

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1100 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 3 (novel)

Day 1..... 1568 words. Total words to date..... 1568

Day 2..... 2963 words. Total words to date..... 4531

Total fiction words for December..... 53954

Total fiction words for the year..... 506485

Total nonfiction words for December... 10580

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 195790

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 702275

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 8

Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 53

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Quanta Magazine](#), [SFWriters.org](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Setting a “Floor” Goal

December 15, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Setting a “Floor” Goal
- * Be sure to see
- * After the novel sputtered
- * Remember that you
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“No tears in the writer, no tears in the reader. No surprise in the writer, no surprise in the reader.”
Robert Frost

“Despite the number of writing skills we’ve mastered, if we’re not excited about the story we’re telling, it’s going to show.” Lori Freeland

Topic: Setting a “Floor” Goal

After reading Dean Wesley Smith’s post on the personal goals he set for himself for 2021 — including what he called a “floor” — I almost decided to also set a floor goal for my own fiction writing. Seems like a good idea, if only to establish a streak. As I can readily attest, streaks have massive power.

Dean and I both use word-count goals but we use them differently. Dean counts all “consumable” words, meaning fiction and nonfiction words that make him money, in his overall annual count.

Although I also keep track of nonfiction (this blog, sometimes my other blog, and any nonfiction books I write), when it comes to specific goals, I count only my fiction. I don’t set specific goals for my nonfiction (I don’t think Dean does either), and I don’t count my nonfiction toward my annual goal.

So my daily word-count goal for fiction remains 4,000 words per writing day. As I wrote at the beginning, I also considered setting a “floor” for my fiction, but I decided against it. Why?

Because I know there will be nonwriting days in my life, and if I missed writing at least my floor even on so-called nonwriting days, it would bring me down emotionally. Hey, a streak is only a streak as long as it's, you know, a streak. Right? Right?

If I were going to set a solid floor — meaning a word count I wanted to hit even on nonwriting days in order to create and continue a streak — it would be 1000 words per day. That's one hour or less of writing.

But I know me. My reasoning, if I wrote 1000 words, would be “Then this must be a writing day, so I need to either hit 4,000 words or miss my goal.” (grin) For me personally, it's less annoying to strive for 4000 words and miss (as I have the last two days) than to strive to write 1000 words per day every day and miss even one of those.

That being said, your experience might vary. Setting a floor seems like a very good idea to me, especially if you're currently having trouble getting yourself to your keyboard. Setting a floor and aiming for a streak will almost certainly help.

And your floor doesn't have to conform to anyone else's. It can be 250 words, or 500. Trust me, it will be more than gratifying to you to look back on a week or month (or year) and know you wrote fiction every day.

In case you missed Dean's post yesterday, I included it in today's “Of Interest” as well.

Be sure to see Bill Sinclair's informative comments at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-journal-a-light-discourse-on-punctuation/#comments>. Who knew I had a reader in Barcelona?

After the novel sputtered along at the beginning, it and I am back on track and building steam.

I even enjoyed a moment during yesterday's writing session when I had an epiphany of sorts, or maybe a remembrance of something I had forgotten. Or it might have been a realization lurking in the back corner of my mind until my ongoing word count clicked-over to some magic cumulative number.

I won't discuss it here until I've had time to practice it (creative mind) and ruminate on it (conscious mind) but it was a big thing, an important technique. The takeaway is that practice in this craft of ours is essential: Writing is practice and practice is learning.

Remember that you can always email me with questions, answers, or discussions at harveystanbrough@gmail.com. I get to those about as soon as I get to comments left on the site.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “John le Carré obituary” at <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/dec/14/john-le-carre-obituary>. Thanks to Bill S. for the tip.

See “An Idea For Balance for the New Year” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/an-idea-for-balance-for-the-new-year/>.

See “27 Specialized Manuscript Publishers” at <https://www.authorspublish.com/27-specialized-manuscript-publishers-that-accept-direct-submissions/>.

See “318R Writing Class by David Farland” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/318r-writing-workshop/>. An opportunity.

See “Staging the Scene” at <https://writerunboxed.com/2020/12/14/staging-the-scene/>. Thanks to The Passive Guy. I do the same thing, albeit in a different way.

See “5 Things Every Writer Needs” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/5-things-every-writer-needs/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 770 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 3 (novel)

Day 1..... 1568 words. Total words to date..... 1568

Day 2..... 2963 words. Total words to date..... 4531

Day 3..... 4652 words. Total words to date..... 9183

Total fiction words for December..... 58606

Total fiction words for the year..... 511137

Total nonfiction words for December... 11350

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 196560

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 707697

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 8

Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 53

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214

Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [John LeCarre](#), [The Guardian](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#), [Writer Unboxed](#)

The Journal: On Comma Use

December 16, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * A writer friend in South Africa
- * A great new information site
- * Topic: On Comma Use
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“B&N's new CEO, James Daunt, is designing the company's phoenix-like rise from its ashes on the direct involvement of on-the-ground booksellers in the decisions on what books individual stores should stock. You know, the way booksellers used to do it before the superstores ran them out of business.” John Gilstrap

“[A]s the [book] business fluctuates and expands and contracts, the one constant to all of it ... is the public's insatiable desire for good stories, well told.” John Gilstrap

“Optimist: Someone who figures that taking a step backward after taking a step forward is not a disaster, it's more like a cha-cha.” Robert Brault (Thanks to The Passive Voice. There are several other good quotes there in today's edition.)

A writer friend and Journal reader in South Africa, Aldred G., pointed out this quote from the Decembr 15 edition of the Journal:

“[I]f you're a writer, WHAT you write is not important. [It's only a few minutes' or hours' entertainment for the reader.] THAT you write is what matters.”

Yes, I added a little to the quote to put it in context.

I was glad Aldred found ot useful. Dean Wesley Smith tried for over a year to teach me that. As I wrote in my response to Aldred, the moment the truth of that thought finally struck me probably was the major epiphany of my life as a writer. It's what actually made me a writer.

The other major truth that Dean tried to teach me and that finally sunk-in was that Every Word of a story should be filtered through the POV character's physical and emotional senses and be delivered by the characters, not the writer. Anything the writer adds is excess.

Or, put another way, “Every Word in a story comes from one character or another. In a good story, nothing comes from the writer.” Ponder that thought in either form. Consider it, turn it over in your mind. When you get it, the quality of your stories will improve dramatically.

I stumbled across a great information site. American English is laden with expressions like so and so has an “axe to grind” or such and such “fits the bill.” If you're ever uncertain whether an expression you want to use is correct, visit “Well-Known Expressions” at <https://www.bookbrowse.com/expressions/>.

While I was writing my current novel, one of my characters said another character might “fit the bill.” But I wondered whether that was correct or whether the real expression was “fill the bill.” Turns out both are correct. (grin)

This is a fun site to browse Just Because.

Topic: On Comma Use

If you're a writer, and if you use punctuation when you write, and if you want to learn to use punctuation purposefully as a tool to direct the reading of your work, I really recommend you buy an ebook or paper copy of [Punctuation for Writers \(2nd edition\)](#) by yours truly. Unlike Strunk & White, PFW doesn't regurgitate the rules. Instead it actually explains punctuation and why it works as it does. Okay, that's enough soap-box time.

PFW started as a 16 page handout titled “The Rules as They Should Read” when I was teaching grunt English in college in regular, GED, and prep classes.

In those 16 pages, I covered everything you need to know about punctuation, and quite a bit about grammar on top of that. By contrast, the Harbrace College Handbook contained 19 pages of rules just for comma use.

Ridiculous.

As I used to tell my students, if you learn five simple rules. you'll be right 99% of the time on any test. You'll also be better understood and less confusing as a fiction writer.

Here are the five rules of comma use, straight out of Punctuation for Writers:

1. Never place a comma between a subject and its verb or between a verb and its object. (Realize that a subject may have more than one verb and that a verb may have more than one object.)
2. When a subordinate clause introduces an independent clause, separate the two with a comma. (If you aren't sure about clauses, Rule 2 is an example of itself, as is this explanation.)
3. Do not use a comma to separate the clauses when a subordinate clause follows an independent clause. (In Rule 3, “Do not use a comma” is an independent clause and the remainder is a dependent clause. This rule, again, is an example of itself.)
4. Use a comma before the appropriate coordinating conjunction to join two related sentences. (The coordinating conjunctions are for, and, nor, but, or, yet, and so. Remember the acronym FANBOYS.) By the way, you very seldom need a comma AFTER a coordinating conjunction.

As an aside, you can replace any correctly used comma-coordinating conjunction pair with a semicolon. In both cases, a medium-length pause is created, the former by the comma-coordinating conjunction pair, and the second by the semicolon. Much more on the semicolon in a future topic.

As another aside, tiny as the comma is, you cannot read-through one that's misplaced. You have to go back mentally, remove the comma, and re-read the sentence without it. But what writer wants to interrupt an otherwise flowing storyline in that way?

5. Trite as it sounds, when you are in doubt about whether to use a comma, leave it out. Believe it or not, most comma problems arise from misuse of commas, not their omission.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "The Trouble with 'Was'" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/david-farlands-writing-tips-the-trouble-with-was/>. Use it when you need it. The only way to describe a state of being is with a state-of-being verb. That said, use SOB verbs only for that reason.

See "What A Difference A Quarter Century Makes" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/12/what-a-difference-a-quarter-century-makes.html>.

See "KDP Select All-Stars" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/kdp-select-all-stars/>. I do NOT recommend putting all your eggs in any one exclusive basket, including KDP Select. I include this link for those who disagree.

See "The Madness of Spies" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-madness-of-spys/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1010 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 3 (novel)

Day 1..... 1568 words. Total words to date..... 1568
Day 2..... 2963 words. Total words to date..... 4531
Day 3..... 4652 words. Total words to date..... 9183
Day 4..... 5506 words. Total words to date..... 14689

Total fiction words for December..... 64112
Total fiction words for the year..... 516643
Total nonfiction words for December... 12360
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 197570
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 714213

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 8
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 53
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Comma Use](#), [David Farland](#), [John Gilstrap](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: A Quick Note on Semicolons

December 17, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * A new first reader
- * Topic: A Quick Note on Semicolons
- * The Numbers

I'm pleased to report I've added one new first reader, Tim W. in Virginia. Welcome aboard, Tim. And thanks!

I'm still looking to add more female first readers. If you're interested (male or female), email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

I like to get feedback from both a male and a female reader when possible. As politically incorrect as it is to say so, it's been my experience that they have different sensibilities; therefore, different things pop out at them as they read.

I send every novel I write to every first reader, more as a reward than anything. But not all of them read everything I send, which is fine.

For one thing, I don't want to overwhelm anyone. For another, not everything I write is in everyone's wheelhouse. So I ask only that if a first reader doesn't have either the time or desire to read something I send, they email me a quick note to let me know that.

For any Pro Writers Writing contributors out there (or anyone else, I suppose) if you want to copy/paste anything from the site, you should do so soon. I received a note from the domain registrar a day or two ago that the domain will expire soon. You can find the site at <https://prowriterswriting.com>. What a grand experiment it was.

Topic: A Quick Note on Semicolons

Almost everyone I've ever heard speak about semicolons say they have no place in fiction. (These are often the same folks who hawk other absolutes, such as "Never use an exclamation point in fiction!" or "Remove all instances of the word 'had' or "If you find an adverb, kill it." And then, of course, there is a whole herd of non-thinkers who believe any word that ends with "ly" is an adverb. But I digress.

One publisher of a (then) major but long-since defunct writing magazine even wrote one time that there was no logical reason for the semicolon since it's interchangeable with the comma. I'm sorry, truly, but that's one of the most ignorant statements I've ever heard from a writing professional.

All of that is crap, and in my opinion, all of it is rooted in fear. Many of us fear spiders because they have eight legs, which (one) makes them appear to be the alien stuff of nightmares and (two) is a feature for which we can't quite grasp a reason.

I'm not saying you should bathe in semicolons. I'm only saying in knowledge is power. Once you understand the specific but subliminal effect a semicolon has on the reader, it's one more tool you can add to your writerly toolbox. And you can never have too many tools in your toolbox. Here are the ways, straight out of any English Composition primer, you can use a semicolon in your fiction:

1. *Between two complete independent clauses* to indicate a cause-and-effect relationship.

Tom skipped town three days ago; did I tell you Mary's pregnant?

Hmm. Does this seem to imply that Tom skipped town because Mary's pregnant? Yup. That's because the semicolon (only a medium-length pause) ties the two sentences together in a undeniable cause-and-effect relationship.

Of course, you could also write

Tom skipped town three days ago, and did I tell you Mary's pregnant?

Or

Tom skipped town three days ago. Did I tell you Mary's pregnant?

All three examples contain the same information, but only the first example ties the two together inextricably. Note that you can also use this to create misdirection. But if you do so, do so in dialogue so you can blame the misdirection on the character later.

This is why I wrote the other day in my topic about commas that the semicolon can replace any combination of a comma and a coordinating conjunction, which most often should also connect two independent clauses. (The CCs are for, and, nor, but, or, yet, and so.) Of course, you want to do that only when you want to indicate a cause-and-effect relationship.

A comma plus any of those words sets up a medium-length pause. The semicolon also sets up a medium-length pause but one that carries an implication.

2. *Between major items of a list* that is further separated by commas. I used this one in my current novel just a day or two ago. Here's the passage:

With the adjutant gone, there were only four: the Communications and Translation Officer (CTO), Captain Matsudo; the Navigation Officer (NavO), Lt. Armand Chazinski; and the two pilots, Ensigns William T. “Bill” Chandler and Tamara Collins.

Of course, I could have bowed to the “rule” to “never” use a semicolon in fiction. I could have written

With the adjutant gone, there were only four: Communications and Translation Officer (CTO) Captain Matsudo, Navigation Officer (NavO) Lt. Armand Chazinski, and the two pilots, Ensigns William T. “Bill” Chandler and Tamara Collins.

And yes, other constructions are possible. But using the semicolons to separate the major items forces the reader to slow down just a bit, which in turn emphasizes each of the first two characters and his or her billet on the bridge.

Why does that matter? Well, because I write into the dark, I can’t really say for sure. I can only assume those characters want to stand out. Perhaps later in the story somewhere one or both of them will do something that will make the reader glad he remembered the name and billet.

But the point is, if I didn’t know the effect of the semicolon on the reader — if I simply scratched semicolons off my list of tools and forged ahead blindly without them because some hack in the past said they have no place in fiction — I would have robbed myself of a choice.

Read both examples again. Both contain exactly the same information, yet you won’t be able to read through the first example as quickly as you read through the second. (Unless you force yourself to, in which case you will mentally remove the semicolons.)

And again, that’s the point. Whether you “prefer” the first example or the second or some other version, using the semicolon creates a different effect in the reader.

With your punctuation or lack thereof, you direct and control the reading of your work. Since that’s a rock-solid truth, you might as well do so intentionally.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Addicted “to,” not “with”” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/addicted-to-not-with/>.

See “Is Your Writer’s Block Really Writer’s Indecision?” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/is-your-writers-block-really-writers-indecision/>. No, it’s writer’s fear.

See “5 Ways to Banish Overused Words” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/5-ways-to-banish-overused-words/>. Just a reminder that I do not always agree with what I link to here.

See “What the Color ‘Haint Blue’ Means to the Descendants of Enslaved Africans” at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/what-haint-blue-means-to-descendants-enslaved-africans>. Actually, I heard about the powers of “haint blue” from my grandmother when I was a child.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1150 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 3 (novel)

Day 1..... 1568 words. Total words to date..... 1568
Day 2..... 2963 words. Total words to date..... 4531
Day 3..... 4652 words. Total words to date..... 9183
Day 4..... 5506 words. Total words to date..... 14689
Day 5..... 4107 words. Total words to date..... 18796

Total fiction words for December..... 68219
Total fiction words for the year..... 520750
Total nonfiction words for December... 13510
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 198720
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 719470

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 8
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 53
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Atlas Obscura](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [punctuation](#), [Semicolons](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Quotes and “Of Interest”

December 18, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Nothing much
- * For those who are interested
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“I realized that coming up with writing topics did not require anything greater than an attunement to the everyday things around me....” Christine M. Estel

“My barn having burned down, I can now see the moon.” Mizuta Masahide

“The Delete button on PG’s keyboard will never gather dust, but the scope of its domain will remain limited to characters, words, the odd paragraph and an occasional draft version of a finished document saved in at least two other places.” The Passive Guy

“**Nothing much to talk about today,**” he said, much to the surprise and relief of everyone in the room.

Enjoy the quotes and the “Of Interest” section below.

For those who are interested, the novel is coming along well. Yesterday was actually a bit of a rough writing day but I employed Keep Coming Back (one of my mantras) and eventually discovered another one: Don’t Stop While the Words Are Coming.

At what I thought was the end of the day, I tallied my word count and was pleased to see I’d written over 4600 words. But as I was adding that to my Journal template over on the business computer, a character said something in my head. So I swiveled back to the writing ‘puter and wrote it down. When I looked up again, my tally had increased to just over 5000 words.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Simple Ways to Generate New Writing Ideas” at <https://www.authorspublish.com/simple-ways-to-generate-new-writing-ideas/>. I’m always amazed that not having story ideas readily available is a thing.

See “Putting Up New Workshops” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/putting-up-new-workshops/>. Dean says hold off on signing up for any new workshops until Jan 26 when they’ll start a new half-price sale.

See “Wreckage (2020 in Review)” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/wreckage-2020-in-review/>. That’s one perspective. Life (and writing) is what you make it.

See “Murphy’s Law and Its Offspring” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/murphys-law-and-its-offspring/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 340 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 3 (novel)

Day 1..... 1568 words. Total words to date..... 1568
Day 2..... 2963 words. Total words to date..... 4531
Day 3..... 4652 words. Total words to date..... 9183
Day 4..... 5506 words. Total words to date..... 14689
Day 5..... 4107 words. Total words to date..... 18796
Day 6..... 5001 words. Total words to date..... 23797

Total fiction words for December..... 73220
Total fiction words for the year..... 525751
Total nonfiction words for December... 13850
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 199060
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 724811

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 8
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 53
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: The “Christmas Star”

December 19, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * The “Christmas Star”
- * Paper
- * A quick apology
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“A lot of what has happened this year — if it were a novel, I would say that it had a little too much plot,” Simon & Schuster CEO Jonathan Karp

Anyone who says things like ‘it had a little too much plot’ doesn’t know anything about writing and should shut up and go back to selling books. Or something less important.

“PG notes that the author of the OP managed to write the entire summary of US publishing in 2020 without mentioning ebooks. Dead trees and more dead trees, as far into the future as the traditional publishing eye can see.” The Passive Guy

We saw the “Christmas Star” last night, Jupiter and Saturn aligned only 1/4” or so apart in the west/southwest sky maybe a hand’s width above the horizon. This was maybe 10 minutes after sundown. Looked at it with the binocs. Pretty cool knowing that alignment hasn’t happened for 800 years. It will happen again in only 80 years, but I’m a grouch and have opted out of viewing that one.

Just a thought... Why the hell do people who protest everything from the carbon gasses emitted by the head of a match to the global rainforests being cut down to make harpoons with which to spear whales still print-out on paper everything they write for each other to read? Not to mention recommending publishing to paper books, etc.

Sorry. Not in the best of moods. Fortunately, I’m a writer, so I can escape the upside-down bizarro world currently engulfing this stupid, silly little blue-marble space ship by running to my novel for solace.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “How To Write A Romcom” at <http://booksbywomen.org/how-to-write-a-romcom/>. (Thanks to PG.)

See “Bookstore Sales Post Another Decline in October” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/bookstore-sales-post-another-decline-in-october/>. Um, it’s the 2000s. Open an online store to supplement your bricks-and-mortar store and advertise the hell out of it.

See “The New History of the Milky Way” at <https://www.quantamagazine.org/the-new-history-of-the-milky-way-20201215/>. Story ideas?

See “Mystery Monoliths” at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/2020-mystery-monoliths>. Story ideas?

See “The Wooden Man” at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/the-wooden-man>. Story ideas?

The Numbers

The Journal..... 370 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 3 (novel)

Day 1..... 1568 words. Total words to date..... 1568
Day 2..... 2963 words. Total words to date..... 4531
Day 3..... 4652 words. Total words to date..... 9183
Day 4..... 5506 words. Total words to date..... 14689
Day 5..... 4107 words. Total words to date..... 18796
Day 6..... 5001 words. Total words to date..... 23797
Day 7..... 4256 words. Total words to date..... 28053

Total fiction words for December..... 77476
Total fiction words for the year..... 530007
Total nonfiction words for December... 14220
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 199430
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 729437

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 8
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 53
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Atlas Obscura](#), [BooksByWomen.org](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Quanta Magazine](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: A Question on Writing Setting

December 20, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Topic: A Question on Writing Setting
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“The settings you create, the characters you bring to life, the stories you imagine into existence—those are important! Most readers don't care if you can do stylistic handsprings. What they want is story that grabs them, holds them, and moves them.” David Farland

Topic: A Question on Writing Setting

A writer (not a Journal reader, I think) wrote to ask me about writing setting. I thought my response would make a good topic for the Journal. He wrote

“Dean ... told me that I needed to work on my settings. I couldn’t quite pull him into the story. I’ve been told this about my settings or lack of before.... I think I tend to start with the action and propel forward from there which doesn’t really ground the reader.”

Actually, starting in the midst of action and propelling forward from there doesn’t ground the reader (pull him into the story) *at all*.

The writer also wrote that in some “Best of” collections he’s read, the stories tend to start with the action. Actually, it only seems that way. I’ve never been able to find a story or novel that I enjoyed that started only with action. Not one. And I’ve looked.

I can’t argue with what my recent correspondent read, but in many stories and novels that I thought started with action, when I went back to look at them, they didn’t. Actually they started with setting (however briefly) and character description, then went into the action.

I always ground the reader in the setting at the start of every major scene in any short story or novel. Always. The comment I get most often from readers of my work is that they feel as if they’re in the scene with the character. I can’t think of any better praise.

Use what the POV character notices (sees, hears, smells, tastes, touches) with his physical senses as he goes in, plus his opinions of the setting. Is he in a bad mood, a good mood? Why?

For just one example, say you have a rat exterminator in a barn. How does he start exterminating rats without first letting the reader know the barn is dimly lighted, thin stripes of sunlight stretching across the barn floor, motes of dust floating in them?

It’s hot and humid, sweat tickling its way down his cheeks. The barn smells of hay and old wood and the dust makes his headache throb a little more? Let him gripe a little. How can there be so much dust when the air hangs heavy with humidity. collecting smells? And the barrel of his flashlight moving in his pocket, cold and annoying through his trousers? Maybe a yearling colt shuffles in a stall, nervous at his entrance.

To the left is a bandsaw. For an instant he smells the cut wood and it reminds him of the taste of cherry pies. His mouth waters at the thought. His grandfather used to eat one of his grandmother’s delicious little cherry half-moon pies with the pinched edge in his wood shop each morning before starting work. And he always brought an extra for Character First Name.

Or say a bad guy is going to murder an old man in his bed. Does the murder actually occur against a setting-less white backdrop? No. The house is dark and cold. The hallway or stairs creak as the killer moves through, and then the heater kicks on. Or the door hinges squeal lightly.

Even if the story opens with the killer bending over the bed and reaching for a pillow with which to smother the victim, it doesn’t open against a blank canvas.

If the setting is a hospital, there’s the distant clacking of shoes in the hallway outside. There’s the cold steel rail alongside the bed, maybe a saline drip attached to the veins in one wrist, the

underlying smell of disinfectant, the dim light of the parking lot streetlights outside, the various colored indicator lights and sounds from various machines in the room. You get the idea.

If you DO want to start literally in the middle of the action, go ahead and write the action scene. Then, to give your story more depth and ground the reader from the beginning, back up and write what happened in the few seconds or minutes leading up to the action. And include the setting then.

Your setting and character description might be only a few sentences, but take your time. In some short stories, the setting and character description takes up the first paragraph or the first few paragraphs. In a novel, depending on genre, it might take up a few chapters.

Just be absolutely certain every words of it comes from the character, not from the writer (you). Every description should be filtered through the physical and emotional (dread, fear, joy, elation, etc.) senses of the character.

And provide the character's opinion of the setting. In the opinion of the character, is the column in the room "ostentatious" or "silly" or "stupid"? Is the carpeting on the floor "ugly" or "puke-green" or "a really pretty lavender"? etc. Are the beeps from the machine next to the hospital bed annoying or incriminating? Is the victim thin, pale, even sallow? Is he heavy, with ruddy cheeks? Does he open his eyes as the pillow descends?

Start with setting to ground your reader and pull him deep into the scene. Your writing and your story will be richer for it.

Here are a few links to other articles I've written on this topic:

"Character, Setting, and Grounding the Reader"

<https://harveystanbrough.com/pro-writers/character-setting-and-grounding-the-reader/>

"The Importance of Setting (and How to Write It): Part One"

<https://harveystanbrough.com/pro-writers/the-importance-of-setting-and-how-to-write-it/>

"The Importance of Setting (and How to Write It): Part Two"

<https://harveystanbrough.com/pro-writers/the-importance-of-setting-and-how-to-write-it-part-two/>

"Chapter 6 — Writing Setting, and Notes on Writing the Scene: Part I"

<https://harveystanbrough.com/pro-writers/chapter-6-writing-setting-part-i/>

"Chapter 6—Writing Setting, and Notes on Writing the Scene: Part II"

<https://harveystanbrough.com/pro-writers/chapter-6-writing-setting-and-notes-on-writing-the-scene-part-ii/>

The last two reference above are from my book, Writing the Character Driven Story, which you can find at <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01BMSHONO/>.

Again, scenes (even action scenes) do not happen against a white background. Think back about stories and novels you've read and enjoyed. Go back to them. If it's a novel, read the opening of the novel and then the openings of a few chapters.

Read with a writer's eyes and study the openings. Look for how the author grounded you and pulled you into the story. And that goes double for the ones you think opened with action.

I didn't write on the novel yesterday. Back to it (anxiously) this morning.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Your Better Half" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/david-farlands-writing-tips-your-better-half/>.

See "Time For Merry Rest" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/12/time-for-merry-rest.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1130 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 3 (novel)

Day 1..... 1568 words. Total words to date..... 1568
Day 2..... 2963 words. Total words to date..... 4531
Day 3..... 4652 words. Total words to date..... 9183
Day 4..... 5506 words. Total words to date..... 14689
Day 5..... 4107 words. Total words to date..... 18796
Day 6..... 5001 words. Total words to date..... 23797
Day 7..... 4256 words. Total words to date..... 28053

Total fiction words for December..... 77476
Total fiction words for the year..... 530007
Total nonfiction words for December... 15350
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 200560
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 730567

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 8
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 53
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#), [Writing Setting](#)

The Journal: Creating a Series Bible

December 21, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Welcome
- * Topic: Creating a Series Bible
- * After taking the day before
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

On a character seeing a shattered mug on the floor of the kitchen or bedroom: “How it wound up on the floor isn’t important (yet). What is important is that I’ve created conflict just by showing the shattered mug.” Sue Coletta

“A funny thing happens while creating a story bible. Scene ideas flood the creative mind.” Sue Coletta

Welcome to my new UK subscriber and to others who have recently subscribed. I hope you find the Journal useful. If you ever have questions, leave a comment or email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

Which leads me to a gift idea. Sometimes the best gifts cost nothing but a few seconds.

If you find this Journal helpful in any way, forward a copy of a post you enjoyed to a writer friend or acquaintance or group and recommend it.

You can’t really give writer friends a gift subscription to the Journal. They have to sign up themselves. But you can give them the gift of knowledge that it exists.

Topic: Creating a Series Bible

Is easy... especially if you write into the dark.

Writing into the dark simply means letting your creative subconscious mind create, and relegating your conscious, critical mind to tasks more suited to its unique talent: learning new information and techniques, which it then feeds to your creative subconscious.

But more than anything else, it means allowing the characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living.

Today's Quotes of the Day come from the first post I linked to in "Of Interest" below. It's an older post from earlier this month. I left a comment, but the comment was limp. Here's what I wanted to write and what I should have written:

"Creating a series bible is easy for me. I just refer back to the reverse outline I created for the novel as I wrote it. When I've written two or more novels in the series, I combine the reverse outlines and I have a series bible."

A reverse outline is exactly what it sounds like. When I finish a chapter, I take a minute or two to add a few notes to the reverse outline about what *happened* (notice the past-tense) in that chapter.

(To see more about reverse outlines, go to either of my websites—<https://hestanbrough.com> or <https://harveystanbrough.com>—and key-in Reverse Outlines in the search box in the left sidebar.)

As I continue writing the novel, I can refer back to my reverse outline to remind myself of a name or a physical characteristic or a situation that happened earlier in the novel. This saves me cumulative hours of scrolling back through the novel looking for what happened why and how and to whom in an earlier chapter.

Here's how the reverse outline relates to creating a series bible. Or a "writing world" bible, for that matter:

As I wrote in my imaginary comment above, when I've written two novels in the series, I retain both reverse outlines in their original files (e.g., "RO The Ark" and "RO The Journey Home 1"). But I also collate the information in both and create a new file titled, for example, "FOH Series Bible."

In her post, Sue mentions she can review her series bible to get ideas for future books. That's a truly great tip.

Here's another one: I can review my reverse outline to re-establish in my creative mind the timeline and sequence of events of the current novel. And tada! The next scene floods into my creative mind and I'm off and writing again. And what comes next is in the natural flow of the story.

I can't tell you the number of times I've felt a little stuck for what to write next in a novel. Especially when I ended the day before with nothing but the new chapter heading on the next page. But I quickly alleviated that feeling by reading back over the reverse outline.

Back on December 14 I missed the opportunity in my comment on Sue's post to recommend using a reverse outline. Probably because I know she is one who outlines a novel before she begins to write it. Unfortunately, comments on that post are now closed.

Still, I regret that missed opportunity because you never know what might help. That comment might have turned on the light in another writer's mind and freed them to the joy of writing into the dark.

Even if you're a plotter and an outliner, I recommend using a reverse outline. Why? Because I also recommend if the characters take the story in a direction you didn't expect—a direction that isn't carefully plotted out on your outline—you let them run with the story. You can always go back and correct the outline instead of forcing the characters to your will in the story.

As Sue noted in the post, "A funny thing happens while creating a story bible. Scene ideas flood the creative mind." Frankly, I feel a little bad for her. How very close she came to the sheer joy of writing into the dark and letting that creative mind just flow.

Some writers—and I count myself very fortunate to be counted among them—know "scene ideas flood[ing] the creative mind" isn't a funny or odd thing to happen at all. For us, it's a freeing, normal, natural part of the storytelling process.

After taking the day before off—I was a little under the weather—I had another very good day of writing yesterday. I expect today will be the same, and I expect the novel will finish easily before the end of the year.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Tips to Create a Series Bible" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2020/12/tips-to-create-a-series-bible.html>. If you don't read this today, at least visit and copy/paste it to a Word doc to read it later.

See "TKZ Members Weigh In on Series Writing" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2019/01/tkz-members-weigh-in-on-series-writing.html>. Ditto my previous comment.

See "5 Tell-Tale Signs of an Amateur Self-Published Book" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/5-tell-tale-signs-of-an-amateur-self-published-book/>. Good on her for admitting that clunky storytelling "shows up in trad-pubbed books too." I submit that it shows up as a result of craft, not the manner of publication.

See "Year's End Surprise: Spiegel & Grau, a Once-and-Future Publisher" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/years-end-surprise-spiegel-grau-a-once-and-future-publisher/>. See PG's take.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1080 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 3 (novel)

Day 1..... 1568 words. Total words to date..... 1568
Day 2..... 2963 words. Total words to date..... 4531
Day 3..... 4652 words. Total words to date..... 9183
Day 4..... 5506 words. Total words to date..... 14689
Day 5..... 4107 words. Total words to date..... 18796
Day 6..... 5001 words. Total words to date..... 23797
Day 7..... 4256 words. Total words to date..... 28053
Day 8..... 6480 words. Total words to date..... 34533

Total fiction words for December..... 83956
Total fiction words for the year..... 536487
Total nonfiction words for December... 16430
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 201640
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 738127

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 8
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 53
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [KillZone Blog](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Reverse Outlines](#), [Series Bible](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Not much today

December 22, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Not much today
- * The Numbers

Not much today. Nothing, really. I'm posting this mostly to get the items in "Of Interest" out to you. Especially the first item for you short fiction writers. In fact, it took me longer to make the links below "hot" than it did to write the rest of this.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Making a Living With Short Fiction 2021” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/making-a-living-with-short-fiction-2021/>.

See “Abandoned Town of Cairo, Illinois” at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/cairo-illinois>.
Story ideas.

See “24 Creative Nonfiction Publishers...” at <https://www.authorspublish.com/24-creative-nonfiction-markets-open-in-december-2020/>. Any essayist or memoirists out there?

See “How Real Do You Want Your World to Be?” at <https://mystorydoctor.com/david-farlands-writing-tips-how-real-do-you-want-your-world-to-be/>.

See “Using Book Promotion Newsletters to Increase Sales” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/using-book-promotion-newsletters-to-increase-sales/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 120 words

Writing of *The Journey Home: Part 3* (novel)

Day 1..... 1568 words. Total words to date..... 1568
Day 2..... 2963 words. Total words to date..... 4531
Day 3..... 4652 words. Total words to date..... 9183
Day 4..... 5506 words. Total words to date..... 14689
Day 5..... 4107 words. Total words to date..... 18796
Day 6..... 5001 words. Total words to date..... 23797
Day 7..... 4256 words. Total words to date..... 28053
Day 8..... 6480 words. Total words to date..... 34533
Day 9..... 3072 words. Total words to date..... 38505

Total fiction words for December..... 87028
Total fiction words for the year..... 539559
Total nonfiction words for December... 16550
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 201760
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 741319

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 8
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 53
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Atlas Obscura](#), [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Catching Up

December 24, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Last night
- * More astute readers
- * Just a thought
- * Merry Christmas
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“It is inaccurate to say that I hate everything. I am strongly in favor of common sense, common honesty, and common decency. This makes me forever ineligible for public office.” H. L. Mencken

Last night, one sister-in-law and one son from Indiana flew in to Las Vegas and then drove from there for a visit. We are fortunate that they will be with us during Christmas and as we begin the new year. With any luck, nobody will tell the cops.

More astute readers will notice there was no new edition of the Journal posted yesterday. I had nothing new to say and nothing old much worth repeating, and I saw no items for the “Of Interest” section.

I didn't write fiction yesterday either. That's two full days lost on this novel alone, and I feel (and regret) both of them deeply. But I was a little under the weather. Whaddaya gonna do? I will write today and, if there's still anything left to write, tomorrow. It would be interesting to finish a novel on Christmas eve or Christmas day.

Then I might take a day or two “off” (i.e., deny myself the pleasure of indulging in starting yet another novel) to apply first reader comments, create covers, and publish or set for pre-release *The Journey Home: Parts 1 and 2*.

Just a thought — even those 5 lost months (May – September) were important to me as a writer. They taught me what I can do as a writer even in a much-compressed amount to time.

Now that I know I can completely skip almost 5 months of writing in a year and still turn out 9 novels and over a dozen short stories, I might even take the risk of tackling that major project I

talked about a while back. I figure if I do it right, that will take a couple of weeks to a month to set up. And if I can't do it right, I won't do it at all.

I'm getting behind in publishing (falling off Heinlein's Rule 4), which is both normal for me and all right. It's a great deal more fun writing the stories than attempting to foist them on unsuspecting readers.

Anyway, here's wishing you and yours a very merry Christmas or whatever other holiday or religious or non-religious remembrance or rite you celebrate, and a happy new year. I hope with newly non-repressive federal and state governments who choose to obey the Constitution, though I'm pretty sure that ship has sailed and fallen off the face of the earth.

But I suppose there's good in everything. It's all what you make it, within what you're allowed to make it. For example, I already know the thread of my next non-FOH (my current series) novel, though I fear that one will be pure fantasy. In that world, everyone will take responsibility (or be held responsible) for their own actions and receive what they earn by their own efforts, good or bad. See why I fear it will be a fantasy?

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Your Reader's Alter Ego" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/david-farlands-writing-tips-your-readers-alter-ego/>.

See "Why I Do Smith's Monthly?" at <https://www.deanwesleymith.com/why-i-do-smiths-monthly/>.

See "The Past, Miss Piggy, the Present" at <https://www.suecoletta.com/the-past-miss-piggy-present/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 570 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 3 (novel)

Day 1..... 1568 words. Total words to date..... 1568
Day 2..... 2963 words. Total words to date..... 4531
Day 3..... 4652 words. Total words to date..... 9183
Day 4..... 5506 words. Total words to date..... 14689
Day 5..... 4107 words. Total words to date..... 18796
Day 6..... 5001 words. Total words to date..... 23797
Day 7..... 4256 words. Total words to date..... 28053
Day 8..... 6480 words. Total words to date..... 34533

Day 9..... 3072 words. Total words to date..... 38505
Day 10... 5190 words. Total words to date..... 43695

Total fiction words for December..... 87028
Total fiction words for the year..... 539559
Total nonfiction words for December... 17120
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 202330
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 741889

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 8
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 53
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [David Farland](#), [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Sue Coletta](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Finished the Novel, and “Hallelujah”

December 25, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Hallelujah
- * Finished the novel
- * The Numbers

See “Hallelujah” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/hallelujah-2/>.

There are many other beautiful short videos at The Passive Voice. You’ll see them if you click the link above and then (after “Hallelujah”) click the Home tab. Wishing you a beautiful, peaceful day.

I **finished the novel** on Christmas Eve. Woohoo! That’s 9 novels on the year and 54 overall.

As it stands at this moment, I PLAN to take most of today off to spend with my wife, her sister Dori and my son Jason. Then I PLAN to use the days between now and the end of the year (inclusive) to apply my first readers’ input to The Journey Home: Parts 1 and 2, create covers and promo docs, and get those published and up for pre-sale.

(But I MIGHT work on a one-off, a new novel idea I have. I'd love to finish the year with one more novel, albeit a short one. Or I might move on to The Journey Home: Part 4.)

And sometime in 2021, MAYBE I'll work on that special project that keeps dinging away in my head. Or at least maybe make a start on it. I plan to hit the ground running on January 1 with my next novel, probably in the Future of Humanity (FOH) series.

For those who care about such things, somehow I missed updating my number totals yesterday. The numbers below are correct.

Talk with you again soon.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 240 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 3 (novel)

Day 1..... 1568 words. Total words to date..... 1568
Day 2..... 2963 words. Total words to date..... 4531
Day 3..... 4652 words. Total words to date..... 9183
Day 4..... 5506 words. Total words to date..... 14689
Day 5..... 4107 words. Total words to date..... 18796
Day 6..... 5001 words. Total words to date..... 23797
Day 7..... 4256 words. Total words to date..... 28053
Day 8..... 6480 words. Total words to date..... 34533
Day 9..... 3072 words. Total words to date..... 37605
Day 10... 5190 words. Total words to date..... 42795
Day 11... 5067 words. Total words to date..... 47862 (done)

Total fiction words for December..... 97285
Total fiction words for the year..... 549816
Total nonfiction words for December... 17360
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 202570
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 752836

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 9
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 54
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: “Hallelujah” and Cover Art

December 26, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * If I may wax
- * I knew better
- * Someone asked me
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“I will be glad to see 2021 arrive so I can get back to getting back to being uninterrupted by all the crapfulness going on.” Anonymous

Me too, brother. Me too.

“Yet another reason to prioritize writing: Probably nobody ever has broken an arm while at the keyboard.” My tongue-in-cheek version of being ‘supportive’ to a writer friend who broke her arm while doing something other than writing

“I did my best, it wasn’t much
I couldn’t feel, so I tried to touch
I’ve told the truth, I didn’t come to fool ya
And even though it all went wrong
I’ll stand before the lord of song
With nothing on my tongue but hallelujah.”
[Leonard Cohen, Verse 4 of “Halleluja”](#)

If I may wax a little personal for a moment, the last quote above is probably my favorite series of words written in the English language. They speak to me personally.

Separate of the rest of the song, that verse alone could be titled “Confession of an Honest Man.”

When I last heard the song, I had a mental image of songwriters all around the world slapping their pens to their desks with a disgusted sigh. May we all write with that honesty and to that degree of clarity.

I knew better when I wrote yesterday that I ‘planned’ to take time off between now and the end of the year. This morning I’ll create the cover for *The Journey Home: Part 1* and get it up for pre-sale and for publication on January 1.

Yesterday, I *did* get the promo doc done for all three *The Journey Home* books, I *did* get the first readers’ input applied to Part 1, and I *did* find the cover illustration for Part 1.

But more on that cover:

One of the big things I've learned about book covers is that for fiction (novels and short stories), most often the cover art should be an illustration, not a photograph. Photographs are better for non-fiction.

My friend, [novelist, poet and designer extraordinaire Robert J. Sadler](#) agreed to design a cover illustration for *The Journey Home: Part 1*. He got it ready for me overnight and it was in my inbox this morning. I am a very fortunate guy.

If you visit his site (also in "Of Interest"), click the Novels tab to see all the novels in his Michael Grant Black Book Investigation mysteries. To see Robert's art, click the Art tab on his website, or visit Fine Art America at <https://fineartamerica.com/profiles/1-robert-sadler/shop>. Frankly, his personal website is more appealing.

So this morning I'll put the cover together and put that one up. After that, I'm going back to writing. By which I mean I'll re-open my creative subconscious for business. I've no doubt I'll start *The Journey Home: Part 4* today or tomorrow.

I was stupid to think I should put off writing in order to publish things. Without the feeling of those keys moving under my fingers, I'm a nervous wreck. And being nervous makes me want a cigar. So if you think about it, I'm writing for my health. (grin)

Someone asked me recently, in light of how "fast" and how much I write, "But what do you do for fun?"

I shrugged. "I *write* for fun."

"No, I mean what do you do to relax, to get away from writing."

"You don't understand. Writing IS how I relax. Pretty much everything else is a chore. Writing is fun."

I wish the same for all of you.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Year End Half Price Workshop Sale" at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/year-end-half-price-workshop-sale/>. Linking to this for the sale.

See "Robert J. Sadler" at <https://www.robertjsadler.com/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 640 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 4 (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for December..... 97285
Total fiction words for the year..... 549816
Total nonfiction words for December... 18000
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 203210
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 753026

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 9
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 54
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [Robert J. Sadler](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: Today, an Odd Compilation

December 27, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * A do-over
- * New cats
- * This morning
- * Topic: "Thread" vs. "Outline"
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

"It was only when publishing house after publishing house, agent after agent had rejected my submissions, and I'd decided that no one was ever going to read my books, that I threw the rules out the window. I then simply wrote what I wanted to write, wrote how the stories came to me, was true to them and my characters. Then I published myself ... And I've sold more than two and a half million books." Kristen Ashley

“Einstein had a long-running debate with his friend Niels Bohr, a Danish physicist.... In Bohr’s view, the world doesn’t have definite properties unless we’re looking at it. When we’re not looking, Bohr thought, the world as we know it isn’t really there.” Peter Evans

I’ve often thought material things exist only because we expect them to be there and only while we’re paying attention.

“If you cross a line and nothing happens, the line loses meaning.” Lauren Oliver

Maybe an epigraph for The Journey Home: Part 5

Yesterday, it dawned on me that I’d screwed up. Better to catch a problem early, though. I won’t go into a lot of details, but suffice it to say I republished The Ark as The Ark: The Journey Home. Then I published The Journey Home: Part 2 (formerly Part 1). So now the series is more well-branded, and the series numbers match the Future of Humanity (FOH) series numbers. Duh.

So the novels I finished recently were The Journey Home: Parts 3 and 4 (not 2 and 3), and the next one I write will be Part 5. Got that? Or are you as confused as I was? (grin)

Of course, republishing those two books also meant tweaking the manuscripts and re-doing the covers. But I was finished with all of it by noon.

Then I went ahead and applied first-reader comments to Part 3 and prepped the manuscripts for both 3 and 4 for publication. And that’s as far as I can go for now, so yay, tomorrow it’s back to writing.

In the meanwhile, Mona and her sister went to pick up two teenage cats from a regional pound, so I expected to spend the balance of the afternoon keeping them and my angel Little Bit from eating each other.

The cats are only a few months old, thin, leggy, and certain they know absolutely everything there is to know. Hence my calling them teenagers. (grin)

As it turned out, my wife, by far the smarter of the two of us, decided to keep the teenagers sequestered for a few days while they become accustomed to the (limited) sights and smells of their new house. Crisis averted.

This morning I will happily return to my version of normal. Two days of being away from my writing ‘puter has left me a trembling mass of nerves. It will be good to slip back aboard The Ark, this time to see what the repops (the repopulation passengers) are up to.

Topic: “Thread” vs. “Outline”

A few days ago in the Journal I mentioned I had the “thread” of a story in mind. That prompted one writer to email me to ask whether I was still writing into the dark. I think he mistook my probably inappropriate use of the word “thread” to mean “skeleton for an outline.”

Nope. It's only an idea. To continue the skeleton analogy, it's one rib or one bone of a finger or thumb or big toe. A slightly more filled-out idea might be a whole toe or a whole finger. Or to look at it another way, the idea or thread is a lifeless single- or double- or triple-cell from which the novel will grow.

The thread or idea that came to me sometime yesterday for *The Journey Home: Part 5* is this:

Thus far each book in the series has been centered around and almost exclusively about the crew. But the repops aren't in stasis. They're living, breathing human beings, and they do more than hang out in the FOH lounges below the main deck, getting bombed and enduring hangovers. So in this book I'll begin finding out some of what they're doing down there.

The farther *The Ark* travels from Earth, the more the realization sets-in that they truly can't go "back home" again and that the future will be whatever they make it. And they literally aren't making the future for themselves—they and a few more generations will die enroute. They're making the future their distant descendents will live on a faraway planet. Should be interesting.

I'm also thinking, off to one side, I might open up this world for others to write stories and novels in if they want to. Just something to think about. And this time around I'm building the series bible and the world bible as I go.

One additional note: If an idea is born whole, with even a sketchy beginning, middle and end, I don't bother writing it. Doing so would be boring. That's why I don't bother creating an outline. Why write a story twice: once in the outline and once in the story itself? For me, the joy of writing is the exciting act of looking in on the characters, even moving among them, as the action unfolds.

I've heard many writers say they write an outline or put up "signposts" etc. to guide them through the story. That they still have the "thrill" of events unfolding within that prefabricated construct. That just isn't me. If I can imagine in advance where a story's going, so can the reader. I'd rather be surprised, and so would readers. Aren't you happier as a reader when events in a story unfold in a way you didn't expect? So again, I just let the characters tell the story that they, not I, are living.

Of course, your way of doing things might vary. To each his or her own.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Happy New Year & Wazzup for Garry Rodgers Writing in 2021" at <http://dyingwords.net/happy-new-year-wazzup-for-garry-rodgers-writing-in-2021/>. You want to read this.

See “The Secret To This Romance Author’s Success? Breaking All The Rules.” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-secret-to-this-romance-authors-success-breaking-all-the-rules-2/>. Oh, you really want to read this. An absolutely excellent article, chock full of good tips.

See “The FBI Does This, But Not That” at <https://leelofland.com/sat-no-to-white-horses-the-fbi-does-this-but-not-that/>.

See “Collection Classes Now Available” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/collection-classes-now-available/>. Linked here just in case you’re interested. OR (ahem) you could spend your time writing (practicing the craft) and put together a collection on your own.

See “Here’s one of the things I learned that morning” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/heres-one-of-the-things-i-learned-that-morning/>.

See “4 Mind-Bending Ways Quantum Physics Challenges Our Reality” at <https://www.sciencealert.com/4-mind-bending-ways-quantum-physics-challenge-our-reality>. Thanks to Karen R. for the tip.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 970 words

Writing of **The Journey Home: Part 5** (novel)

Day 1..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for December..... 97285
Total fiction words for the year..... 549816
Total nonfiction words for December... 19150
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 204360
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 754176

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 9
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 54
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Dean Wesley Smith](#), [DyingWords.net](#), [Ideas](#), [Lee Lofland](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [ScienceAlert.com](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Welcome

December 28, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Welcome
- * The Numbers

Welcome to our new friend Yakov and any others who have subscribed or started reading the Journal in recent days. If I can do anything to help with your writing, feel free to email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com. Now and then I miss a day posting, Yakov, as I almost did today, when I have nothing to pass along.

Nothing else today but I wanted to get "Of Interest" out to you. Just writing. Yesterday I officially went over 100,000 words for the month.

Oops. I screwed up and forgot to add a title. So I'm re-sending this.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "One Writer's Unusual Path to Six Figures" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/one-writers-unusual-path-to-six-figures/>.

See "Titles and Comp Titles — How To Find the Best Ones For Your Book" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/titles-and-comp-titles-how-to-find-the-best-ones-for-your-book/>. Witness my recent re-thinking and losing a day to writing to retitle my books. Giving this more thought up front would have been better.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 150 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 5 (novel)

Day 1..... 4179 words. Total words to date..... 4179

Total fiction words for December..... 101464
Total fiction words for the year..... 553995
Total nonfiction words for December... 19300
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 204510
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 758505

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 9
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 54
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Professional Writer Series](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#)

The Journal: On Traditional Publishing

December 29, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Topic: On Traditional Publishing
- * Yesterday and Today
- * The Numbers

Topic: On Traditional Publishing

Be sure to check out David Farland's link in "Of Interest" today, and then let's all have a good cry for traditional publishing.

If you didn't catch it, that was sarcasm. For a major writer who influences so many other writers to defend traditional publishing so stringently, especially while omitting a lot of pertinent information, borders on the irresponsible.

I can only wonder how many writers were on the verge of beginning their careers as indie publishers only to be nudged back to traditional publishing by his article. I added the link to it below only to provide a reference point for this topic.

Listen: It isn't the authors' fault that the TradPub industry is clinging to outmoded ways of doing business. The 1980s are over, and the sooner traditional publishing recognizes that fact the better off they'll be.

Traditional publishing also publishes ebooks (not mentioned in the article). They typically charge 3 or 4 times the cost an indie author charges, yet they have the same overhead for ebooks (practically nothing) and they still pay authors almost nothing.

And frankly, in exchange for purchasing ALL RIGHTS to an author's IP for what amounts to a pittance, traditional publishing as we know it doesn't deserve to survive.

If anyone out there knows of any big-five (or big at all) traditional publisher who offers a fair contract, does not buy all rights, and includes a rights-reversion clause within a reasonable time period (say 3-5 years) from anyone other than a Stephen King or possibly Dave Farland, please please let me know.

Folks, trust me on this: Don't go with traditional publishing. If you do, chances are you will get screwed. It's one thing to say you can always walk away from a bad contract; it's another to actually do it when you have stars in your eyes.

Why?

Because as a general rule, we writers devalue our own work. Your IP doesn't weigh anything. It doesn't have physical substance so it seems to have no immediate value. Yet here's this big publisher offering you \$5,000 or \$10,000 or \$15,000 or even \$50,000 for all rights for the life of the copyright. Who wouldn't jump at the chance to sell?

And as for Farland's basic premise that the poor, overhead-laden traditional publishers simply can't afford to market and promote your book? Bullsh*t.

The fact is, your book means nothing to them beyond the monetary value of the IP and what it does for the bottom line of their company. Look:

1. When you sell them all rights to your IP, the publisher's accountant adds that IP—which is now the publisher's newest asset—to a spreadsheet. It adds value to their company even if they never publish the book.
2. Lawyers check amortization schedules against the author's current age to determine roughly how long the author will live, then add 70 years. That's how long they will own the IP (and it will add value to their company) before it drops into the public domain.
3. Other lawyers assess the potential earning value of that IP during that time period. Maybe it has film or TV series potential. So maybe they value that IP at \$3,000,000 dollars (and that's on the low side).

Yet for an investment (your advance) of \$5,000 or \$10,000 or \$15,000 or even \$50,000—which they typically pay in three or four installments, by the way—they've just increased the value of their company by 3 million dollars.

That's not a bad trick if you can pull it off, and traditional publishers pull it off every day of the year, always at the expense of some new, starry-eyed writer who thinks he or she just received the deal of a lifetime.

If this were you, and had you walked away, you would *not* have received your advance, 15% of which would have gone to your agent. Nor would you have received your 10% to 15% royalty after you "earned out" your advance (and again, 15% of any royalty payments also go to your agent).

Instead, you would indie publish. If you were smart, you'd go wide and distribute to around 240 stores and around 1000 libraries around the world. You'd earn around 70% on every sale, and if a film (or gaming) producer *did* decide your story or something inside it would make a good film or game, YOU would still own all rights.

You and your IP attorney would negotiate a deal, and in the end you would cut out a tiny slice of your IP (film rights or gaming rights, for example) and you'd STILL own all rights to everything else.

When the film or game is made, you get paid. When a book sells, you get paid. When the film or game takes off and they create and sell merchandise based on the film or game, you get paid. And your IP keeps making money for you and your heirs for the rest of your life plus 70 years after your death.

But by all means, do what you want. I offer this only as food for thought.

Yesterday I had a pretty good day of writing. This morning I received input from first readers on Books 3 and 4 of the series.

I took a little time to add the input from the reader for Book 3, then saved the input for Book 4 until a later time. Then I wrote and posted this and turned to my writing 'puter.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "43 Writers' 'Rules for Writing'" at <https://www.authorspublish.com/43-writers-rules-for-writing/>. Of course, Heinlein's Rules didn't make the list.

See "The Hidden Costs of [Traditional] Publishing" at <https://mystorydoctor.com/david-farlands-writing-tips-the-hidden-costs-of-publishing/>. I still get angry even reading the title of this post.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 980 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 5 (novel)

Day 1..... 4179 words. Total words to date..... 4179

Day 2..... 4825 words. Total words to date..... 9004

Total fiction words for December..... 106289

Total fiction words for the year..... 558820

Total nonfiction words for December... 20280

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 205490

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 764310

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 9

Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X

Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 54

| | |
|---|-----|
| Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... | 8 |
| Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... | 214 |
| Short story collections..... | 31 |

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [AuthorsPublish.com](#), [David Farland](#), [Professional Writer Series](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: An Open Statement on “Diversity” in Fiction

December 30, 2020 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Welcome
- * Yesterday
- * Topic: An Open Statement on “Diversity” in Fiction
- * The Numbers

Welcome to Bill S., the most recent subscriber to the Journal.

Well, a pretty good day yesterday, but only because a day with any writing is better than a day without any. I fell far short of my goal, and really for no good reason. I just got lazy. Still, every little bit helps.

Topic: An Open Statement on “Diversity” in Fiction

Yesterday too, a reader pointed out that I “haven’t mentioned diversity very much on [T]he Ark.”

That’s true. I haven’t. Some people see this as a sticky wicket. I do not.

The make-up of The Ark is extremely diverse, with crewpeople and/or repopulation passengers from almost every culture on Earth. So The Ark and the whole FOH series is diverse pretty much to the max.

But I don’t mention diversity much. Nor do the crewpeople and repop passengers on board The Ark. Really, they (and I) couldn’t care less.

Every person allowed to board The Ark, crewpeople and repopulation passengers alike, underwent a rigorous psychological screening process to weed-out anyone who might cause problems based on their personal perception of gender or race issues, religious beliefs, national origin, cultural or political beliefs and any other superficial issues.

Actually, The only group the tests were unable to weed out were psychopaths, or sociopaths if you like. And it's a good thing or there wouldn't be any stories on The Ark worth writing. No conflict.

But back to the notion that I failed to mention “diversity” enough. It's an unfortunate fact that some people use the surface differences two paragraphs above this one to divide humanity. It's equally sad that some national and world leaders use them to their own ends, always for monetary gain and to amass more power.

But neither the people on The Ark nor I think that way. The people on The Ark are doing what they're doing for the Future of Humanity (FOH), not for this religious group or that skin color or any other false, human-created division.

Consider, if I research and write at some depth about a culture of which I am not personally a member, some readers (like, I assume, the reader who pointed out this “flaw”) will applaud me for being diversity-inclusive.

Others, though—even others who are not members of that culture either—will scream that I'm “misappropriating” the cultural mores of the culture I researched. To those people, if I felt like wasting my breath, I would say, “Y'know what? It's fiction, it's taking place on a generation ship that doesn't exist, and everyone on board is getting along (mostly) despite the problems and problem-children they left behind for good reason on Earth. Get over it.”

Earthbound as we are, people who are actively looking for something to gripe about (too few “Blacks,” too few “Whites,” too few “Asians” or whatever else) will always be out there and they'll always find something to complain about.

However, I don't much care whether any of them ever pick up one of my books. Besides, they're probably too busy dreaming up “causes” to read and then “protesting injustices” for the sake of being seen before going home to their gated, locked communities and their (insert racial orientation here) maids at the end of the day.

Finally, as I've said over and over in this and other venues, I don't consciously decide anything when I'm writing a story. And frankly, being politically correct (saying or writing “the right thing” for appearance' sake) is the least of my concerns.

I have many flaws, but faking interest in the superficial differences and social mores that some use as wedges to divide human beings into different groups isn't one of them. I guess I was fortunate to come to maturity in the Marine Corps, where everyone was green and everyone bled red. Seems to me that's a good way to be.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Street Lib Notes” at

http://r.send.streetlib.com/mk/mr/oXtSIerbPIaPP3v1cngwyUwHGX_mOeJ5sNluwa_wOiKL1K-nEvpWuo2thf7JnxsTZJfToy95xrVEm9El4NvUwUwDbuDCD-R13e3hO8i8F1T. Sorry the link is so long if you have to type it in. This was an email newsletter sent to me that I thought you should see.

See “A Caveman Would Never Do CrossFit....” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/a-caveman-would-never-do-crossfit-why-theres-nothing-natural-about-exercise/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 710 words

Writing of The Journey Home: Part 5 (novel)

Day 1..... 4179 words. Total words to date..... 4179
Day 2..... 4825 words. Total words to date..... 9004
Day 3..... 2746 words. Total words to date..... 11750

Total fiction words for December..... 109035
Total fiction words for the year..... 561566
Total nonfiction words for December... 20990
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 206200
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 767766

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 9
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 54
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

Categories [Daily Journal](#) Tags [Professional Writer Series](#), [StreetLib](#), [The Passive Voice](#), [the writing life](#), [Topic](#)

The Journal: Happy New Year, Yesterday, Cycling and Heinlein’s Rules

January 1, 2021 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Happy New Year
- * Thanks

- * Topic: Yesterday, Cycling, and the Two Days Before
- * Yesterday too, an article
- * Heinlein's Rules
- * Annual Recap
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

"It's never too early to start something new, and it's never too late to fix what's broken for next time." Wes Crowley

"Tomorrow is the first blank page of a 365-page book. Write a good one." Brad Paisley (thanks to Sam T for sharing this)

For those of you who wait to begin a new year on January 1, Happy New Year. I've also found it useful to remember that (as Brad Paisley said above), a year is only 365 days in a row, and a new series of days begins with each dawn.

That's how my old buddy Wes Crowley looks at it too (see the first Quote of the Day above). (grin) However you count the beginning of a new year, make it what you want it to be.

I didn't have much to say yesterday, so I skipped publishing an edition of the Journal. Thanks for hanging in there with me.

Topic: Yesterday, Cycling, and the Two Days Before

I had a good writing day on Wednesday even though I temporarily lost my way in the story on Tuesday.

So on Wednesday I cycled back through pretty much the whole novel (just reading for pleasure and allowing my characters to touch the story as I went. That got me back on track, and even with all the cycling I still had a pretty decent day with slightly over 4000 words.

However, the characters also introduced a new major problem, a complete surprise and a very emotional one. We (the characters and I) ended up with three new chapters that hadn't been there before. Which of course meant I had to then cycle through a few of the other chapters yet again with the new information in mind.

But as always the characters took over and ran with the story. Still, I had a smaller day Thursday than I would have liked. If "difficult" is a word that can be applied to writing fiction, yesterday was a difficult day. I had to let the characters adjust the story here and there while simultaneously keeping my own critical, conscious mind (the author) out of it.

But it's all good. And I LOVE the new curve ball the characters threw into the mix. Later on Thursday (around 11 a.m.), I got back to the white space (where I hadn't written yet) and the characters continued to let the story unfold.

With the additional cycling on Thursday (yesterday) my numbers are low, but at least they're there. (grin) And tomorrow on my new goals kick in. Should be interesting.

Yesterday too I saw an article titled "What to Do While You Are Waiting for Publication." I did not link to it in "Of Interest" because it mentioned nothing about indie publishing and assumes all authors are dumb enough and insecure enough to sell all rights to traditional publishers.

I mention this only because my immediate, unsolicited response when I first saw the title was "Write the next book." That's what I do while I'm "waiting for publication" even though I'm an indie publisher.

At this moment I have 54 finished novels, but only 52 of them published. I'm still "waiting for publication" on 53 and 54. And I'm what, around 19,000 words into 55? (grin)

I'm a writer, so I write (Heinlein's Rule 1). And when I feel like I can afford a day away from writing, I publish.

Heinlein's Rules

If you want to be a successful professional writer, Heinlein's Rules (officially "Heinlein's Business Habits for Writers") consists of only five rules. They are the simplest rules of writing you'll ever find, yet owing to human nature, they're also the most difficult you'll ever try to follow. Consider this a dare. (grin)

By the way, if any of you out there don't yet have a copy of Heinlein's Rules and would like to see what all the fuss is about, click <https://harveystanbrough.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Heinleins-Business-Habits-Annotated-2.pdf>. A PDF document will be downloaded to your computer.

Annual Recap

In December I wrote 115,940 words of fiction and 20,900 words of nonfiction (all in this blog, I believe). In 2020 I wrote 568,471 words of fiction—spread over 9 novels and 13 short stories—and 206,200 words of nonfiction.

It was not a good year. I can never know what I might have written during those 4+ lost months. Which brings me full circle back to "It's never too early to start something new, and it's never too late to fix what's broken for next time."

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "When my first novel was published" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/when-my-first-novel-was-published/>. How great is this guy?

See “New Year Starting” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/new-year-starting/>. Tips on goals and streaks and starting.

See “Ray Bradbury at 100” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/ray-bradbury-at-100/>.

See “Here She Comes Again: Reading Dolly Parton” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/here-she-comes-again-reading-dolly-parton/>.

See “Murder, It Sucks The Air Out Of Living” at <https://leelofland.com/murder-it-sucks-the-air-out-of-living-2/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 860 words

Writing of **The Journey Home: Part 5** (novel)

Day 1..... 4179 words. Total words to date..... 4179
Day 2..... 4825 words. Total words to date..... 9004
Day 3..... 2746 words. Total words to date..... 11750
Day 4..... 4032 words. Total words to date..... 15782
Day 5..... 2873 words. Total words to date..... 18655

Total fiction words for December..... 115940
Total fiction words for the year..... 568471
Total nonfiction words for December... 20990
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 206200
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 774671

Calendar Year 2020 Novels to Date..... 9
Calendar Year 2020 Novellas to Date..... X
Calendar Year 2020 Short Stories to Date... 13
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 54
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 214
Short story collections..... 31

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