

The Journal, 2023

A New Year, a New Way Forward

January 1, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * A New Year, a New Way Forward
- * Ideas
- * Football
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“I’m interested in having fun with ideas, throwing them up in the air like confetti and then running under them.” Ray Bradbury

“Don’t think. Thinking is the enemy of creativity.” Ray Bradbury

“I’ve had a sign over my typewriter for over 25 years now, which reads ‘Don’t think!’ You must never think at the typewriter — you must feel. Your intellect is always buried in that feeling anyway.” Ray Bradbury

“Writing is not a serious business. It’s a joy and a celebration. You should be having fun with it.” Ray Bradbury

A New Year, a New Way Forward

It’s a little strange, waiting to post the Journal until later in the day. But this is one of the larger changes I’m making.

Probably I’ll still write the Journal early in the day on days when I have something to say, but posting it later will enable me to report real-time numbers for both my fiction and nonfiction.

Seems maybe my characters like this better too. I was finished writing by 11:30 a.m. today and I wrote well over 4000 words.

Ideas

Stephen King is widely known for taking ideas from other entertainment sources and writing novels from those ideas. For just one example, he took the idea for *The Dome* from *The*

Simpson's Movie, in which Springfield was completely covered with a clear dome. Nothing wrong with that. (You can't copyright an idea.)

I offer the first item (well, the only item) in "Of Interest" as a possible stimulus for ideas, or possibly as a stimulus to a way to get ideas.

Football

If you're a football fan, you're probably in heaven right now. If you aren't, at least something good is keeping the football fan in your life busy so you can do other things. Like write. (grin)

I was pleased to close out 2022 with 2209 words of fiction on December 31 and to open 2023 with 4214 words on January 1.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "10 Novels Based on Folk Horror" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/10-novels-based-on-folk-horror/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 330 words

Writing of Santa Fe: A New Office (novel, WCG8, Santa Fe 3)

Day 1..... 2815 words. Total words to date..... 2815
Day 2..... 2034 words. Total words to date..... 4849
Day 3..... 2650 words. Total words to date..... 7499
Day 4..... 2209 words. Total words to date..... 9708
Day 5..... 4214 words. Total words to date..... 13922

Total fiction words for December..... 69687
Total fiction words for 2022..... 284661
Total words for 2022 (fiction and this blog)..... 507591

Total fiction words for January..... 4214
Total fiction words for 2023..... 4214
Total nonfiction words for January... 330
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 330
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 4544

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	71
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. I convey the stories of my characters. Because It Makes Sense, I trust them to tell the story that they, not I, are living. This greatly increases my productivity and provides the fastest possible ascension along the learning curve of Craft because I get a great deal more practice at actually writing. It will do the same for you if only you trust it.

Habits and the Santa Fe Subseries

January 2, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Habits
- * Santa Fe Subseries
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“There are scum and scuts in every folk and nation.” Robert E. Howard in a Conan novel

“Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow has not yet come. We have only today. Let us begin.” Mother Theresa

“The future starts today, not tomorrow.”—Pope John Paul II

“The future doesn't belong to the fainthearted; it belongs to the brave.” Ronald Reagan

Habits

Wow, are some habits difficult to break. This morning I can only write until 11. Yet instead of starting on the novel again, I'm here typing on this silly Journal. (grin)

I've gotten used to pulling on my sweats, stepping into my fuzzy slippers, getting a cup of coffee, and padding out to the back fence to chat with my friends as I wake up.

My personal favorite coffee is either the Organic Sumatra or the Dark Sumatra Mandheling. Both are very rich (they remind me of chicory coffee) but also very low in acid. I get mine (K-Cups) from [Fresh Roasted Coffee](#).

Santa Fe Subseries

It dawned on me as I watched football last night that there might be numerous books in this Santa Fe subseries (I'm writing book 2 now) of the Wes Crowley Gap series.

In the old days (say before 2015) that thought would have frightened me. Isn't that ridiculous? I mean, what's the worst that could happen?

Well, okay, I suppose one of the bad guys Wes is chasing could come back life and gun me down (or do a lot worse if it's Four Crows), but that horror stuff is Chris Ridge's domain, not mine. So again, what could happen?

Now when I have a thought like that it only excites me. And yet every day I hear writers say it's difficult to come up with ideas.

I suspect those folks think an idea is a story born in whole cloth. It isn't. A story is only a mental image or a bit of dialogue or a brief narrative thought or a cool phrase or word that drives you to sit down at a keyboard and start writing.

Once you put your fingers on the keys, just write whatever comes. Then write the next sentence and the next and the next. Don't second-guess, don't wonder what will happen next. Just open yourself up and be the Recorder (Stenographer, Whatever) for your characters as they live the story and you run through it with them.

If you've never tried this, it is an exhilarating experience. And the great news is, it's still just as exhilarating 8 years, 70+ novels, and 220+ novellas and short stories later.

But do me a favor—if you're too frightened to try WITD or if you just can't bring yourself to try it or if you're just absolutely certain all those beginning writers on the "boards" are right and people like King and Child and DW Smith and KK Rusch and Bradbury and Heinlein and me are wrong, keep it to yourself, would you?

Please restrain the urge to leave a comment on any of my websites. Instead, go leave your comment on one of the MILLIONS of websites that agree with you. 'Cause you aren't gonna convince me, and I'm not gonna help you spread the myths. Not on this website.

Now *there's* a habit worth developing. And that's really what I'm doing over here in the Stanbrough camp right now: trying to break one habit cold (tying a bow on the Journal every morning) while easing into another one (writing earlier).

Best of all, that "writing earlier" habit might well develop into a "writing more" habit. Yesterday I was through writing (had reached my goal) by 11:30 but later in the day, I was bored out of my mind. I've never developed the ability to just Do Nothing (except with a good cigar, but I can't go there).

So maybe I'll write early, and then come back later in the day to write more. Maybe as all of this develops I'll even increase my daily word count goal. (Can you tell I'm excited? All these new possibilities!)

All right. I'm gonna go play with Wes for awhile now. He and Charley have boarded a train this morning in Santa Fe bound for Las Cruces and it's just about to pull away from the platform. I'd better hurry.

If I can, I'll add more to this later, from Las Cruces maybe, or maybe from Columbus or even Puerto Palomas across the line.

Almost Missed

Wow. I almost didn't post this at all. I almost forgot. I took my 'puter up to the house in case I had the opportunity to write more, but I didn't. Then I dealt with a few problems and then remembered I hadn't posted yet. So here it is.

Oh, and just for the record, I didn't "think" my way to a single word of it. If I tried to "think" about what I was going to write next, I wouldn't have received from my characters the biggest surprise yet in any of the TWENTY Wes Crowley novels. In fact, I probably wouldn't have finished more than a few novels, if that many.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "75 New Year Quotes That Will Inspire a Fresh Start to the Year" at <https://www.rd.com/list/new-years-quotes/>.

See "Using Your Writing Superpower in 2023" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/01/using-your-writing-superpower-in-2023.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 900 words

Writing of Santa Fe: A New Office (novel, WCG8, Santa Fe 3)

Day 1..... 2815 words. Total words to date..... 2815
Day 2..... 2034 words. Total words to date..... 4849
Day 3..... 2650 words. Total words to date..... 7499
Day 4..... 2209 words. Total words to date..... 9708
Day 5..... 4214 words. Total words to date..... 13922
Day 6..... 2299 words. Total words to date..... 16221

Total fiction words for December..... 69687
Total fiction words for 2022..... 284661
Total words for 2022 (fiction and this blog)..... 507591

Total fiction words for January..... 6513
Total fiction words for 2023..... 6513
Total nonfiction words for January... 900
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 900
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 7743

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 71
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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2022 Archive, New Comment Policy and More

January 3, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * 2022 Archive
- * New Comment Policy
- * Rationale for Comment Policy
- * Correction
- * Like Any Story
- * Of Interest

2022 Archive

The Journal Archive is now available for download free on the Archives page. To download any of the archives or any of the free books listed there, visit <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives/> and click on the archive(s) and or free book(s) of your choice.

I almost forgot to post this again today. I don't know whether this write-first post-later thing is gonna work out. We'll see.

New Comment Policy

Until now, I've let pretty much all comments through, then taken the time to respond. I will still do that for most comments, but not for those that endorse or propagate the myths of writing. You can find that crap pretty much everywhere. There's no reason for me to allow it on my website.

Posting those comments here in the first place is a waste of the commenter's time. And allowing those comments through and responding to them is a waste of my time. See my new [Comment Policy page](#).

Rationale for Comment Policy

I'm not sure why people who are mired in the writing myths seek out my silly little minuscule, unimportant website to disagree with me or with the likes of Ray Bradbury or Robert A. Heinlein or Dean Wesley Smith or Kristine Kathryn Rusch or Stephen King or Lee Child or Jack Higgins or James Lee Burke or anyone else who has written TONS more fiction than they have.

All of the writers I listed above and many more, including me and many of the writers who read my Journal, have been mired in the myths ourselves.

I once spent over 3 years outlining a novel. Hey, but whatever works for me is fine, right? Can anyone say with a straight face that "worked" for me? And no, I still haven't written that novel.

But now some of us have found a crisp, clean new way to write, and we aren't going back. Most of us are smart enough to keep it to ourselves. Unfortunately, I am not. I like to share what I have tested and know to be possible in an attempt to ease others' transition to a fun, enjoyable way to write fiction.

Nor do I owe the general writing public a "balanced" presentation of myths vs. non-myths. They can learn the myths in any of the MILLIONS of websites, classrooms, "boards," Facebook groups, etc. ad nauseam where those mired in the myths commiserate. Yet they can learn what I teach pretty much nowhere but here on this one little website.

What I DO owe the general writing public is the best writing advice I can give them. So in this one tiny bit of the internet universe, I will continue to teach what I practice in my everyday life:

- Heinlein's Rules,
- Ray Bradbury's many wise dictums on writing,
- that writers should believe-in and trust themselves,
- that writers should report the story as it unfolds,
- that only the creative mind can create, and
- that the conscious mind can only build or construct. It cannot create.

Of course, I might reconsider my position if Anyone Anywhere Ever would utter even one original thought that proves the conscious mind is effective at creating fiction. But that will never happen because they can't, and they can't because it isn't.

Correction

In yesterday's post under the "Santa Fe Subseries" segment, I wrote "A story is only a mental image...." Of course, that should have read "An idea is only a mental image...." Thanks to my first reader, Russ, for catching that glitch.

Like Any Story

Like any authentic story in any life, a fiction unfolds as it happens, as the characters live it. Because of that, it can only be reported. It can not be planned or foreseen. How can anyone possibly know what will happen next or think ahead in a story that's unfolding as it happens?

Of course, you have free will. You certainly can force it and control everything, but it will no longer be the characters' authentic story. It will be a conscious-mind construct, something you built block by well-thought-out block.

You can force the characters to say what you want them to say, but you can't force them to mean it.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "A new physics-defying theory describes the effects of faster-than-light travel" at <https://interestingengineering.com/science/faster-than-light-travel>.

See "2023" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/2023-2/>.

See "A treasure trove of Hollywood intellectual property is heading for the public domain" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/a-treasure-trove-of-hollywood-intellectual-property-is-heading-for-the-public-domain/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 750 words

Writing of Santa Fe: A New Office (novel, WCG8, Santa Fe 3)

Day 1..... 2815 words. Total words to date..... 2815
Day 2..... 2034 words. Total words to date..... 4849
Day 3..... 2650 words. Total words to date..... 7499
Day 4..... 2209 words. Total words to date..... 9708

Day 5..... 4214 words. Total words to date..... 13922
Day 6..... 2299 words. Total words to date..... 16221
Day 7..... 2136 words. Total words to date.....18357

Total fiction words for January..... 8649
Total fiction words for 2023..... 8649
Total nonfiction words for January... 1980
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 1980
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 10629

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 71
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. Because It Makes Sense to do so, I report the story as it unfolds and trust the characters to tell the story that they, not I, are living. This greatly increases my productivity and provides the fastest possible ascension along the learning curve of Craft because I get a great deal more practice at actually writing. It will do the same for you if only you trust it.

My Typical Day

January 4, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * My Typical Day
- * Back to the Original Plan
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far [they] can go.” TS Eliot
Wow. Maybe my new favorite quote.

“Heavy social media use in children aged 12 to 13 associated with increased brain activity *in regions controlling reward processing* (emphasis added).” Headline under Science & Technology in the 1440 newsletter (SF ideas, anyone?)

“Scientists conclude the tail cannot, in fact, wag the dog.” Another head-slapping headline from 1440, this one under the “Etcetera” section. I wonder how much money they spent on this study? You can’t make this stuff up.

Apologies for yesterday’s post being largely a repeat of the post from the day before.

Also, part of today’s post is also a comment on Terry Odell’s TKZ post today. (Yes, I’m glancing at TKZ again each morning. I’m getting a guest gig there soon, so I thought I should.)

My Typical Day

It’s been a while since I did one of these “typical day” posts, so I thought I’d do one now for anyone who’s interested.

When I get up each morning, I get a mug of coffee and commute (a 150-foot walk) from my house to the Hovel, my adobe office. I sit down at my business computer first to check and respond to emails, read my newsletters, check other websites, etc.

I also prepare my almost-daily Journal during this time. That variously includes quotes, a topic on the craft of writing, my non-process of writing, or publishing, and links to articles around the internet I think my readers might find of interest. That’s usually my first 300 to 1500 words of the day, all nonfiction.

I take a break (15 minutes or so) up at the house, then come back to the Hovel, check for any other emails, then swivel my chair to face in the opposite direction and open my writing ‘puter.

When I turn to my writing ‘puter, a cute little HP Probook 11 (I like the keyboard) attached to a 24” monitor, the manuscript is already open, not to where I left off but where I started writing yesterday. I read over what I wrote (usually 2000 to 4000 words). I don’t read critically but simply as a reader, enjoying the story.

As I do that I allow my fingers to rest on the keyboard. My characters usually add or deepen some description, sometimes say more (dialogue) than they did originally, etc. That part feels like it usually takes around ten minutes or so, but I’m not sure.

When I get to the white space, I write the next sentence, then the next and the next and the next. This is my practice until the characters lead me through to the end of the story.

My sessions are usually an hour to an hour and a half, usually 1200 to 2000 words, which for me is both a scene and a chapter. I try to knock out three or four sessions of fiction every day. My daily word count goal is 3000 publishable words of fiction.

I never consciously plan or plot or signpost or inflict anything else external on the story. That would render it something other than the story the characters would have lived without my interference.

I prefer to tell the story the characters are actually living. Like any story in any life, it's unfolding as it happens, as the characters live it. Because of that, it can only be reported, not planned or foreseen.

Some believe the we "own" the characters, that they are a figment of our imagination, of our creative subconscious.

I'm not so sure. When I access my creative subconscious, maybe I'm viewing a creation of my own imagination. Maybe it really is all in my head.

Or maybe when I access my creative subconscious I'm drawing back a curtain on another dimension, another place, one in which my characters are actually living their ongoing story. Maybe the stories I record for them are only slices of the life they're living in that other place.

I personally prefer to believe the latter, but it doesn't matter, does it? The point is, I respect my characters enough to let them live their lives as those lives unfold. I don't invent what's happening and the characters' reactions and what's being said. I only report it.

Back to the Original Plan

As you can see, I've decided to set aside my hoity-toity attempt to post the Journal later in the day and thereby report my fiction numbers in real time instead of posting them a day late (and a dollar short?).

The new format was putting too much pressure on the fiction writing. No need to pressurize something that's strictly for fun in the first place. So I'll post today's fiction numbers tomorrow (or when I post the Journal again) and so on.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "What's Your Writing Time Like?" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/01/whats-your-writing-time-like.html>. I urge you to leave a reply. It isn't everyday you get an open invitation to let people know who you are and what you do.

See "What will the internet of the future look like?" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/what-will-the-internet-of-the-future-look-like/>. See PG's take. Excellent!

See "Predictions from 1923 on life in 2023" (via Twitter) at <https://twitter.com/paulisci/status/1609597531251703809>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 860 words

Writing of Santa Fe: A New Office (novel, WCG8, Santa Fe 3)

Day 1..... 2815 words. Total words to date..... 2815
 Day 2..... 2034 words. Total words to date..... 4849
 Day 3..... 2650 words. Total words to date..... 7499
 Day 4..... 2209 words. Total words to date..... 9708
 Day 5..... 4214 words. Total words to date..... 13922
 Day 6..... 2299 words. Total words to date..... 16221
 Day 7..... 2136 words. Total words to date.....18357

Total fiction words for January..... 8649
 Total fiction words for 2023..... 8649
 Total nonfiction words for January... 2840
 Total nonfiction words for the year..... 2840
 Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 11489

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 0
 Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
 Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0
 Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 71
 Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
 Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
 Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer because of my zen-like non-process. If you want to learn it too, either hang around or download my [Journal Archives](#), read them, and try WITD for yourself. The archives are free.

A Quick Exchange

January 5, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * A Quick Exchange
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“It is my conclusion that the human mind and body is essentially a single cell rechargeable battery that is charged from the atmospheric DC voltage and the Earth.” Steven Magee, Health Forensics

“The creative process is not controlled by a switch you can simply turn on or off—it’s with you all the time.” Alvin Ailey

A Quick Exchange Between Pro Writers

Yesterday in the Journal I wrote “Or maybe when I access my creative subconscious I’m drawing back a curtain on another dimension, another place, one in which my characters are actually living their ongoing story. Maybe the stories I record for them are only slices of the life they’re living in that other place.”

[Dan Baldwin](#), professional fiction writer, article writer, ghostwriter, and pendulum dowser sent me this:

“I think there may be something to this. My swinging a rock on a string and an on-going reading leads me to think so. Quantum mechanics makes my head swim, but the more I read up on it, the more this seems not only possible, but probable.”

I wrote back, “It’s what I believe, firmly. But the point is, it doesn’t matter. Whether we pull back a curtain on another dimension, access characters and stories that are taking place in our own imagination, or stumble upon some sheer magic, the point is that we get to be the first ever to see, hear and record that particular story for that particular set of characters. Thanks for helping me clarify.”

You can learn more about Dan at [Four Knights Press](#).

Folks, a truly amazing world awaits once you’re able to respect your characters, release control of them, and let them tell the story that they, not you, are living.

Would you want someone else to construct YOUR story, controlling everything you say and do? Of course not. This is exactly the same thing. You have as much right to construct someone else’s story from your external point of view as someone else has to construct your story from their point of view.

DWS wrote recently that he’ll write a post soon about his own writing. I’m eagerly anticipating that. I’ll be interested to see whether he mentions returning to a daily word count goal.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Dear writer: Advice on prioritizing your to-do list” at <https://on.substack.com/p/writer-advice-hilary-fitzgerald-campbell>. Something I received via email and thought some of you might enjoy.

See “Chaos and Creating Fiction” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/chaos-and-creating-fiction/>.

See “The Author-Creator Marketing Playbook” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-author-creator-marketing-playbook/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 430 words

Writing of Santa Fe: A New Office (novel, WCG8, Santa Fe 3)

Day 1..... 2815 words. Total words to date..... 2815
Day 2..... 2034 words. Total words to date..... 4849
Day 3..... 2650 words. Total words to date..... 7499
Day 4..... 2209 words. Total words to date..... 9708
Day 5..... 4214 words. Total words to date..... 13922
Day 6..... 2299 words. Total words to date..... 16221
Day 7..... 2136 words. Total words to date..... 18357
Day 8..... 1688 words. Total words to date..... 20045

Total fiction words for January..... 10337
Total fiction words for 2023..... 10337
Total nonfiction words for January... 32370
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 3270
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 13607

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 71
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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The Secret to Being Prolific, Part 1

January 6, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * The Secret to Being Prolific, Part 1
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“Can’t never did anything.” My stepmom, about 65 years ago when I complained that I couldn’t do something. As usual, she was right.

“When I sat down at my writing computer before this, I never saw the words I was typing. I was living in the story, with the characters, enjoying my romp through their world. Just like I was reading a book, that’s how I typed.” Dean Wesley Smith

“Content Warning: This article discusses weight loss, disordered eating, and the lie that being smaller makes you more worthy. Use caution and don’t forget you are already good.” from some editor at Book Riot (see “Of Interest”)

Note: Not one time, ever, in my 70 years have I heard, read, or inferred from anything I read or heard that “being smaller makes you more worthy.” Not once. And as for the chance that everyone who reads the “content warning” above is “already good,” the editor probably should boil or bake them for a set period of time and then season them to taste before dropping that little bit of judgement. Or maybe s/he/it should resign as General Manager of the ***** Universe and stop making blanket, participation trophy declarations in the first place. Okay, rant over.

The Secret to Being Prolific, Part 1

I brought this post forward from September of last year. The timing felt right. I’ve substantially updated it and cut it into two parts.

First, the secret to being a prolific fiction writer has nothing to do with typing speed. Let’s put that myth to rest right up front. Most fiction writers who are focused on Story instead of being focused on words or sentences write about 1000 to 1500 words per hour.

That sounds fast, but it isn’t. It’s only 17 words per minute at the low end and 25 words per minute at the high end. If you passed your high school typing class, you typed considerably faster than that.

In my own class, some hit 120 wpm. My own rate was about 60 wpm. That equates to 3600 words per hour, yet my own fiction-writing speed ranges from 1100 to 1300 words per hour.

I know one fiction writer who, on average, generates 3000 words per hour. Even that is only 50 words per minute, so there’s no fear you’ll start a wildfire at 1000 words per hour.

But to do that, as I alluded to above, you have to be focused on Story, not individual words or sentences. Just learning to focus on Story will move you from Stage 2 to Stage 3 as a fiction writer.

To do so, you only have to believe in yourself. Trust yourself and trust your characters. Just tell the story as it unfolds as you run through it with the characters. It really is that easy.

If you're writing much slower than 1000 words per hour, I'm sorry to be the bearer of bad news, but you're writing from the critical mind. You're focused so tightly on individual words and sentences that you are unable to see the story that's unfolding all around you.

No wonder you feel you "need" an outline. When you surface from making sure every word and sentence is perfect in itself, the outline is there as a safety net to remind you of where you want the story to go next.

Did you get that? Where YOU want the story to go next. Not where the authentic story would actually go if you allowed the characters to live it unimpeded.

But if you're mired in the myths, the authentic story the characters are living doesn't matter to you. All that truly matters is doing what someone else said you "have" to do: carefully filling in the blanks in the story you consciously constructed in your outline. Let's talk about that for a moment.

The Trap of the Critical Mind

The first thing to know is this: The conscious, critical mind can create nothing original. It can connive and plan. It can scheme. It can construct block by block. But it cannot create.

Those who are unable to trust themselves call upon the conscious mind to construct safety nets that don't need to be constructed (character sketches, outlines, signposts, etc.) and to correct the creative subconscious, which doesn't need to be corrected.

The urge to "improve" what you've written with the creative subconscious or "correct" your characters' perception of the story that they, not you, are living is a function of the conscious, critical mind's primary purpose: to protect you.

But if you second-guess and correct your characters often enough, they'll stop bringing you story ideas, and soon they'll stop telling you stories too.

Writers who have trouble coming up with story ideas are writers who are steeped in the myths.

They actually trust Other Writers more than they trust themselves or the characters who are actually *living* the story. Think about that. And please, someone (anyone) explain to me how that makes any kind of rational sense.

Every time writers invoke the conscious, critical mind to correct what they wrote with the creative subconscious, it moves them farther from the authentic story and farther from their own unique, original voice. You won't find that in any how-to books on writing (except maybe mine or Dean Wesley Smith's) but it's the unpopular truth.

Invoking the conscious, critical mind is the worst kind of creative self-sabotage, and the writers' fear of failure wins. For a great deal more, see [Quiet the Critical Mind \(and Write Fiction\)](#).

I'll post Part 2 tomorrow. Talk with you again then.

Of Interest

See "Forgot One Thing... Writing" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/forgot-one-thing-writing/>.

See "Keep On Writing?" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/01/reader-friday-keep-on-writing.html>.

See "Lies Diet Books Tell" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/lies-diet-books-tell/>. The content warning triggered me. (grin)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 960 words

Writing of Santa Fe: A New Office (novel, WCG8, Santa Fe 3)

Day 1..... 2815 words. Total words to date..... 2815
Day 2..... 2034 words. Total words to date..... 4849
Day 3..... 2650 words. Total words to date..... 7499
Day 4..... 2209 words. Total words to date..... 9708
Day 5..... 4214 words. Total words to date..... 13922
Day 6..... 2299 words. Total words to date..... 16221
Day 7..... 2136 words. Total words to date..... 18357
Day 8..... 1688 words. Total words to date..... 20045
Day 9..... 2712 words. Total words to date..... 22757

Total fiction words for January..... 13049
Total fiction words for 2023..... 13049
Total nonfiction words for January... 4230
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 4230
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 17279

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 71
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer because of my zen-like non-process. If you want to learn it too, either hang around or download my Journal Archives <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives/>, read them, and try WITD for yourself. The archives are free.

The Secret to Being Prolific, Part 2

January 7, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * The Secret to Being Prolific, Part 2
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“Can't never did anything.” My stepmom, about 65 years ago when I complained that I couldn't do something. As usual, she was right.

“Can't died in the house of trying.” Yvonne C. (via Bob B.)

“Creativity requires the courage to let go of certainty.” Erich Fromm

“We have to continually be jumping off cliffs and developing our wings on the way down.” Kurt Vonnegut

“I never made one of my discoveries through the process of rational thinking.” Albert Einstein

No fiction writing here yesterday. Went to SV, ate more than I should have, didn't feel like writing when I got back. (grin) I'll write today.

The Secret to Being Prolific, Part 2

As I wrote in [Part 1 of this post](#), becoming prolific as a fiction writer has nothing to do with speed or how fast you type. It has everything to do with how much time you spend in the chair. And believe it or not, it's all simple math.

For most jobs, you're expected to work 8 hours per day, maybe with up to an hour off for lunch. That's still 7 hours per day, usually five days per week.

If you did that as a writer and took an hour off for lunch, you'd produce 7000 words per day. Even if you took weekends off, that's 35,000 words per week. That's a short novel.

But to be clear, that's if you spend the time WRITING, which means putting new words on the page.

Note: this includes time for cycling—a quick read-through with the creative subconscious during which the fingers rest on the keyboard and the characters add or correct things they missed as the story was unfolding—but it does not include time for revision or rewriting or any of the other silly myth-driven actions that are functions of the conscious, critical mind.

We fiction writers are blessed. Some of use are even spoiled. If we turn out even a 60,000 word novel twice a year, we're considered "prolific."

Think about that. In the first 7 months of 2022, I wrote 13 novels, an average of one every 14 days. So I could *literally* work 4 weeks—28 days—per year, write two 60,000-word novels during that time, then take the other 48 weeks off and be considered a prolific fiction writer. I'd have to write, on average, 4286 words per day. That's four hours per day, focused on Story.

Again, it's all math. There are 52 weeks in a year. If we write only five days per week, that's 260 days per year. So to write two 60,000 word novels over a period of a year would require us to show up to work only five days per week for only a half-hour per day (462 words per day). Not a bad gig, is it?

If you want to actually BE prolific (vs. simply being considered prolific by those who don't have a clue), first, let's back away from spending 7 or 8 hours per day in the chair. After all, as too many of us say, we don't have a "real" job and we have a life.

So let's say we go half-time. Say we show up and do our job only three or four hours per day. Even if we still only show up five days per week, that's 15,000 to 20,000 words per week, or 780,000 to 1,040,000 words per year.

Yes. That's over one million words per year, working only 4 hours per day, five days per week. And if we show up only 2 hours per day, five days per week to practice our chosen profession, that's still 10,000 words per week and 520,000 words per year. That's 4 and 1/3 120,000 word novels or 8 and 2/3 60,000 word novels per year. Now THAT's prolific. Math doesn't lie.

But I'm not recommending you sit for three or four hours at a stretch. Take a break at least once every hour, even if it's only to get up and walk away and back.

Likewise, if you have non-writing chores to do, you can attend to those too. Write for an hour, do something else, then come back and write for another hour. The lesson here is to Keep Coming Back. Show your chosen profession the respect and dedication it deserves.

Again, it's all simple math.

To write a 120,000 word novel in 3 months requires no more than an hour and a half of writing per day. That's 1333 words per day on average for 90 straight days or 1464 words words per day on average for 82 days (taking weekends off).

So why aren't all novelists writing at least 4 novels per year?

I honestly don't know, except that so many, including me at one time, have fallen for the bullshi* that you can't write a good story without input from a bunch of other people, and without involving the conscious, critical mind to second guess everything your creative subconscious creates. Yet if you stop to really think about that, the inanity of it will strike you full force.

If you believe in yourself as a capable human being, and if you trust your characters and enjoy recording the story as you watch it unfold, you really are limited only by how fast you can type or speak into a voice recorder. Erle Stanley Gardner, the pulp writer who created Perry Mason, dictated up to 10,000 words of fiction in a day. Of course, he had a typist to transcribe it for him, but still. The sky really is the limit.

If you don't trust your characters, well, then while you're hovering in place over that one novel, second-guessing your characters and moving farther from your unique, original voice, prolific writers will be turning out 4 or 6 or 12 or 24 novels per year.

It really is all up to you. I hope for your sake you will choose not to bend to the unreasoning fear. Remember, can't never did anything.

Talk with you again then.

Of Interest

See "Forgot One Thing... Writing" (comments) at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/forgot-one-thing-writing/#comments>.

See "More IP Valuation" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/more-ip-valuation/>. Including a fun little quiz.

See "Parody under copyright and trade mark law..." at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/parody-under-copyright-and-trade-mark-law-key-guidance-from-zorro-and-the-italian-supreme-court/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1010 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal (WCG8SF3)

Day 1..... 2815 words. Total words to date..... 2815
Day 2..... 2034 words. Total words to date..... 4849
Day 3..... 2650 words. Total words to date..... 7499
Day 4..... 2209 words. Total words to date..... 9708
Day 5..... 4214 words. Total words to date..... 13922
Day 6..... 2299 words. Total words to date..... 16221

Day 7..... 2136 words. Total words to date..... 18357
Day 8..... 1688 words. Total words to date..... 20045
Day 9..... 2712 words. Total words to date..... 22757

Total fiction words for January..... 13049
Total fiction words for 2023..... 13049
Total nonfiction words for January... 5240
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 5240
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 18289

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 71
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer because of my zen-like non-process. If you want to learn it too, either hang around or download my Journal Archives at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives/>, read them, and try WITD for yourself. The archives are free.

“Um, You Weren’t There”

January 8, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * “Um, You Weren’t There”
- * A Fun Diversion
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“When you reach for the stars you may not quite get one, but you won’t come up with a handful of mud, either.” Leo Burnett

“The hardest thing to explain is the glaringly evident which everybody has decided not to see.”
Ayn Rand

“There are two ways to be fooled. One is to believe what isn’t true; the other is to refuse to believe what is true.” Soren Kierkegaard

“Um, You Weren’t There”

I learned a very long time ago that for a concept to sink in so I could finally realize its truth and use it, sometimes I had to hear the concept three or four (or more) times in different ways.

Consequently, when I started passing along what I’d learned, I carried with me the assumption that those who might not understand a concept I expressed in one way might understand it if I expressed it in another.

One of the most valuable concepts to learn is perfectly articulated in the old saw, “A writer is the worst judge of his or her own work.” That statement is absolutely true, but I’ve finally realized its essence: “A writer should never judge his or her own work.” Let me ‘splain.

Many writers, when they believe their story is good, fall back on that saying: “Well, I’m the worst possible judge of my own work, so the story can’t *really* be good.”

Pause here for a moment. Read that paragraph again, and this time notice the obvious lockstep with the standard myth that you aren’t good enough, skilled enough, knowledgeable enough, talented enough, etc. to create a fiction on your own.

Now, please allow me a digression:

The gaggle who promote that myth have thrown you under the wheels of a bus so they can then pull you back out in the nick of time and appear to save you by selling you their latest book on how to write fiction.

In that book, they will say *nothing* that hasn’t been said at least a million times since the fervor for the myths started in the 1940s. Some of you probably own books that all mimic the same advice, though it’s sometimes worded a little differently.

They and those who don’t know any better (see any group or board populated with young writers) will tell you endlessly that you need to plan, plot, and outline before you write.

That you then need to read critically what you’ve written, revise it, and then seek critical input from others who will read your story critically with an eye as to how they would have written it. As Twain wrote (paraphrasing), No urge is greater than the urge to change what another person wrote.

Interesting here to note, of the members of your critique group, they will never read your story as it was meant to be read, for pleasure. If they read it at all after it’s published, they will read it only to see whether you’ve done what they recommended.

After that “process” Those who write the how-to books and others who propagate the myths will tell you that you need to rewrite your story. Then you need to submit it to beta readers and sensitivity readers and others who, like the members of your critique group, will actively look for things that don’t please them. Of course, more rewrites will follow.

And with every critical, conscious-mind revision and rewrite, you veer farther and farther from your characters' unique, original, authentic story and your own unique, original, authentic authorial voice.

That's the end of my digression. Thank you.

Pause here for a moment.

Take a deep breath and think way back about the very first story you ever told. Not the first story you wrote, but the first one you told. (You might have thought of it as a lie.)

Remember? You were making up stories long before you even knew there was such a thing as the alphabet or how to manipulate the letters into words and sentences with a pencil on a Big Chief tablet.

You can still do that.

You have been absorbing Story subliminally your entire life. Subconsciously, you know different types of story structure. You've read them in novels and short stories, and you've watched and heard them on television and in films.

When you come in excited or agitated from a recent trip in your car, maybe just to the grocery store and back, and tell your significant other what happened, why you're so excited or agitated, you're telling a story.

You do so without seeking input. You do so without revision or rewording. You simply report what happened, probably slanted slightly to emphasize the more important facts while downplaying those that are less important or don't matter at all to the current story.

And again, you do so without seeking input. In fact, if someone so much as mutters "That couldn't have happened" you become indignant and defend your story: "Um, excuse me, but you weren't there!"

Here I'm reminded of a discussion Lee Child had with his New York editor over lunch. The editor talked about a certain mini-scene and said how wonderful it would be if it had occurred at a different place in the book.

Lee nodded. "I agree. That would be better. But that isn't what happened." That was Lee Child saying to his editor, "You weren't there."

So why don't we as writers take that same indignant attitude about the fiction we write? Why don't we defend our work, vigorously? Why don't we tell other members of our critique group, "Um, you weren't there!" Or for that matter, why do we employ a critique group at all?

The number one reason is that old saying again: We are the worst judge of our own work.

Okay. You're right. I agree. After all, I started this post by saying that old saw is true. We really are the worst judge of our own work. That's an important concept to remember.

But also remember the concept is true both ways. When we think a story we've written is good, that's because we are the worst judge of our own work.

But equally importantly, when we think a story we've written is BAD, that too is because we are the worst judge of our own work.

And that, at long last, is my point: The two attitudes cancel each other out. You ARE the worst judge of your own work, period. Good OR bad. Deal with it.

"You ARE the worst judge of your own work, period.

Good OR bad. Deal with it.

And that's a long-winded way of illustrating that your opinion of your own work simply doesn't matter.

So why bother trying to judge your own story at all? Write it, publish it (or submit it) and move on to the next story.

Put it out there so readers can decide for themselves whether it's good or bad. It isn't your place to prejudge for readers what they will or won't like.

And as for the members of your critique group, their opinion matters even less than yours does. Why? Because when the story happened, um, they weren't there.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See "And a Lawyer Friend Said, "I Told You So."" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/and-a-lawyer-friend-said-i-told-you-so/>.

See "Are You Making Less Money..." at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/are-you-making-less-money-with-your-writing-at-the-moment-youre-not-alone/>. See PG's take.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1250 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal (WCG8SF3)

Day 1..... 2815 words. Total words to date..... 2815

Day 2..... 2034 words. Total words to date..... 4849

Day 3..... 2650 words. Total words to date..... 7499
Day 4..... 2209 words. Total words to date..... 9708
Day 5..... 4214 words. Total words to date..... 13922
Day 6..... 2299 words. Total words to date..... 16221
Day 7..... 2136 words. Total words to date..... 18357
Day 8..... 1688 words. Total words to date..... 20045
Day 9..... 2712 words. Total words to date..... 22757
Day 10... 3052 words. Total words to date..... 25809

Total fiction words for January..... 16101
Total fiction words for 2023..... 16101
Total nonfiction words for January... 6490
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 6490
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 22591

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 71
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer because of my zen-like non-process. If you want to learn it too, either hang around or download my Journal Archives at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives/>, read them, and try WITD for yourself. The archives are free.

A New Story Posted to Stanbrough Writes

January 9, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * A New Story Posted to Stanbrough Writes
- * Of Interest

A New Story Posted to Stanbrough Writes

I just remembered this morning it's been a week or so since I posted a story over there, so I posted one. To see it, click the Story of the Week tab over at <https://harveystanbroughwrites.com/>.

The title of the current story is “Going Back.” There are several other stories below that in different genres. This one has a butt-ugly cover but it’s a pretty good story. I’ve often thought of expanding it into a novel.

No fiction writing yesterday. I watched football all day. Today I’ll return to the story, but once the sun comes up I’ll also be working with my neighbor to repair the water well and restore service to our house.

Talk with you again then.

Of Interest

See “Workshops Still Open” at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/workshops-still-open/>.

See “Tesla driver who fell asleep...” at <https://interestingengineering.com/transportation/tesla-driver-autopilot-trigger-police-officers>. A new candidate for Moron of the Week and maybe story ideas.

See “Georgia vs. TCU” at <https://www.si.com/fannation/college/cfb-hq/ncaa-football-picks/georgia-tcu-game-college-football-playoff-national-championship-prediction-preview>. Not about writing, but TCU being there is a big deal.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 180 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal (WCG8SF3)

Day 1..... 2815 words. Total words to date..... 2815
Day 2..... 2034 words. Total words to date..... 4849
Day 3..... 2650 words. Total words to date..... 7499
Day 4..... 2209 words. Total words to date..... 9708
Day 5..... 4214 words. Total words to date..... 13922
Day 6..... 2299 words. Total words to date..... 16221
Day 7..... 2136 words. Total words to date..... 18357
Day 8..... 1688 words. Total words to date..... 20045
Day 9..... 2712 words. Total words to date..... 22757
Day 10... 3052 words. Total words to date..... 25809

Total fiction words for January..... 16101
Total fiction words for 2023..... 16101
Total nonfiction words for January... 6670
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 6670
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 22771

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date.....	0
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date...	0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	71
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer because of my zen-like non-process. If you want to learn it too, either hang around or download my Journal Archives at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives/>, read them, and try WITD for yourself. The archives are free.

Heinlein's Rule 4

January 10, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Went Out and Played
- * SNAFU 1—Rose's Story
- * SNAFU 2 (No, I am not kidding)—Blackwell Ops 8
- * Comments Matter
- * Of Interest

Quote of the Day

“Just because electronic copying is very simple to do and happens trillions of times per day on computers around the world doesn't mean that making an electronic copy of a bunch of organized electrons that are protected by copyright law is not a violation of copyright law.” The Passive Guy

Went Out and Played

Day before yesterday, the well that provides our water developed a severe leak, so it had to be turned off and repaired. As it turned out, moles had dug down beneath a PVC-pipe T, causing it to sag and, over time, to pop loose. That was day before yesterday.

Yesterday, I donned lace-up boots and played in the mud (black clay) for about an hour before the neighbor (and landlord, it's his well) was called away. I came here and wrote this.

When he was ready again he came back, tied-in a PVC pipe T among three existing pipes and we had water again.

I wrote most of today's edition of the Journal yesterday. You'll see why.

SNAFU 1—Rose's Story

Turns out I am dumber than a post. I finished *The Stirchians: Rose's Story* last year. November 24th to be exact. I had to look it up. Why?

Because while I was clearing up the desktop on my business computer, I ran across my first reader's input for the story.

So I opened the docx file, glanced over it, and sure enough, I hadn't added my first reader's input.

So I opened the book's folder. I hadn't designed a cover or created a promo doc either. Which means I hadn't published it. Fell off Heinlein's Rule 4 again.

I do that quite often with short stories. I have several at the moment that I haven't published yet. Maybe I'll combine them in a collection titled *Unpublished Until Now* or something just to get them off my desk. But I try to go ahead and publish novels since I went to the "trouble" of writing them and, ostensibly, there are readers waiting.

Anyway, I added Russ's corrections to the Word document, designed a cover, saved the cover in my three favorite sizes (2000 x 3000, 300 x 450, and 180 x 270), drew up a promo doc and published the stupid thing. That took a few hours.

It's ironic. I was in a hurry to write that story because I knew there were readers waiting for the sequel to *The 13-Month Turn*, yet once I finished Rose's Story I let it slip through the cracks. And there it's been, lying forgotten beneath the floorboards of my brain, for over a month.

I did at least have the good sense to add it to my inventory spreadsheet when I finished it, so it's already included in my novels numbers below. Still, how annoying is this?

Oh well, it's published now to D2D and Amazon, and I also updated the Science Fiction page on StoneThread Publishing and created a book page for Rose's Story.

If you want to see the cover and promo stuff, visit the book page at <https://stonethreadpublishing.com/the-stirchians-roses-story/>. Kind of a nifty cover when you compare it to the cover for *The 13-Month Turn* (right next to it).

SNAFU 2 (No, I am not kidding)—Blackwell Ops 8

Wow. Like I said above, dumber than a post.

Because of SNAFU 1, I went back and double-checked my inventory spreadsheet. This time I just looked along the Published column. Surprise! I found another blank spot in the entries color coded as novels.

I'm pretty much amazing at Heinlein's Rules 1-3 if I do say so myself, but by Fred, Ginger and Betty White, I really do suck at Rule 4. Go figure. Um, I'm a writer. Even the thought of the word "business" puts me to sleep.

Anyway, I finished *Blackwell Ops 8: Philip Dunstan & Macy Marie Corman* way back on August 19, 2022. It was the first of five books I wrote in 2022 as I struggled to come out of the last vestiges of the brain cloud.

As I did with *Rose's Story*, I designed a cover, created a promo doc, and uploaded and published BO-8 on D2D and Amazon. And yup, I also revised the Action Adventure/Thriller page on StoneThread Publishing and created a book page for BO-8 there. You can check it out at <https://stonethreadpublishing.com/bo-8/>.

I started late yesterday morning at 5:30. So the above silliness (including volunteering as a supervisor on the well repair for an hour) plus all the business stuff plus writing this account has taken right at seven hours. It's noon-thirty.

Oh, and there are those who somehow manage to equate designing a cover with writing a novel, as in "at least it's a creative endeavor" etc. etc. etc. And good for them, and good for you if you're one of them.

I'm not. For me, designing a cover, constructing a promo doc, formatting the manuscript, uploading, etc. is all business stuff, meaning "stuff that soaks up time I could be spending on the story." All of that stuff fails the WIBBOW rule every time in my mind.

Which is probably why I slip off Heinlein's Rule 4 so often. And why I sometimes seriously consider dropping Rule 4 altogether. Just write, then let my heirs publish the stuff (or not). Doesn't that sound wonderfully freeing?

Anyway, at about 12:30 I took a break up at the house. That turned into a trip to the grocery, and that turned into taking the rest of the day off and watching about half of the ridiculous college championship game.

Comments Matter

Hey, folks, much as I appreciate the private comments via email, it would help the Journal's visibility a ton if you would go ahead and click through to the actual post on the actual website and leave a comment.

Comments really help the circulation of the Journal (and whatever other blogs you comment on). Comments cause the bots and spiders and other creepy-crawlies to take the Journal more seriously. Thanks.

Talk with you again then.

Of Interest

See “Workshops Are In Second Week” at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/special-offer-from-me/>.

See “Controlled Digital Lending...” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/controlled-digital-lending-could-canadian-universities-find-themselves-out-on-a-limb/>. See PG’s take.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1030 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal (WCG8SF3)

Day 10... 3052 words. Total words to date..... 25809

Total fiction words for January..... 16101

Total fiction words for 2023..... 16101

Total nonfiction words for January... 7700

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 7700

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 23801

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 71

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

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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A Fun Diversion

January 11, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * A Fun Diversion
- * Of Interest

Quote of the Day

“When everything seems to be going against you, remember that the airplane takes off against the wind, not with it.” Henry Ford

By Way of Example, A Fun Diversion

I just did some math. In 2021 I was on pace to surpass 1,000,000 words of fiction in a year for the first time. So we’re all on the same page, let me ‘splain what I mean by “on pace”:

In the first 7 months of 2021 (through August 2) I wrote 623,282 words of fiction. Divided by 7, that was 89,040 words per month. Had I kept up that same pace, the next five months would have brought another 445,201 words for a total of 1,068,483 words of fiction on the year.

Then I did something stupid and wasn’t able to write for almost a year. (I say almost a year because I actually started *Blackwell Ops 8* with 8000 words in May, then added to it through June and July and wrapped it in August.)

So I thought I’d see whether I reached the one million words in those two fragments of years: the first 7 months of 2021 and the last 5 months of 2022. Once again I’m reminded you should never go looking for something you don’t really want to know. (grin)

In the first 7 months of 2021 I wrote 623,282 words in 13 novels. Then in the last 5 months of 2022 I wrote 284,661 in five novels.

So my total for that 12 months was 907,943 words in 12 novels. (grin) So I fell short of my million-word goal by a mere 92,057 words. Well, darn.

But this isn’t only a good method for looking at the past.

It’s also a great way to gauge your progress now and serve as a guide into the future. Every month or two or however often, you can check to see how you’re doing and whether you need to increase your daily word count goal.

For example, I already know, having missed my annual goal in 2021 and 2022, I’d really like to surpass 1,000,000 words of fiction this year. So that’s my annual goal for fiction.

But doing the math, I’m currently on track to fall well short this year. Ten days into the year, my current fiction total is only 20603. I divided that by 10 for a meager 2060 words per day and then multiplied that by 365 days: 751,900. I’m currently on pace to exceed, by the skin of my teeth, only three quarters of my goal.

Wow, huh? Seems I still have some work to do. I need to average 800 more words—so another good half-hour to hour in the chair *writing*—per day. (grin)

Yes, writing only 2800 words per day on average will put you over a million words on the year. The daily word count goal and the average words per day really are what matter.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “The Age of Social Media Is Ending” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-age-of-social-media-is-ending/>. Oh, but see the comments.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 460 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal (WCG8SF3)

Day 11... 4502 words. Total words to date..... 30311

Total fiction words for January..... 20603

Total fiction words for 2023..... 20603

Total nonfiction words for January... 8160

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 8160

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 28763

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 71

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

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer because of my zen-like non-process. If you want to learn it too, either hang around or download my Journal Archives at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives/>, read them, and try WITD for yourself. The archives are free.

Flash Sale: Video Seminars on DVD

January 12, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * I forgot to mention
- * Flash Sale: Video Seminars on DVD
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“We never know the whole man, though sometimes, in quick flashes, we know the true man.”
Agathe Christie *Seems appropriate for a mystery writer*

“Science debunks ‘no pain, no gain.’” *Um, how do you “debunk” something that only served as a motivational saying in the first place?*

“When a poet sees a rock in the road, he may write ‘a rock lay in the road.’ A false poet will hoke it up in the translation.” Howard Nemerov

I forgot to mention yesterday that I added a new gift to the Archives and Gifts page at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives-gifts/>. It's one of my small collections of poetry, so if you enjoy poetry, go check it out.

And if you're one of those unfortunate ones whom college professors convinced that you can't “understand” poetry, go check it out anyway. I'm not one of those snotty pretend poets with my nose pointed so heavenward that I risk drowning if it rains. As with any piece of writing, whatever a poem means to you is correct.

Anyway, I revised the Archives and Gifts page a little too, so you don't have to scroll so far.

Flash Sale: Video Seminars on DVD

This flash sale is available first only to readers of The Journal.

Back when I was still teaching in-person seminars in Tucson (2009, I believe) we actually filmed some of those presentations. Yup, me, almost live, in video and audio and with my hokey, western-twang voice.

Now, full disclosure, these are NOT studio-quality DVDs. My wife recorded them on a small video camera from the back of the room as I taught the seminars. So the lighting, voice quality, etc. is not the best.

Hence the low, low price of only \$5 per hour of instruction. Also, we're eating the shipping cost at the media mail rate.

However, the value is in the information, and the information is all there. I don't remember what we charged for these seminars, but I can guarantee you it was quite a bit more than \$5 per hour. (grin)

Now we're offering these DVDs for sale, and we don't plan to make any copies. When these are gone, that's it.

Each DVD is around three hours long and is divided into three approximately one-hour sessions.

Sorry, but no sales of single DVDs. At only \$5 per hour of instruction, we're selling these seminar DVDs only as sets.

We have only seven sets, as follows:

**A full set of all 6 DVDs.* That's 18 hours of instruction. We have five full sets of 6 DVDs, but when they're gone, they're gone. The cost is \$90.

**A set of 5 DVDs.* This one contains all of the seminars listed below EXCEPT POV & Narrative Voice. That's 15 hours of instruction. We have only one set of 5 DVDs. The cost is \$75.

**A set of 4 DVDs* that includes everything EXCEPT Writing Realistic Dialogue and POV & Narrative Voice. That's 12 hours of instruction. We have only one set of 4 DVDs. The cost is \$60.

Here are the seminar descriptions:

Writing Realistic Dialogue—Various techniques to further suspend the reader's sense of disbelief through realistic, non-linear dialogue and its nuances. Accompanied by two handouts in PDF.

Conveying Emotion Through Dialogue—Convey the emotions of the characters and manipulate the mood and emotions of the reader through the nuances of dialogue and punctuation.

Creating Realistic Characters—What causes a reader to immediately recognize and identify with a character type? What makes the individual character stand out from other characters? Why should "cardboard" or "flat" characters' dialogue be MORE colorful than that of more important characters? Includes a list of cliché character traits and a partial list of non-cliché character traits in PDF.

Writing Dialect—The old wisdom on writing dialect is a paradox: Until you know how to write dialect well, don't write it at all. Learn to take your time and think your way through dialect. What you need, what you should leave out. Includes a list of suggested words and spellings and a rationale for and against using phonetic spellings in PDF.

Point of View and Narrative Voice—POV defined, narrative voice clarified. A lot of strong narrative tips in this one, including the natural tense for narrative (and why), what "show, don't tell" really means, how to recognize and repair "passive" constructions and much more.

Writing Great Beginnings—How to grab the reader from the first sentence. Ways to turn a phrase, a look at dramatic, emotional, and dramatic-emotional sentence structures, and techniques that will have the reader leaping into the story of his/her own accord.

As you can see, these are not the things I talk about in the Journal. They have nothing to do with process or with grounding the reader or the five senses or setting or scene or any of that.

These are all pre-craft seminars. These are the foundation you need, the knowledge you need, to be able to write into the dark and attempt to adhere to Heinlein’s Rules.

If you paid rapt attention to the rules of grammar and syntax in school, and if you followed up by asking why those rules work the way they do and then explored the nuances of the language in depth, you don’t need these.

But if you didn’t, trust me, this information can only help improve your writing. Besides, if the language and punctuation are the primary tools of your trade, you should know this stuff.

To purchase any of the sets, either

1. send full payment via PayPal to harveystanbrough@gmail.com (I’ll know what the payment’s for) and include your physical shipping address, and the DVDs will go out in the next day’s post, OR

2. to pay by personal check, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com to reserve your set. Then mail your check pronto to PO Box 604, St. David AZ 85630. We’ll hold the set for you for up to one week, so mail your check promptly, and again, be sure to let us know your physical shipping address. The DVDs will go out in the post the day after your check arrives.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Kickstarter Best Practices” at <https://deanwesleymith.com/kickstarter-best-practices/>.

See “Ringing Out the Old Year With Hate Mail” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/01/ringing-out-the-old-year-with-hate-mail.html>.

See “Will AI Make Creative Workers Redundant?” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/will-ai-make-creative-workers-redundant/>. I left a comment.

See “Amazon Book Sales Statistics” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/amazon-book-sales-statistics/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1060 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal (WCG8SF3)

Day 11... 4502 words. Total words to date..... 30311

Day 12... 1098 words. Total words to date..... 31409

Total fiction words for January.....	21701
Total fiction words for 2023.....	21701
Total nonfiction words for January...	9220
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	9220
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	30923
Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date.....	0
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date...	0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	71
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer because of my zen-like non-process. If you want to learn it too, either hang around or download my Journal Archives at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives/>, read them, and try WITD for yourself. The archives are free.

Seminars on DVDs Flash Sale (Fizzled)

January 13, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Seminars on DVDs Flash Sale
- * Kris Rusch on Direct Sales
- * Of Interest

Seminars on DVDs Flash Sale (Fizzled)

I held this sale back from the general public, wanting to give Journal readers first crack. I honestly expected the seminars to sell out in an hour or so. They didn't. Knock me over with a feather.

Even one writer who earlier bemoaned the fact that she was not able to attend my live seminars in person didn't write in to buy a set. If I were still conducting live seminars, I guarantee the fee would be at least \$20 per hour, and probably more like \$40 or \$50 per hour.

Yet somehow \$5 per hour of instruction was too much. Head shaking. I have to admit, the results of this "sale" give me a new perspective on some things I thought were locked down.

For anyone reading about the sale for the first time, in a minor update, we did learn that one DVD was bad, but we still have 5 full sets of 6 DVDs (\$90 each), one set of 5 DVDs (\$75) and one set of 3 DVDs (\$45).

Folks, this is literally stuff you absolutely cannot learn anywhere else. For details, see yesterday's post at <https://hestanbrough.com/flash-sale-video-seminars-on-dvd/>. But just to be crystal clear, I will not sell any of these sets to anyone who attended the seminars live previously, so please don't offer.

Anyway, today at noon or so I'll open up the sale to Facebook and Twitter, so if any of you want any of this stuff, I suggest you email me first thing.

Kris Rusch on Direct Sales from Websites. See "Business Musings: Direct: The Year in Review Part 8" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/business-musings-direct-the-year-in-review-part-8/>.

If you can gird yourself against (or don't mind or agree with) her political commentary, I recommend looking for her other year-in-review posts and subscribing to her Business Musings blog. When it comes to writing, publishing and licensing creative works, the woman knows what she's talking about.

As an enjoyable (for me) aside, in the comments on that post at The Passive Voice, Writing Observer, a man self-described on his own website as a "newbie (wannabe) writer," nonetheless chooses to recommend against following KKR's advice. My first thought, screaming as it bounced from wall to wall in my mind, was **BASED ON WHAT?**

So in turn, I suggested maybe HE should list his writing and publishing credits and allude to his vast experience to back up any advice he gives to other writers.

People who don't have a clue what they're talking about but who insist on handing out writing advice are about as helpful as the lemming standing off to one side of the queue, handing out blindfolds to their fellows as they march toward the cliff.

But like most other "newbie (wannabe) writers" Writing Observer seems to feel entitled to display his ignorance far and wide. According to his website, he's an IT guy by trade (25 years). See, now why doesn't he blog about that?

Talk among yourselves. I might be off here for a few days. I need to focus on my current novel.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Finding Connection on Twitter" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/finding-connection-on-twitter/>.

See "Writing Insecure Characters" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/writing-insecure-characters/>. If you write what the characters give you, you cannot go wrong.

See “DeepL, the AI-based language translator, raises over \$100M at a \$1B+ valuation” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/deepl-the-ai-based-language-translator-raises-over-100m-at-a-1b-valuation/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 560 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal (WCG8SF3)

Day 11... 4502 words. Total words to date..... 30311

Day 12... 1098 words. Total words to date..... 31409

Day 13... 2743 words. Total words to date..... 34152

Total fiction words for January..... 24444

Total fiction words for 2023..... 24444

Total nonfiction words for January... 9780

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 9780

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 34224

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 71

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

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer because of my zen-like non-process. If you want to learn it too, either hang around or download my Journal Archives at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives/>, read them, and try WITD for yourself. The archives are free.

Some Notes

January 16, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

* Quotes of the Day

* Some Notes

* Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“The conventional army loses if it does not win. The guerrilla wins if he does not lose.” Henry Kissinger

“People who don’t have a clue about the creative process will never let that lack of knowledge interfere with criticism of a writer’s work.” Dan Baldwin

“Why can’t we have several versions of a book in digital form: an author’s cut with extra material at a premium price, a quick-read simple version for less money, a kid’s version of the adult book. It’s all possible for very little effort or money if the parties are willing. Seems like a no brainer to me.” Laurie McLean

Some Notes

Items in “Of Interest” were beginning to pile up. I urge you to look at them.

If you’re a lifelong learner, you might take a look at [Brilliant.org](https://brilliant.org). After a 7-day free trial, the cost comes out to just under \$130 per year. No, I’m not getting a kickback. It’s just something that looked interesting to me. I might try it myself.

On the other hand, there are many free resources available for learning the topic of your choice. You can find them with a simple search on the internet.

I suspect the novel will wrap in my next writing session, maybe today. We’ll see.

Sherrilyn Kenyon—

Has anyone else heard of this very prolific writer? According to Goodreads, she has written 210 novels in several series. To see them, take a look at https://www.goodreads.com/series/list/4430.Sherrilyn_Kenyon.html. I counted 19 series as well as one series of coloring books.

If you’re serious about learning the craft of writing, I suspect Ms. Kenyon is another Stephen King level writer from whom you can learn innumerable craft bits and pieces just by reading her work.

DVD Seminars—I have only one six-DVD set of the writing seminars left. The price is \$120. That’s still less than \$7 per hour.

I also have two copies each of *Conveying Emotion Through Dialogue*, *Creating Realistic Characters*, and *Writing Dialect*. I have one copy each of *Writing Realistic Dialogue* and *Writing Great Beginnings*. Each single DVD is \$25.

If you want any of the above, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com to check for availability and reserve your copy.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Here’s why faster-than-light travel leads to maddening time paradoxes” at <https://interestingengineering.com/video/faster-than-light-travel-paradoxes>. Must-see for SF writers and anyone interested in learning.

See “When a publisher might not do as good a job as a self-publishing author” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/when-a-publisher-might-not-do-as-good-a-job-as-a-self-publishing-author/>.

See “Laurie McLean’s Crystal Ball: Publishing Predictions for 2023” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/laurie-mcleans-crystal-ball-publishing-predictions-for-2023/>. I agree 1000% with her take on book banning.

See “Every book deserves to be heard” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/every-book-deserves-to-be-heard/>.

See “Do Androids Tell Electric Stories?” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/do-androids-tell-electric-stories/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 450 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal (WCG8SF3)

Day 11... 4502 words. Total words to date..... 30311

Day 12... 1098 words. Total words to date..... 31409

Day 13... 2743 words. Total words to date..... 34152

Day 14... 2785 words. Total words to date..... 36937

Day 15... 3372 words. Total words to date.....40309

Total fiction words for January..... 30601

Total fiction words for 2023..... 30601

Total nonfiction words for January... 10230

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 10230

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 40831

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 71

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

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer because of my zen-like non-process. If you want to learn it too, either hang around or download my Journal Archives at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives/>, read them, and try WITD for yourself. For now, the archives are free.

Heinlein's Rules Redux

January 17, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Heinlein's Rules Redux (you want to read this)
- * I didn't write much
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“He who is not courageous enough to take risks will accomplish nothing in life.” Muhammad Ali

“Recent experiments on mice have shown that aging is reversible and can be moved forward and backward in time.” a subheadline from the [1440 Daily Digest](#)

Heinlein's Rules Redux

I think I mentioned awhile back that Garry Rodgers, a regular contributor at TKZ, invited me to write a guest post on Heinlein's Rules for that online journal.

I assented and went back and forth about what I should contribute. Then I remembered awhile back I wrote a series of five blog posts in a row here at the Journal, all on Heinlein's Rules. I originally offered those posts as a faux interview. But they were based on questions from a real interviewer who later changed her mind and decided not to run the piece because it was too long.

So sometime in the next couple of months, Garry will post my guest blog post over in TKZ. That post will be an excerpt taken from those five posts I wrote here on the Journal back in March of 2021.

As I was putting together the excerpt, it struck me that it would be a good idea to offer that entire short series of posts as a single document. Hence, you can now download, free, “What Heinlein's Rules Mean to Me” by clicking <https://harveystanbrough.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/What-Heinleins-Rules-Mean-to-Me.pdf>.

Even if you were around to read the original posts or even if you've already downloaded the archives, you might find this a valuable addition to your writer's library.

I didn't write much while my youngest son was visiting this past weekend, but I wouldn't be at all surprised if the current novel wraps today.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Happy Public Domain Day 2023" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/01/happy-public-domain-day-2023.html>.

See "Not Writing? Have You Ego-Trapped Yourself?" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/not-writing-have-you-ego-trapped-yourself/>. If you can't bring yourself to try WITD, this might be of use to you.

See "The Half-Madness of Prince Harry" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-half-madness-of-prince-harry/>. Fiction isn't always advertised as fiction. Sometimes it's delivered as half-truths and innuendo.

See "20 Chucklesome Slang Terms From the 1910s" at <https://www.mentalfloss.com/posts/1910s-slang-terms>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 380 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal (WCG8SF3)

Day 11... 4502 words. Total words to date..... 30311
Day 12... 1098 words. Total words to date..... 31409
Day 13... 2743 words. Total words to date..... 34152
Day 14... 2785 words. Total words to date..... 36937
Day 15... 3372 words. Total words to date.....40309
Day 16... 1297 words. Total words to date..... 41606

Total fiction words for January..... 31898
Total fiction words for 2023..... 31898
Total nonfiction words for January... 10610
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 10610
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 42508

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 71
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

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On Revision (Gasp! What?)

January 19, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * The Novel Wrapped
- * On Revision (*Gasp! What?*)
- * Genre Doesn't Matter
- * Audio Lectures
- * Of Interest

Quote of the Day

“Write the slow parts fast and the fast parts slow.” Lee Child on pacing

Ooh, study that until you understand!

The Novel Wrapped

Welp, the novel wrapped with 46545 words, 1401 of which were cuts. (Note that's an average, over 18 writing days, of just over 2500 words per day. I need to increase that average if I'm to have any chance of reaching my annual goal.) I ran a spell check, deleted the cuts, saved the file in PDF and sent it off to my first reader, Russ Jones. Gracias, Russ.

And by the time I got up this morning and out to the Hovel, Russ had already read the PDF story, annotated it, and sent it back to me. So I'll design a cover etc. and publish it today. Not sure when I'll start the next one.

But yesterday after the novel wrapped, while the following was fresh in my mind, I came here to write this.

On Revision

I understand that I'm taking a bit of a chance here.

Revision is a topic I very seldom talk about in the Journal (other than to say “Don’t Do It!”) because it’s SO easy to confuse young writers. Especially with the glut of writers and would-be writers out there in all directions saying you should outline, write, REVISE, seek criticism, rewrite, blah blah blah.

So the first question I expect to receive is, “Well, if it’s all right to revise (conscious, critical mind) sometimes, then why isn’t it all right all the time?”

So I surrender. If you want to follow the “outline, write, revise, seek criticism, rewrite, blah blah blah” crowd and construct your stories instead of creating them, knock yourself out. I really don’t care.

Of course, you’ll always wonder what it might have been like to write into the dark, whether it really was as freeing as I’ve tried to tell you, but you’ll never know. But hey, that’s on you, not me.

For those of you who are still reading, first, this will change NOTHING I’ve taught you before: You cannot CREATE anything with your rational, conscious, critical mind. It isn’t a failing on your part. It simply can’t be done.

The rational, conscious, critical mind CONSTRUCTS, it doesn’t create. If you want to build a story or novel block by pre-planned block, go ahead. You can even call it a “creation” if you want, but you know it’s a false construction.

That said, occasionally I do invoke my conscious, critical mind to revise. There, I said it. Now let me explain it. I don’t revise what has happened as the story unfolded but how many times I’ve reported what happened.

By the way, if you’re advanced enough in your skill set, you might find this technique useful yourself. If you aren’t there yet, don’t worry about it. I wasn’t there until around the middle of 2020. You’ll be able to use it someday.

First, though, a quick warning. Be very cautious. When you do what I’m about to explain, you aren’t looking to change story content. And if the content hasn’t already been revealed, you can’t do this anyway, at least not the way I’m about to explain it.

Remember, just like in your life (your story) the characters’ story unfolds as they live it. Your first task as a fiction writer is to be true to your characters, to write down what happens in their world and what they say and do in response.

So when I say you shouldn’t revise content, that’s exactly what I mean. You shouldn’t revise what happens in your characters’ world or what they say or do in their reaction to it.

Now—in almost all of my novels and even in some of my short stories, the final high-action scene—the climax, not the ending or denouement—often unfolds from the vantage point of more

than one POV character. As a result, sometimes information is repeated unnecessarily (place emphasis on “unnecessarily”).

I hasten to add, knowing when and how often to repeat information, and knowing what information to repeat, is an advanced skill in and of itself.

But unnecessary repetition will dull the excitement of a scene, and it will kill the story, especially if it crops up in the big climax.

So when I’m writing a story like the one I just finished, in which the events of the climax are reported through the senses of more than one POV character, first, I still cycle back routinely to let the characters touch the story again to make sure they haven’t omitted anything they wanted to include. Of course, I do that with my creative subconscious.

(To learn about cycling, key “cycling” into the Search box in the sidebar at <https://hestanbrough.com> or search the archives for the term.)

But then I read through it again—critically, this time—comparing the various POV characters’ accounts. NOT TO CHANGE any part of any of those accounts, but to be absolutely sure the accounts mesh without stepping on each others’ toes. To make sure any repetition is warranted and not excessive, and to make sure the climax is as squeaky clean as I can help make it in my role as an outsider.

Okay, the floor is open for questions or comments. Please visit <https://hestanbrough.com/on-revision-gasp-what/> and use the Comment form so everyone can benefit.

If you email me with a question or comment, that’s fine, but if I believe my response would benefit other writers, I’ll use it in a comment myself, or in another post.

Genre Doesn’t Matter

I was telling someone a few days ago, a writer asked me once whether I could edit a novel in a specific genre. My response was a dry, “If it’s written in the English language, you’re in luck.” (I no longer copyedit for others.)

I’ve spent several decades trying to convince writers that poetry techniques are useful in fiction (and vice versa), and that how various craft techniques (suspense, pacing, POV, narrative voice, punctuation, and so on) are applied is equally important across ALL genres.

Likewise learning, absorbing new knowledge across all fields of interest is important regardless of what genre(s) you write. I once had a woman tell me she would never even read Heinlein’s Rules “because I don’t write science fiction.”

Another woman who writes two 60,000 word novels per year refused to try the five senses exercise. “I know enough,” she said. “I don’t want to learn anything else.”

Wow.

Now we can't help being ignorant of one thing or another. Nobody knows everything. But intentional ignorance, especially on the part of a writer of fiction, borders on stupidity.

As a writer of fiction, you should glean new knowledge, new information, from every source available to you. I don't mean information about writing, I mean information in general, information that will expand your horizons.

One of my favorite sources of information is the free [Interesting Engineering newsletter](#).

The other is the free (and politically unbiased) newsletter 1440 Daily Digest. You can sign up for that at DailyDigest@email.join1440.com. We're far too limited as it is. Don't limit yourself further.

Audio Lectures

I haven't mentioned these for quite awhile, but even as the DVD video lectures go away, I still have audio lectures, and I can deliver them almost instantly via email. They are very low cost at only \$5 per session, and they range from 2 or 3 sessions on up to 9 or 10.

To see what I offer in audio lectures, visit <https://harveystanbrough.com/lecture-series/>.

And while I'm at it, see my books on writing at <https://stonethreadpublishing.com/writing-books/>. If you order from me directly, there's a discount involved.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Writing Classes" at <https://deanwesleymsmith.com/writing-classes/>. This kickstarter ends at 7 p.m. today or tomorrow.

See "Using ChatGPT as a Blog Research and Writing Tool" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/01/using-open-ai-chatgpt-as-a-blog-research-and-writing-tool.html>.

See "OpenAI Used Kenyan Workers on Less Than \$2 Per Hour to Make ChatGPT Less Toxic" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/openai-used-kenyan-workers-on-less-than-2-per-hour-to-make-chatgpt-less-toxic/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1340 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal (WCG8SF3)

Day 1..... 2815 words. Total words to date..... 2815
Day 2..... 2034 words. Total words to date..... 4849
Day 3..... 2650 words. Total words to date..... 7499
Day 4..... 2209 words. Total words to date..... 9708
Day 5..... 4214 words. Total words to date..... 13922
Day 6..... 2299 words. Total words to date..... 16221
Day 7..... 2136 words. Total words to date..... 18357
Day 8..... 1688 words. Total words to date..... 20045
Day 9..... 2712 words. Total words to date..... 22757
Day 10... 3052 words. Total words to date..... 25809
Day 11... 4502 words. Total words to date..... 30311
Day 12... 1098 words. Total words to date..... 31409
Day 13... 2743 words. Total words to date..... 34152
Day 14... 2785 words. Total words to date..... 36937
Day 15... 3372 words. Total words to date..... 40309
Day 16... 1297 words. Total words to date..... 41606
Day 17... 2885 words. Total words to date..... 44506
Day 18... 2039 words. Total words to date..... 46545 (Done)

Total fiction words for January..... 36822
Total fiction words for 2023..... 36822
Total nonfiction words for January... 10950
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 10950
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 48772

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer because of my zen-like non-process. If you want to learn it too, either hang around or download my Journal Archives at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives/>, read them, and try WITD for yourself. For the time being, the archives are free.

Famous Writers Speak, and A New Novel

January 20, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

I did not want to embed videos in this post. I wanted only to display links. Why does WordPress and other platforms (ahem, Substack) remove our ability to choose? What does it possibly matter to them?

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Famous Writers Speak
- * A Novel Published
- * A New Novel
- * Of Interest

Quote of the Day

“[T]rust your own writing and voice. Act like an artist instead of a doormat for heaven's sake.”
Dean Wesley Smith

Famous Writers Speak

I hope I've been intelligent enough to share these with you before, but just in case, here they are in a lot. I strongly recommend you listen to them, closely, as you have time. And bookmark them if you want. I won't be sharing them again.

Note: I didn't make the links active, so you'll have to copy and paste them into your browser. If I'd made them active Substack would have automatically imbedded each video.

UPDATE: Well, apparently even WordPress automatically imbedded the videos. I don't know how to stop them from doing that, so I won't be posting anymore links to videos after this.

Dean Wesley Smith

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=71Q8aw5jzrE>

Stephen King

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gNvw0BcO_FM

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AgxqQV8hX8U>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=829vaz2CxiI>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rRD7JJPeIM>

Lee Child

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ovTDIqMCCn0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BiEAQIzBjoM>

Lee Child and George R. R. Martin

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IwgUHLQCyR0>

James Lee Burke

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=msD9mFZKXt8>

No doubt there are other YouTube videos available by these folks and others if you only do a quick search.

Keying in a name of someone from whom you would like to learn, clicking Search and then listening is a pretty small price to pay to learn from accomplished writers. Of course, I could be wrong.

Hint: This is about WRITING and STORY, so I suggest you key in the names of writers whose emphasis is on writing and storytelling, not their personal biases, political beliefs, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, etc.

A Novel Published

As I was publishing *Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal* yesterday, a feeling came over me that there would be probably three more titles in the Gap series over all. I'm not sure where that feeling came from, but I'll run with it.

See the cover and description for *Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal* at <http://stonethreadpublishing.com/wes-crowley-deputy-us-marshal/>.

And to see how the Gap series is branded, visit <https://stonethreadpublishing.com/the-wes-crowley-series/>. Compare the covers from the third book in the first row to the last book in the second row. That's the current Gap series.

A Brief History—For those of you who aren't aware, I initially wrote a short story that featured Wes. Then I wrote a novel and two sequels. Then I wrote three prequels to the first novel followed by six more sequels to complete the 12-volume Wes Crowley saga. I thought (feared) that was all of the story.

But one day I noticed there was a 16-year gap between books 2 and 3 of that saga. And to be honest, I missed hanging out with Wes. So I started writing books to fill-in that gap. Hence, the Wes Crowley Gap series.

After I wrote the first five books of that series, the sixth one veered off into a new subseries: Santa Fe. And so far I've written three novels in that series. So that's where we are now.

Of course, I'm not only a writer of period westerns. I also have action-adventure, suspense (thriller), science fiction and science fantasy, crime-PI-detective novels plus a police procedural or two. Browse the tabs over at [StoneThread Publishing](http://StoneThreadPublishing.com).

A New Novel

Anyway, *Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal* was the 20th novel in the Wes Crowley saga, the 8th in the Gap series, and the 3rd in the Santa Fe subseries. Fun, eh?

So as I said, I had a sense from somewhere that this Gap series will probably have three more novels. It might have more than that, but I don't think it will have fewer.

And as I was publishing and glanced at the promo doc, I was also reminded of something fairly insignificant that happened in the beginning of this book, an event and characters—some old and some brand new “stimulus characters”—who will drive at least the next novel in the series.

So after I published the novel to D2D and Amazon and then came back here and wrote all this, I took a break. That expanded into a trip to the grocery in Benson, and then we treated ourselves to lunch.

We came home, I helped put away the groceries, and then I came back to the Hovel and started prepping for the next book. In my case, in this series, that means preparing the reverse-outline notepad document.

First I’ll transfer the names of places and characters who will carry over from the series into that book, then add blank chapter numbers down the left, etc. I tend to keep a running list of places and people from earlier novels at the bottom so I can find them.

An Interruption—Then, due to an unfortunate accident, I spent a couple of hours repotting a plant. We use the wide south-facing window in the front part of the Hovel as a greenhouse, and one of the plants overbalanced and fell over. Probably drinking again.

A couple hours later that plant was in a larger, more stable pot and scheduled for its first AA meeting. I’d also moved a few of the plants from the front window to the back window to give them all a bit more breathing room.

Then it was time to end the day and go relax for awhile with the TV.

This morning I’ll read back over the reverse outline and maybe the first few chapters of the novel I just finished to get those stimulus characters and their situation back into my head.

And then I’ll start fresh with the next novel. For the time being I’ll call it Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2. (The WCG9SF4 in the parentheses below stands for Wes Crowley Gap series novel 9, Santa Fe subseries novel 4).

And just like that, I’ll be off and playing again. Woohoo! I expect the first few days to be slow. Somehow, after leaving it for several years, I slipped back into watching the NFL playoffs this year. Shrug. Entertainment.

I might not be back for a few days.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See “More Copyright Valuation” at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/more-copyright-valuation/>.

See “Tips From the Masters” at <https://www.writingclasses.com/toolbox/tips-masters/>.

See “7 Incredible Technologies That Will Terrify You” at <https://join1440.com/listicles/7-incredible-technologies-that-will-terrify-you>.

See “AI Chatbots Now Let You Talk to Historical Figures...” at <https://mymodernmet.com/ai-history-chatbots/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1000 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

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

Total fiction words for January..... 36822

Total fiction words for 2023..... 36822

Total nonfiction words for January... 12950

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 12950

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 49772

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72

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

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer because of my zen-like non-process. If you want to learn it too, either hang around or download my Journal Archives at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives/>, read them, and try WITD for yourself. For the time being, the archives are free.

Being a Hobbyist and A Change of Plans

January 21, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Being a Hobbyist is Fine
- * A Change of Plans
- * Of Interest

Quote of the Day

“The person who makes a success of living is the one who sees his goal steadily and aims for it unswervingly. That is dedication.” Cecil B. DeMille

Being a Hobbyist is Fine

I received a nice email from a former seminar student. I hadn't heard from her in several years. She had requested a full set of the DVD seminars I'd offered, had received them, and wrote to say she looked forward to watching and listening to them.

She hadn't written for several years and was only now digging out from under other responsibilities enough that she thought she might start writing again. But she wasn't at all excited about it, and I understand that.

For her, writing stories is a hobby, not an overwhelming passion. It's something she enjoys doing when she feels she has time to do it. Yet she wants to do it as well as possible or not at all.

I understand that too.

My youngest son is an amateur HAM radio operator. He even runs the “head-end” for a major cable company up near Flagstaff. He was a prodigy. At 4 years old he was pointing out “radio towers” whenever we took a trip in the car.

I'm like that with writing. I wrote my first short story before I ever attended school, and even though I've done many things in my life, writing is the one thing I've always gone back to. Like Roy with his driving interest in radio signals, writing is more what I am than something I do.

On the other hand, I'm interested playing guitar and singing too, back when I could still carry a tune. (grin) I've written dozens of songs, and for several years I performed them (along with covers of others' songs) all around southwest Arizona, especially Yuma when I and another guy entertained at the Chilton and other places there.

At one time I even thought I might do that as a career. I still have a guitar, but at this point in my life I haven't played it for several years. Though I once sort of aspired to being a professional recording artist, it wasn't my passion, so it will never be more than a hobby for me.

My dual passion is writing and teaching, and I suppose that's enough.

A Change of Plans

Wow. Busy times.

My writing schedule doesn't matter to you, nor should it. But I thought I'd let you know I'm as susceptible as the next writer to changing circumstances and allowing the new reality to change my mind.

Also, my brain works very fast, but trust me, I'm not bragging. It's a blessing sometimes, like while I'm racing through a story with my characters, but it's often a curse, like when I write something in this blog and send it off, therefore cementing it in a time and place.

For example, on Thursday I said I would start a new novel, remember? I was going to read back over a few chapters of the previous novel—the early chapters that contained the catalyst characters for the upcoming novel to get those characters and their situations back in my head—and then I was going to sit down and start the next novel.

But then I had that plant emergency. (I told you about that yesterday.)

So I was going to read back and start the new novel on Friday. But I got sidetracked and spent much of the morning looking for a computer.

My writing 'puter, a little HP 11.6" ProBook, has been getting glitchy recently. Twice I've had to reset the factory settings to get it to keep working. So I've been locked into the hunt for a new computer for the past couple of weeks. I came close several times, but I could never quite pull the trigger on buying one. Something was always a little off or not quite as I wanted it to be.

Finally Friday morning everything clicked. I usually buy refurbished or open-box computers from eBay, but for some reason I went to the Amazon Restored store.

And there I found something I hadn't even thought about looking for over at eBay: a desktop computer, albeit a minuscule but very powerful one with 32GB of DDR4 Ram and a 1TB SSD. And WiFi and Bluetooth, so the keyboard and mouse are not attached via wires. I already have a great monitor.

So I bought it. It will arrive on Saturday. I spent part of Friday mid-day setting up the area for it. When it gets here I'll only have to plug it in. Until I get programs arranged, etc. (probably on Monday) I'll continue to use my current business laptop, which is now destined to either move up to the house or become my new writing 'puter.

Okay, so finally late Friday morning, I set out to find and read the chapters that contain those characters and situations. Only those situations and catalyst characters weren't in the first few chapters of the previous novel (where I thought they were). They actually appeared in the novel before that.

It's okay. I don't mind. Having written so many novels so quickly that I get people and places and situations confused is kind of a nice problem to have. (grin)

So yesterday afternoon I read over Chapters 17 through 24 of *The Road to Santa Fe* to refamiliarize myself with those situations and characters. By then, most of my day was over, so I put off the writing until this morning.

So I'll write this morning and I'll write tomorrow morning, though I plan to spend most of today and Sunday eating finger foods and watching the football playoffs. I escaped that nonsense for several years, but the play of two of the young quarterbacks especially has caught my attention.

Back in the day I watched Drew Brees play for Purdue, then followed his career with the New Orleans Saints. I also followed Peyton Manning's career from his rookie year at Indy though his brief stint with Denver. Now it's Patrick Mahomes (Texas Tech and KC Chiefs) and Joe Burrow (LSU, Cincinnati Bengals).

Who knows, I might even have a beer. (I would run with scissors too, but I can't run anymore. Too old.)

Thanks for playing along (grin). Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "The fungus in 'The Last of Us' isn't fictional. Could it infect humans?" at <https://interestingengineering.com/culture/zzombie-fungus-could-it-infect-humans>. Anyone want to write a new *The Stand*?

See "Resurrected Classic Workshops" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/resurrected-classic-workshops/>. Ahem. I've received a lot from Dean through his site, through responses to emails, and from taking some of his lectures and workshops, but I've never received any worthwhile information from feedback on homework on a workshop assignment.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1150 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

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

Total fiction words for January..... 36822

Total fiction words for 2023..... 36822

Total nonfiction words for January... 14100

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 14100

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 50922

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72

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

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer because of my zen-like non-process. If you want to learn it too, either hang around or download my Journal Archives at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives/>, read them, and try WITD for yourself. For the time being, the archives are free.

Clunking Along

January 23, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Clunking Along
- * Every Novel Writes Differently
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“Genetic control will be the weapon of the future.” Jeanette Winterson

An appropriate topic for a novel as our own federal government recommends and moves toward mandating “vaccines” that will alter the recipient’s RNA

“Have no fear of perfection—you’ll never reach it.” Salvador Dalí

“Our scientific power has outrun our spiritual power. We have guided missiles and misguided men.” Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Clunking Along

Of course, I do realize how fortunate I am to have several computers whereas some have none. This is sort of the equivalent of a guy like Vince Gill owning several guitars.

But the new computer (which is excellent) came with a wireless keyboard that is... well, clunky is the nice way to say it.

The keys travel well over a quarter-inch, and to make matters worse, they stick on the way down. In other words, it’s of the poorest possible quality. Which, sadly, is exactly what I expected when I ordered the computer. When did we communally decide it was all right to cheat each other? When did we decide being cheated was a normal, acceptable part of an “honest” transaction?

But that’s a topic for another post and another website.

As I’ve trained myself to do, I set up the excellent-quality computer and gave quiet thanks that I wouldn’t have to return it. Then I used the clunky keyboard to order a new one. It’s scheduled to

arrive sometime today. As for the current one, I won't even try to sell it. It isn't worth the price of postage to mail it.

Every Novel Writes Differently

and this one is no different. On Saturday I wrote 2880 words in one and a half chapters before I realized the first chapter felt sort of good (shrug) but the second chapter reads like a code book from some remote island in the second world war. Something just isn't right.

So I decided to scrap the whole thing and start over. I'll write today and begin reporting fresh tomorrow.

Football is over until next Sunday, so the week should hold very few distractions. (Lord, please don't make me pay for having written the previous sentence.)

By the way, there is still one full set of 6 seminars on DVD and eight individual 3-hour DVDs for sale. You can find them at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives-gifts-dvds/>.

For the seminar descriptions, see <https://hestanbrough.com/flash-sale-video-seminars-on-dvd/>.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "The worst sentence structure on the planet" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-worst-sentence-structure-on-the-planet/>. I couldn't begin to agree more.

See "The Patent Law Origins of Science Fiction" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-patent-law-origins-of-science-fiction/>. I list this mainly because it talks about Hugo Gernsback, lauded by many as the father of science fiction.

See "In-Person Workshops" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/in-person-workshops-3/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 470 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

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

Total fiction words for January..... 36822

Total fiction words for 2023..... 36822

Total nonfiction words for January... 14570

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 14570

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 51392

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date...	0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

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An Unfolding SF Idea and a Keyboard Review

January 24, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * An Unfolding Idea for an SF Novel
- * Artech HW086 Keyboard (Review)
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“The united voice of millions cannot lend the smallest foundation to falsehood.” ~ Oliver Goldsmith

“Truth is a clumsy servant that breaks the dishes while washing them.” Karl Kraus

“We’re still in the first minutes of the first day of the Internet revolution.” Scott David Cook, co-founder of Intuit

An Unfolding Idea for an SF Novel

Yesterday in Quotes of the Day I wrote these two paragraphs:

“Genetic control will be the weapon of the future.” Jeanette Winterson

An appropriate topic for a novel as our own federal government recommends and moves toward mandating “vaccines” that will alter the recipient’s RNA

Today, this rolled in from [1440 Daily Digest](#):

“US health officials propose shifting to a once-a-year COVID-19 booster for children and adults, similar to the flu shot schedule ([More](#)) | More than 80% of Americans have received at least one vaccine dose; around 15% have received a booster ([More](#))”

There you go. If you can't write a dystopian SF novel based on that, you either aren't interested in SF, are frightened of backlash from the feds, or your fingers are broken. (grin)

There's also a direct tie-in at the first link under “Of Interest.” Yet another potential breach of privacy and another step toward Orwell's Big Brother.

Understand, I'm talking only as a fiction writer here. My only concern personally is that everyone gets to choose whether to accept a so-called vaccine (um, because it isn't actually a vaccine at all). Of course, we're living in an age of what I call surface freedoms, a time when, for example, you may call a duck an eagle and everyone has to pretend to agree with you.

At this point the choice of whether to be injected is still yours, although the feds have increased the pressure by regularly invoking the dreaded “CovId-19” in advertisements and urging the public to get injected. Fear is an excellent catalyst, but ruling by fear is never a good thing.

The advertisements are now saying you are especially at risk for CovId and therefore should take the injection(s) if you engage in risky behavior. For example, if you smoke (*well, smoking marijuana's perfectly fine, but you know, not those devil tobacco products*), drink, or think for yourself.

Okay, that last one hasn't popped up in commercials yet, but I suspect that's only because it isn't a widespread phenomenon.

So anyway, I probably will never write this idea because it annoys me so much. And even if you and I both did write it, the resulting novels would be vastly different.

So if it speaks to you, feel free. Roll the above together with the first item linked to in “Of Interest” and your own research. There might even be an SF series in your future.

Artech HW086 Keyboard (Review)

In a first, ever, I thought I'd offer a review of a new (to me) piece of tech. And really, it's only right. For many of us, the keyboard we use is an integral part of the writing process. I know it is for me. And after a bunch of years I've discovered maybe my first ever favorite keyboard manufacturer. I received my new keyboard yesterday, a stainless-steel wireless [Artech Model HW086](#), and I absolutely love it. Here's why:

The keys are close enough together that I can type without reaching. That decreases the number of errors from inadvertently hitting the wrong key and the time spent backspacing or deleting, and thereby increases my actual overall writing speed.

The keystrokes are shallow enough to encourage touch typing. I feel as if my fingertips are crawling over the keyboard, yet the keys are solid enough so my fingers enjoy the experience. I can literally feel myself putting my characters' words on the page, but it isn't clunky in the slightest.

The Delete key is in the upper right corner. That's important if layout matters to you (it does to me). Essentially, this keyboard mimics the keyboard on my little 11.6" HP ProBook. You can't beat comfort when you're typing.

The keyboard is wireless, as I mentioned earlier, but it also has a built-in rechargeable battery and a charging cord.

The price was excellent. I would have paid twice as much for this much quality in a keyboard. The base price on sale was only \$17.59. My total, including tax, was only \$23.33. No shipping as I ordered through Amazon Prime. And when I looked yesterday, they even have the same model in "used, like-new" condition for only \$13.99. (Same link, scroll down on the right.)

So overall, if you are a writer and if you want a keyboard that will serve as an unintrusive, silent partner in putting new words on the page, I strongly recommend the stainless-steel, wireless [Artech Model HW086](#).

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "A breakthrough system can see through walls by using Wi-Fi routers" at <https://interestingengineering.com/innovation/see-through-walls-using-wi-fi-routers>.

See "Finding Those Laser Beam Words" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/01/finding-those-laser-beam-words.html>. Maybe good as a conscious-mind learning exercise. But while writing, if you focus on words you will lose track of Story..

See "Me, Myself, and (A)I: Copyright Office to Focus on AI Authorship" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/me-myself-and-ai-copyright-office-to-focus-on-ai-authorship/>.

See "FBI director warns about Beijing's AI program" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/fbi-director-warns-about-beijings-ai-program/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 890 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231

Total fiction words for January.....	40053
Total fiction words for 2023.....	40053
Total nonfiction words for January...	15460
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	15460
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	55513
Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date...	0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

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A Techy Morning

January 25, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Follow-Up Comment
- * A Techy Morning
- * Of Interest

Quote of the Day

“I strive to remain invisible in my writing. I want my readers to be fully aware of everything my characters are thinking and feeling, thoroughly immersed in [the story]. The moment I draw attention to myself, I show disrespect to my characters and their tribulations.

“Writerly affectations—lack of quotation marks for dialogue, impossibly long paragraphs, and the like—annoy me. They eject me from the story.” John Gilstrap in [“The Invisible Writer”](#) at KillZone blog

Follow-Up Comment

If you are racing through the story with your characters, simply recording what happens and what the characters say and do in reaction, there can be no writer affectations and readers will have no choice but to be immersed in the story.

If, on the other hand, you are focused on words and sentences instead of Story, the characters will race away through the story by themselves.

However you come to it, eventually only you can decide whether you will record the characters' authentic story and actually be a storyteller or craft and construct a false account of your own device, word by word, sentence by sentence, merely to keep up the appearance of being a storyteller.

And no, I didn't leave a comment on the original post. I don't like participating in dogpiles, especially when I'm on the bottom.

A Techy Morning

Yesterday I was not a writer. Yesterday started with a very techy morning and ended with a trip to the grocery.

The techy stuff lasted until almost noon. I had to file yesterday's edition of the Journal on one of my other computers because I didn't yet have Office or any other productivity suite on my new business computer yet. (I refer to a spreadsheet toward the end of filing a new edition of the Journal. I don't keep all the Numbers stuff manually.)

LibreOffice—So I took the opportunity to download and try LibreOffice again. Ugh. I found it full-featured (or very nearly so) but extremely clunky. Admittedly, I didn't invest a lot of time in playing with it, but in the end I didn't like the feel and look of it.

LibreOffice is of greater value, I think, to the Open-Source community of techies than it is to everyday personal and professional end users. The emphasis seems always to be on development rather than ease of use or even actual usefulness. Maybe if they'd stop comparing themselves to Word and just create a dynamite office suite.

Corel WordPerfect—I was a massive WordPerfect fan back in the day when it was first out. This was in the early to mid-1990s, so yeah, 28 to 32 years ago. Still, the rise of Microsoft Office notwithstanding, I've never understood why WordPerfect couldn't keep going. And yes, occasionally I still mourn it.

Someone somewhere out there still has the code from the original WordPerfect. It would have to be tweaked to be used in today's e-world, but why that hasn't been done is beyond my understanding, especially today when people are feeling a little bullied by Microsoft.

WordPad—Today there is a version of Corel WordPerfect, but it isn't even a shadow of a shadow of its former self. In fact, from the trial (full version x limited time) I downloaded and played with yesterday morning, Windows 10's WordPad is just as good as WordPerfect. And by comparison, WordPad actually looks better on the screen.

In fact, if WordPad had an automatic word-count feature in the status bar, I probably would use it as my go-to word processing program.

While I'm still in a mood to play a little, I'll probably download WPS Writer and try that this morning. If that one changes my mind, I'll report that next time. If it doesn't work out, well, then it's back to using Office 365 or, in the alternative, Office 2010. I still have a copy and it still works just fine. Oh, and sometime today I'll get back to the novel.

If anyone out there knows of any other good word processing programs, please take a minute to send me an email.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Valuation, Bite-Sized Copyright, and The Decade Ahead..." at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/valuation-bite-sized-copyright-and-the-decade-ahead/>. You want to read this.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 710 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231

Total fiction words for January..... 40053

Total fiction words for 2023..... 40053

Total nonfiction words for January... 16170

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 16170

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 56223

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72

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

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer because of my zen-like non-process. If you want to learn it too, either hang around or download my Journal Archives at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives/>, read them, and try WITD for yourself. For the time being, the archives are free.

WPS Office and More

January 26, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * WPS Office
- * Comments on the DVD Seminars
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“Selling catalogs [of our novels and stories] to Alternative Investment Managers of Equity Funds and Hedge funds is in our future.” Dean Wesley Smith

“PG wonders how humankind was able to evolve from pond scum into its present form without trigger warnings.” The Passive Guy in a comment on the last linked article in “Of Interest”

“Hope is like a road in the country; there never was a road, but when many people walk on it, the road comes into existence.” Lin Yutang

“The kiss originated when the first male reptile licked the first female reptile, implying in a subtle, complimentary way that she was as succulent as the small reptile he had for dinner the night before.” F. Scott Fitzgerald

“Writing is an occupation in which you have to keep proving your talent to people who have none.” ~ Jules Renard

WPS Office

As I write this, it's still yesterday, Wednesday. WPS Office downloaded and installed easily. I had to drag a couple of unwanted shortcuts to the recycle bin, but otherwise no problem at all.

The suite did take over without being invited, making its various components the default programs to open my files, but thus far it seems at least as good as Office 365 so I'm leaving it as-is for now. Being free makes the program even better.

The Standard version is free, and that's all I need. But there are also Premium and Business versions available. If this works out, I will purchase a Premium license, not because I need more features but to help support the creators of WPS Office.

Maybe best of all, the program is intuitive if you've used Microsoft Word. (A friend emailed yesterday to remind me of Scrivener, but mentioned it has a steep learning curve.)

You can see the different versions of WPS Office along with their pricing and attributes at <https://www.wps.com/pricing/>.

Comments on the DVD Seminars

“Just letting you know that I received the DVDs today. I am so happy to have them. I have only gotten about 20 minutes into Creating Realistic Characters and already I have learned so much. The information is invaluable, I can’t wait to watch the rest! I know I am going to be getting a lot out of these for a long time. Thanks for the fast shipping too.” CP

“The DVDS came this afternoon and I’ve already started absorbing the info. Great stuff! Thanks again for making these available.” FT

And there have been other comments, all good. I didn’t expect the seminars on DVD to receive such a warm reception. If enough people want them, we might see whether the files are still good enough to burn more DVDs. If this is something that would interest you, please let me know.

For the time being, to see the remaining individual seminar DVDs, please visit <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives-gifts-dvds/>. The cost is \$25 for one, or \$23 each for two or more.

Of course, I also have the audio seminars, and those are available directly via email. You can view those topics, complete with course descriptions, at <https://harveystanbrough.com/lecture-series/>.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Adding Fun and Games to Copyright Valuation” at <https://deanwesleymith.com/adding-fun-and-games-to-copyright-valuation/>. Despite the stupid, flippant title, you want to read this.

See “Here’s how to observe comet 2022 E3 (ZTF) before it disappears forever” at <https://interestingengineering.com/science/observe-comet-2022-e3-ztf>.

See “What time is it on the Moon?” at <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-023-00185-z>. A great thought exercise and especially of interest to would-be lunar explorers and SF writers.

See “Humanity May Reach Singularity Within Just 7 Years” at <https://www.popularmechanics.com/technology/robots/a42612745/singularity-when-will-it-happen/>.

See “To Warn or not to Warn: The Controversy around Trigger Warnings in Literature” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/to-warn-or-not-to-warn-the-controversy-around-trigger-warnings-in-literature/>. How very silly humans can be, thinking that what fake-offends them matters in the slightest to anyone else.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 610 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231

Day 1..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221

Total fiction words for January..... 43043

Total fiction words for 2023..... 43043

Total nonfiction words for January... 16780

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 16780

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 59823

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72

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

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer because of my zen-like non-process. If you want to learn it too, either hang around or download my Journal Archives at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives/>, read them, and try WITD for yourself. For the time being, the archives are free.

The Journal Archives

January 27, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * The Journal Archives
- * Other Resources
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

Just some beautiful writing...

“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”

“You’ve never seen death? Look in the mirror every day and you will see it like bees working in a glass hive.” Jean Cocteau

“After the writer’s death, reading his journal is like receiving a long letter.” Jean Cocteau

The Journal Archives

For several years, I’ve offered a fully searchable PDF copy of the Journal archives free of charge. That has changed. If you downloaded some or all of the archives during that free period, good for you. Enjoy. I hope you learn a ton.

If you didn’t, it isn’t too late to get them. It’s only too late to get them free of charge. Yesterday I changed the Archives, Gifts & DVDs page to reflect the following:

As a sample of the value of these archives, I offer the earliest archive, which encompasses the last few months of 2014, free of charge. You may download it by clicking THE JOURNAL 2014. ([Please visit the page](#) to download the free archive.)

The other archives are available at only \$30 each. (That’s \$2.50 per month, 50 cents less than any of my patrons pay just because they enjoy the Journal.) You may also purchase all 8 archives as a set (2014/15 through 2022) for \$220.

(Note: For my regular donors and patrons, these archives are still free of charge. If you haven’t already downloaded them, you have only to email me and I’ll send them to you.)

If any of you would like to become a patron or donor, please visit <https://hestanbrough.com/become-a-patron/>.

Other Resources

Bob B, a man who regularly recommends my work on reddit, recently recommended some of my nonfiction as well as the following.

I have not vetted these and am not personally recommending them, but I thought I’d pass them along just in case you might find them useful.

Additionally, all opinions not preceded by “Ed. Note” and set in italics are from Bob:

<https://www.artofmanliness.com/2014/03/26/want-to-become-a-better-writer-copy-the-work-of-others/>—This is how they used to teach writing.

Ed. Note: I’m not sure who “they” are, but I agree that this is one way to learn to sense the rhythm and flow and to some degree the style of the writer you’re emulating.

DANDELION WINE by Ray Bradbury shows how he began writing.

TECHNIQUES OF THE SELLING WRITER by Dwight V. Swain—Corny title but chock full of solid advice.

<https://blog.karenwoodward.org/2012/10/jim-butcher-on-writing.html>—Killer advice from Jim Butcher.

All right, from here down, these are all my own thoughts again.

Another would-be writer on reddit asked, “What do you do when you literally have no ideas?”

This is a foreign concept to me. I still don’t understand how anyone can “literally have no ideas.” And just to be clear, I don’t hang out on reddit or any other quick-advice places. I happened to see this question while I was checking an alert for my name.

But my advice remains: If you don’t have an idea for a story and you want to write a story anyway, follows this formula for a story starter. It really does work every time.

* pick a character, any character (by name) who has a

* problem (any little problem, doesn’t have to be “the” problem of the story), then drop him, her, or it into a

* setting (any setting, and the best one is wherever the character happens to be when you first see him, her or it).

Then write whatever comes to you to write. It really is that simple.

In case you didn’t hear that let me repeat it:

IT REALLY IS THAT SIMPLE.

Now, you have zero excuses. If you want to write a story, Character with a Problem in a Setting. Go.

I might be off here for a few days.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Neil Turok on the case for a parallel universe going backwards in time” at <https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg25734230-100-neil-turok-on-the-case-for-a-parallel-universe-going-backwards-in-time/>.

See “Only Talking Valuation” at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/only-talking-valuation/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 710 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231

Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221

Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026

Total fiction words for January..... 44848

Total fiction words for 2023..... 44848

Total nonfiction words for January... 17490

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 17490

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 62338

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72

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

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer because of my zen-like non-process. If you want to learn it too, either hang around or download my Journal Archives at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives/>, read them, and try WITD for yourself.

The Journal, DVDs, Mentoring, and More

January 29, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

* Quote of the Day

* The Journal, DVDs, Mentoring and More

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* Of Interest

Quote of the Day

“It was one of the dullest speeches I ever heard. The Agee woman told us for three quarters of an hour how she came to write her beastly book, when a simple apology was all that was required.”

P.G. Wodehouse, *The Girl in Blue*

The Journal, DVDs, Mentoring and More

Heather H. sent a fairly lengthy comment. I thought it was of sufficient public interest that I decided to enter my response here as an edition of the Journal.

You can see Heather's comment in full at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-journal-archives/#comments>. I've excerpted her comments below to set up my responses.

HH: "I have certainly missed daily gems on your blog or newsflash posts- like the initial DVD sale and- gasp!- the end of mentoring."

Seminars on DVD—There are still some seminars on DVD left. You can see those at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives-gifts-dvds/>.

Mentoring—I ended the mentoring sessions because, after an initial rush, nobody seemed to want them. If there is sufficient interest, I might start them again. In the meantime, Journal readers may email me at any time at harveystanbrough@gmail.com with any questions about writing or publishing and I will do my best to give the writer a good response.

HH: "I didn't understand how the patron process worked.... I did some searching in order to define what patrons did: (Here HH listed a URL that displayed the old patronage reward tiers and is no longer valid.) Are the comments distinguishing various monthly level descriptions still timely?"

Patronage/Donations—If you're talking about the patronage reward tiers listed at that now-defunct URL, those descriptions are no longer valid, for two reasons:

1. Literally nobody was taking advantage of the rewards, and
2. My writing habits changed. It's meaningless to offer "every new short story I write" as a reward when I'm writing short fiction hardly at all.

I didn't have a way to fulfill those rewards automatically—meaning the patrons had to email me to let me know what reward or rewards they wanted—and again, nobody was taking advantage of that.

So I changed the rewards part of the [Become a Patron](#) (Donations) page to read, "As a token of my appreciation, please let me know which fiction or nonfiction book you would like in return for your support. Monthly patrons may request a new reward each month."

HH: "On learning that my writing text is now (deservedly) behind a paywall...."

The Journal vs. the Archives—I can't be certain what you mean here, so I'll do my best.

The Journal itself is not behind a paywall. It remains free, and you can even receive it in your inbox each day if you want. If you (any of you) want that, let me know privately at the email address above and I'll add your email address to the list of subscribers on my substack.

However, yes, the Journal Archives, after I offered them free for years, are now for sale at the token price of only \$30 for each 12-month archive (a very low cost of \$2.50 per month) or \$220 for all eight archives.

That's \$20 less than you'd pay if you bought all eight archives separately, and it's \$80 less than the cost of just one online workshop from WMG Publishing (Dean Wesley Smith).

I've said many times over the past several years that I only wish I'd had the ability to purchase such an archive when I was starting this journey. But I didn't. I had to piece together information through reading blog posts, reading the stories and novels of writers whose work I admire, and taking workshops from Dean Wesley Smith, etc.

Because I legitimately want to help, I routinely underprice the value of my work. That's why the Journal has always been free, and that's why the archives were free for so long. Then that perceived value thing kicks in and folks assume if something is free or low-cost, it must not be worth anything. And most often they would be right, but not when they're dealing with me.

For just one example, the ridiculously low-priced mentorships (\$25 per month to ask basically anything you wanted to ask) were no exception, yet very few took advantage of them. And NOBODY took advantage of the lower-priced Extended Q&A that I offered. So if I bring either or both of those back, I will charge more (perceived value).

Likewise, the archives are no exception. They were free for years. Ironically enough, if I ever went through all those posts and gleaned out all the topics about craft, and if I compiled those gleanings into a more concise archive, I probably would charge \$240 or more for each year.

Yet that new "cleaned-up" archive would contain less valuable information than the original does, because I will have inadvertently tossed out some little bits and pieces of information that resonate with a particular ear. That's why I haven't cleaned them up before. In their current rough form, they cost far less and deliver far more useful information. Shrug. Go figure.

Here's What I Know—Up above I wrote that when I started out, I had to piece together information. That's true. And at first everything I learned was only that: thin layers of information, one draped over the other over the other, all lying atop my skin like a sheen of perspiration after warming up as I anticipated a good workout.

Little did I know the workout would last eight years (so far) and result in over 70 novels, 8 novellas and over 220 short stories. But I was SERIOUS about the workout. I didn't want to read about writing and talk about writing and think about writing. I wanted to actually WRITE.

And the only way to do that is to practice. That means putting new words on the page. So I decided to be serious about practicing. I set my sights on putting 3000 words of publishable fiction on the page per day, no excuses.

And through repeated hours and days and pages of practice I absorbed the information that criss-crossed my writer's skin in layers and it slowly became knowledge. At that point, finally, I was no longer pretending or hiding in someone else's shadow. I had turned the information into knowledge and made it my own.

All Right, Take Notes—I just wrote that I had turned the information I'd gleaned into knowledge and made it my own.

But it was actually much more than that, folks. I actually expanded DWS' "writing into the dark."

When I got it from Dean, WITD only meant writing without an outline, plunging ahead "into the dark" (or into the unknown, with a nod to my friend Michael) without knowing in advance where the story was going.

Easy-peasy. You only have to trust that YOU know more than anyone else does (duh) about the story that's unfolding in YOUR head with characters that only YOU know intimately. Why is that so hard to understand?

Oh, but the members of your critique group have written more than you have. Okay. So how many stories have they written with the characters that are living in YOUR head? None? I rest my case. Don't trust them. No urge is stronger than the urge of one writer to change another writer's work.

But I digress.

As I practiced I realized what I was doing was much MORE than writing into the dark. I was conveying the stories that my characters, not I, were living.

What's more, I came to realize and understand that you literally CAN'T outline or plan ahead your characters' story and life anymore than you can outline or plan ahead your own story and life. Because it's unfolding as you live it. Duh. And your characters' story and life is unfolding as they live it.

You can't foresee with any accuracy something that hasn't happened yet. For one thing, every decision you make—every single step you take—along your path opens up endless futures, only one of which will actually come into existence with your next step. And the process repeats.

Yes, you can lay out an outline and force your characters (whom you probably also planned and constructed and forced into shape) to bend to your will, but that is not creation, that is construction.

End Game—Okay, so with the Journal I’m passing that knowledge along, as I am with my nonfiction books and the Journal Archives. And with the archives, you get the added bonus of being able to watch and study my own development from an amateur, brand-new baby novelist into a seasoned, prolific professional.

The Journal is (and will remain) free, and the books and archives don’t cost a ton. So there you go. But as I did with the seminars on DVD, after the initial flurry of buying (which frankly hasn’t started yet) calms, I’ll probably increase the price of the archives. Somebody out there somewhere will recognize the value and be willing to pay for them.

Okay, that’s way more than enough blathering on from me for one day. Take care, and I’ll talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

Nothing today.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1530 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051

Total fiction words for January..... 46873
Total fiction words for 2023..... 46873
Total nonfiction words for January... 19020
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 179020
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 65893

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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Another Q&A & Rewards

January 30, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Another Q&A & Rewards
- * Free Journal Archives
- * Off For Awhile
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“Men are not prisoners of fate, but only prisoners of their own minds.” Franklin D. Roosevelt

Um, writers, likewise.

“Do not grow old, no matter how long you live. Never cease to stand like curious children before the Great Mystery into which we were born.” Albert Einstein

Another Q&A & Rewards

Had another good comment from Heather H yesterday. You can read her comment and my response at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-journal-dvds-mentoring-and-more/#comments>.

Partly because of Heather's comments these past two days and partly because it costs me nothing to leave it up there, I've decided to reinstate a system of patronage rewards. You can see that at <https://hestanbrough.com/patronage-and-donations/>.

But I emphasize, if you're a patron and you want one or more of the rewards, you need to email me to let me know what you want and what eformat you prefer.

Free Journal Archives

Frankly, I'm not sure what I was thinking the other day when I slapped a price on the archives. I mean, they're right there in the sidebar, and they're right there in the Journal itself. All you'd have to do if you really wanted them is scroll through, copy and paste, and remember to click Save now and then. It isn't even a copyright violation as long as they're only for your own use and you never represent the thoughts there as being your own.

Putting a price on them was silly of me. So I've decided to make the archives free again. There y'go. You can find them with live download links again at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives-gifts-dvds/>.

And yes, Heather H, I expect I will create one more nonfiction book from what I've both practiced and written in the Journal over all these years. It will probably be titled *Best Advice for Fiction Writers from a Prolific Professional Writer Who Knows What He's Talking About and Isn't Just Out to Make a Buck Selling You Books on How-to Outline and Plot and Plan and Squeeze Your Characters Beneath Your Control-Freak Thumb Until They Freakin' Pop*. Something like that.

It will add-to and greatly expand the free handout by a similar name on the Archives, Gifts & DVDs page. And frankly, I expect literally tens of people will buy it (grin) because what do I know? It isn't like I have any experience other than having written over 70 novels (most in a month or less), 8 novellas, and over 220 short stories in several genres.

After all, I don't even advocate all that planning and plotting and crushing characters beneath the writer's oppressive thumb and forcing them to the writer's will and trusting strangers' instincts more than you trust your own and all that bullsnot. Pure mushroom fodder, all of it.

Off For Awhile

I might be off here for awhile. Above everything else, writing fiction has always been fun for me, and I want to keep it that way. Or maybe get it back.

Recently I've allowed a little unnecessary internal pressure to creep in, partly on its own and partly in conjunction with some external life-happens pressures.

Overall the writing is less than fun right now, so I'm going to decompress a bit. Maybe even slip naked into a vat of Negra Modelo and just marinate. Hang in there, and I'll talk with you all again before too long.

Of Interest

See "Derivative Rights in Bite-Sized Copyright" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/derivative-rights-in-bite-sized-copyright/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 580 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051

Total fiction words for January..... 46873
Total fiction words for 2023..... 46873

Total nonfiction words for January... 19600
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 19600
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 66473

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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Last Day, Erin D, and Forums etc.

January 31, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Last Day of the Month
- * For Erin D (and Whomever Else)
- * Forums and Boards and Opinions, Oh My
- * Of Interest

Quote of the Day

“The internet was supposed to liberate knowledge, but in fact it buried it, first under a vast sewer of ignorance, laziness, bigotry, superstition and filth and then beneath the cloak of political surveillance. Now...cyberspace exists exclusively to promote commerce, gossip and pornography. And of course to hunt down sedition. Only paper is safe. Books are the key. A book cannot be accessed from afar, you have to hold it, you have to read it.” Ben Elton

Mr. Elton makes some interesting points

Last Day of the Month

Yay. Beginning tomorrow, the year-to-date numbers will stop mimicking the month-to-date numbers. As a writer, I think February 1 is my favorite day of the year.

For Erin D (and Whomever Else)

This morning I received an email from Erin D, a young writer who is frustrated and confused by all the noise on forums etc. Yet even after all that, she chose to ask my opinion on publishing. She wondered whether she should take on the tasks of self-publishing (covers, sales copy, etc.). I was honored, and I did my best to help.

Naturally, I gave her my usual no-BS response. In fact, I responded twice, the second time with a few things I'd forgotten to clarify for her. (Primarily that fantasy, mystery, romance and action-adventure/thriller do well in tradpub as well as in indie, and that SF and westerns are about the worst-selling genres ever in both traditional and indie. Well, SF sells well in Hollywood, but not so much in books. And of course westerns don't sell well anywhere except to hard core readers of westerns. (Go figure. My two "big" genres are western and SF.)

But I still missed one thing. She said she has an MFA and has "published a few short stories in journals and ... written 15 novels." She also said she has "queried one [novel] for over a year."

If that means she has written 15 novels and not published any of them, I hope she's reading this.

Erin D, please follow [Heinlein's Rule 4](#), updated for today's world.

Those 15 unpublished novels (if they are currently unpublished) will give you more than ample practice at designing attractive covers, writing effective sales copy, and publishing. As for the various niches you mentioned, when you upload to Draft2Digital (to go wide) and/or Amazon, you will be afforded the opportunity to categorize each novel.

Don't Be Afraid. Don't rewrite or revise them, either again or at all. Let them stand as they are. Publish them and let your readers decide what they like or don't like.

There's nothing to fear. If you fail, you will fail to succeed. But chances are, if you go with indie publishing and do the work of collecting email addresses, etc. you will not fail

Forums and Boards and Opinions, Oh My

It never ceases to amaze me, all the noise would-be and beginning writers make. With all the blathering they serve only to further cloud already muddied waters.

There are folks out there who don't write fiction or haven't written fiction "yet but I'm gonna" or have only started writing fiction (fewer than, say, 100 short stories or 10 novels) yet feel qualified to hold forth about writing on the forums and boards and wherever else. I wish they would one day realize how ridiculous they are.

Of course, that will never happen, so I wish at least that other beginning writers, those looking for advice, would come to understand how ridiculous it is to take advice from, um, other beginning writers. Duh.

I think ours is the only field of endeavor in which beginners and even people who've never gone beyond talking and reading and thinking about writing feel completely qualified to tell others how to write. Incredible.

I'd like to smile and gather all of them into a big circle. "A'ight, now, ever'body hold hands. That's right. Okay, ready? Now then, all'a ya'll shut the hell up."

But then, that's probably just me.

Of Interest

See "Business Musings: Year in Review 2022: The Final Post (A Process Blog)" at <https://kriswrites.com/2023/01/25/business-musings-year-in-review-2022-the-final-post-a-process-blog/>. If you can put up with her political "insights," I suggest you click back and read the whole Year in Review series, then subscribe. It's free.

See "Fun Offer" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/fun-offer/>.

See "Barnes & Noble Makes a Comeback" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/01/barnes-noble-makes-a-comeback.html>. Yeah, probably not.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 750 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051

Total fiction words for January..... 46873
Total fiction words for 2023..... 46873
Total nonfiction words for January... 20350
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 20350
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 67223

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer because of my zen-like non-process. If you want to learn it too, either hang around or download my Journal Archives at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives/>, read them, and try WITD for yourself.

The Future in Five Points

February 1, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Thanks to Heather H
- * The Future in Five Points
- * Finally Figured It Out
- * Oh, But There's This
- * Of Interest

Thanks to Heather H for pointing out that the subscription button on my Patronage & Donations page was flinging error messages in every direction.

I went back to PayPal and copied the code again, then pasted it in place. It should work fine now.

The Future in Five Points from a recent StreetLib newsletter.

The January 31 newsletter from StreetLib was so informative that I decided to share some of it here.

I won't do this often, if at all, in the future. Even if you don't use them for distribution, I recommend you sign up for their free newsletter. To do so, visit <https://www.streetlib.com/>, scroll to the bottom of the page, enter your email address and click Subscribe. Now, from StreetLib,

“Accessible books [are] no longer an option for publishers, but a necessity. We have dedicated a [webinar](#), a [blog post](#) and also [a report on StreetLib Ready](#) to this theme.” (Note: I couldn't find a way to translate the last one into English.)

“[T]he serial book market continues to grow reflecting the change in users' reading habits. Among the dedicated and most successful apps there is also Dreame, our distribution partner.” (Hmm. I think I'll look more deeply into this one myself.)

“The way readers discover new titles is evolving, becoming increasingly social. According to the data reported, as many as 70% of readers use social media to discover new books and 50% love to share what they are reading on social platforms, first of all TikTok.

“Consumption of spoken audio content has increased by +200% in less than a decade!

“The integration of AI technology has, and will increasingly have, an impact on traditional editorial work processes and business models by implementing the way books, ebooks and audiobooks are created, distributed and consumed.”

Also there's this:

“Kindle Unlimited paid out over half a billion dollars in 2022, mostly to independent authors. \$72 million more than in 2021. Yet so much global reporting on the e-book market continues to disregard this data, fueling the tendency to consider the e-book market to have been declining for years now.”

Well, there y'go. Do with the information what you will.

Finally Figured It Out

Not that it matters to you, but I've been more than a little preoccupied ever since I received my new desktop computer. That thing still amazes me. This isn't some huge tower. It measures 7"x7" and is 1.5" tall. In fact, it lies flat on my desk beneath the monitor stand.

Anyway, my preoccupation wasn't with setting the thing up or any of that. The problem was me trying to decide which laptop to use for what. As part of that, I finally decided to continue using my old 14" ProBook up at the house. It's heavy, and it has a regular (annoyingly noisy and susceptible to dust) hard drive.

Then it dawned on me: You know how football teams have first, second, and third-string players? Well, I now have a first, second, and third-string writing 'puter. Barring some sort of catastrophe, I shouldn't have to buy another computer for myself, ever.

My new first-string writing 'puter is my former business laptop, a 14" HP EliteBook with a 500 gig SSD and 8 gigs of DDR4 memory. (If you don't know what all of that means, it has a large storage capacity and it's relatively fast.) If I ever go on the road again for any reason, that's the one I'll take with me. It's my writing 'puter, but the screen is large enough I can also conduct business on it, etc.

My second-string writing 'puter is my former writing 'puter, an 11.6" HP ProBook with a 256G SSD and 4 gigs of DDR3 memory. Love the keyboard, but the screen's too difficult to see when it isn't attached to a larger monitor. That one, for the time being, will be turned off and stored as a spare.

(Kind'a reminds me of the several Olympus portable typewriters, all of the same model, that prolific writer Harlan Ellison kept on shelves in his house. When he wore one out, he just took another from the shelf, loaded a fresh ribbon, and kept writing. Come to think of it, my restored laptops probably cost less than his new Olympus typewriters.)

And my third string writing 'puter is the old 14" HP ProBook with its HDD. I doubt it will ever see service again other than as the house computer.

Now maybe I can get back to writing.

Oh, But There's This

After a 22 year old assistant coach impersonated a 13 year old basketball player and took her place in a game, school officials “met with parents of the JV and varsity girls basketball teams, where *players from both teams decided not to continue their seasons*” (emphasis mine).

Why? Yes, the idiot assistant coach did something stupid. So what now? The players on the teams, who did nothing wrong, are going to punish themselves? And why? So the assistant coach can “see what she's done”? Are we maybe carrying the “offended” stuff a little far?

This. This is why I escape into my characters' sensible, realistic world whenever I can.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “What are Accessible Ebooks and how to align with new European guidelines” at <https://blog.streetlib.com/what-are-accessible-ebooks-and-how-to-align-with-new-european-guidelines/>.

See “Marine researcher finds massive eel on Texas beach” at <https://www.nbcdfw.com/news/local/texas-news/marine-researcher-finds-massive-american-eel-on-texas-beach/3180587/>. Aliens, anyone?

See “Calls to 911 about self-driving cars gone rogue rise in San Francisco” at <https://www.vice.com/en/article/93apqv/san-franciscans-keep-calling-911-about-baffling-self-driving-car-behavior>. Am I supposed to be surprised?

See “January 2023 Notes” at <https://franktheodat.substack.com/p/january-2023-notes>. Good stuff. Should you maybe do something like this to help hold yourself accountable?

See “Barnes & Noble Makes a Comeback” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/barnes-noble-makes-a-comeback/>. This is not a repeat. See PG's take.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 760 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051

Total fiction words for February.....	XXXX
Total fiction words for 2023.....	46873
Total nonfiction words for February...	760
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	21110
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	67983
Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date...	0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

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Some Fiction Writing Truths

February 2, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Some Fiction Writing Truths
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“Forget artificial intelligence — in the brave new world of big data, it’s artificial idiocy we should be looking out for.” Tom Chatfield

“The next time I see comments suggesting that an author focus on platform instead of the work at issue, I’ll know where to ship another pallet of Kool-Aid.” C.E. Petit in a comment on the last post in “Of Interest”

“If you’re thinking of your fiction book in terms of message, it’s probably a bad book, as you’re focused on message not story.” Elaine T in a comment on the same post in “Of Interest”

Some Fiction Writing Truths

I didn’t expect to be back here today, but a young writer emailed me again with some concerns. And I probably can’t get through to her, I know that. I can only try. Anyway, I thought I’d share part of our exchange here in case some of you glean something valuable from it.

She wrote, “[W]hen I first started writing as a teenager, I naturally cycled. (I’ve also always hated revision, so I never did until I was told to by teachers.)”

And the conditioning began. Isn’t it odd how readily we believe what we hear about how to write fiction from people who’ve never written fiction or who are hobbyists at best? Yet we don’t believe people like Ray Bradbury, who did nothing but write fiction his entire life and was extremely successful, when he says “Plot is no more than footprints left in the snow after your characters have run by on their way to incredible destinations.”

She continued, “It was only in college, when I started taking creative writing courses and critiquing/being critiqued, that I wrote significantly less, and started hyper-analyzing my work as I was writing. As much as I learned from the MFA, I also think it only contributed to this self-consciousness, which hasn’t helped me in my writing. I’ve become stuck, thinking I need to revise and that all my stories are crap.”

If any of YOU feel you have to revise or rewrite because you think all your stories are crap, as I told her, Get over yourself.

Your opinion as a reader is only ONE opinion. Just because YOU think something is crap doesn’t mean anyone else will. I guarantee some readers will love your work, most will like it, and a few will agree with you that it’s crap.

I have to laugh at this nonsense. When writers think their work is GOOD, they say, “Oh but we writers are the worst judge of our own work” and they feel all smug and self-satisfied in sending the work to critique groups or beta readers for a second (third fourth etc.) opinion.

But when they think their work is CRAP, suddenly writers forget all that “worst judge of your own work” stuff. They hide the story away and it never sees the light of day. And potentially MILLIONS of readers are robbed of the opportunity to make up their own mind about the story.

She also asked point-blank, “Are the myths ever true?”

No, the myths are not true. They’re all based on fear, and in every case it’s an unreasoning fear. There are zero real-world consequences.

Writers listen to all that BS because they’re literally inundated with it 24/7 from every direction. Even in series episodes and films, whenever writers are portrayed, it takes them years to finish a book as they revise and rewrite, engage critique groups, etc.

But all of that is actually harmful to your work and to your self-confidence. It’s a lie. The myths are lies. Not one of them is necessary to writing fiction.

My respondent also wrote that when she tried cycling it was hard because she “was so hyper-aware of needing to include enough tension, plot, movement, etc. What if there’s a giant plot hole in my story? etc.”

To which I replied, “What is ‘enough tension, plot, movement, etc?’ As for a ‘plot hole,’ only stories that are constructed block by block even have those. And if you’re determined to construct false stories block by block, I can’t help you.”

I also sent her what follows, but it felt important enough to share here.

You are a human being with a brain and a mind. You can do anything you really want to do. For many it’s easier to succumb to the unreasoning fears and follow the myths as if they’re gospel. They aren’t.

Most long-term professional fiction writers Just Write, recording their characters’ stories as they run through them. Stephen King, possibly the only Stage 5 writer writing today, calls himself his characters’ stenographer.

It really is all up to you. You’re perfectly within your rights to remain stuck in your own certainty of how very important your stories are. (Um, if you don’t see them as earth-shakingly important, then why do you spend so much time revising and rewriting them?)

Likewise, you may choose to succumb to the fear (*Ohdeargod what if there isn’t enough tension, plot, movement, etc.?*) and control every word your characters say and everything that happens to them in what, after all that, is only a false construction.

OR you can come down from your ivory tower, toss aside the authorial robes, slip into a pair of jeans and sneakers and a t-shirt, roll off the parapet and race off through the story with your characters As It Unfolds Around You.

Then, finally, your job will be to do your best to write it all down as it happens. The important distinction is this: You aren’t making up (constructing) anything. You’re reporting what happens as it happens, recording your characters’ story.

THAT You write is important because, um, you’re a writer. But WHAT you write, the individual story or novel, doesn’t matter in the slightest. It isn’t important, or it matters only to the degree that the eventual reader finds it entertaining.

For more on Cycling, visit <https://hestanbrough.com> and key “cycling” into the search box in the sidebar.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “What Heinlein’s Rules Mean to Me: An Excerpt” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/02/what-heinleins-rules-mean-to-me-an-excerpt.html>. My guest post on The Kill Zone blog. You’ve seen it before, but might be fun to read the comments in that venue.

See “Maybe the Book Doesn’t Need to Be “Disrupted” in the First Place?” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/maybe-the-book-doesnt-need-to-be-disrupted-in-the-first-place/>. See PG’s take.

See “How Author Platform Connects to Author Brand” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-author-platform-connects-to-author-brand/>. In case anyone’s interested. Two quotes of the day came from comments on this article.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1080 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051

Total fiction words for February..... XXXX
Total fiction words for 2023..... 46873
Total nonfiction words for February... 1840
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 22190
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 69063

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer because of my zen-like non-process. If you want to learn it too, either hang around or download my Journal Archives at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives/>, read them, and try WITD for yourself.

My Guest Appearance

February 3, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Welcome

- * Great Comment
- * Guest Appearance
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

On being original: “The next Bill Gates will not start an operating system. The next Larry Page won’t start a search engine. The next Mark Zuckerberg won’t start a social network company. If you are copying these people, you are not learning from them.” Peter Thiel

“Some editors are failed writers, but so are most writers.” T.S. Eliot

Welcome to ibib1850 and any other new subscribers to the Journal. Welcome aboard. Glad to have you. If I can help with your writing, feel free to let me know.

Great Comment

Be sure to read Frank T’s comment on yesterday’s post, especially if you don’t yet “get” that your opinion of your work is only one opinion, the reader is the only valid judge of your work, etc.

And thanks, Frank, for the comment.

Guest Appearance

I didn’t say anything in the body of yesterday’s Journal, but my guest post appeared at The KillZone blog yesterday. You’ve seen the information before in this Journal. It was a series of posts that I compiled as an article (“What Heinlein’s Rules Mean to Me”) and then posted free on the [Archives, Gifts & DVDs page](#).

But you might want to stop by the TKZ blog anyway to check out the comments. It’s a pretty easy way to see how strong the myths are and how they persist among even some professional writers.

Anyway, I came away with a few notes:

1. “Whatever works for you is fine” works in only one direction. (grin)

If you follow the myths, you like to hear, “Hey, now, whatever works for you is fine.” Of course, following the myths requires a wholly different definition of “works” than the one to which I’ve grown accustomed.

To me, “works” has always meant “is effective.” Following the myths might “work” (is an effective way) to write one or two novels per year, but if you’re truly prolific, you don’t want revising, rewriting, and garnering critiques to clutter up your writing time.

And if you don't follow the myths, trust me, you'll never hear another writer say, "Hey, whatever works for you is fine."

2. "***Writers are the worst judge of their own work***" is a true statement.

What it actually means is that the writer's opinion of his or her own work is only one opinion, so don't give it any more weight than that. What you've written has value, but how much value is up to the individual reader, not you. And what the reader thinks of your work, by the way, is none of your business.

The myth puppies repeat the saying often, and they repeat it exactly as it's written above, but what they actually mean is "Writers are the worst judge of their own work if they believe the work is good." Then they ship it off to a critique group so other people can tell them why they're wrong and why it's not good.

If they believe the work is crap, of course, they suddenly forget the saying. They don't send the work to a critique group. It goes into the recycle bin on the computer or into the trash can in real life or into a drawer where it stays until some poor descendent finds it, reads it, enjoys it, and wonders why it was never published.

3. ***Driven by unreasoning fear*** (fear that literally lacks any real-world consequences), people will expend far more energy telling you why writing into the dark can't possibly work and is a horrible idea and they'll never try it and on and on—than they would expend simply trying it for themselves.

This strange phenomenon never ceases to amaze me. Trying WITD is literally a win-win, no-lose situation. If you really try WITD and it doesn't work, you can always slip back into your comfortable niche among those warm, bloated myths.

That's exactly what I thought would happen back in early 2014 when I tried it. But I wanted to be sure. I wanted to know absolutely, either way, whether it would work or was bogus, as I expected, so I gave it a real, authentic try.

Boy was I surprised. It worked. Of course, I thought it was a fluke so I tried it again. And it worked. And it kept working. And I've never looked back.

If you are able to really try WITD (for various reasons, not everyone is able), it will work for you. And from then on, you'll be on an adventure with every single story and novel you write. At times you won't be able to draw a breath because you're so excited at the unexpected antics and utterings of the characters as their story unfolds.

And the only way to give it a real try it is to take a deep breath, be determined to shut out the critical voice, and do it.

I'd say good luck, but if you're able to give it a real try, that would be redundant.

Still Not Writing

I'll be back at it soon. Just now I'm serving as a caregiver. I won't discuss details, but that's more important than what ol' Wes is up to right now. I suspect he's cooling his heels up in Santa Fe, chatting with the marshal and the marshal's deputy and Governor Lew Wallace about what they want to do when I come back.

On the other hand, I have bits of time right now to take care of some admin matters, like responding to the comments over on TKZ. I did that through the day yesterday.

Also, I learned how to schedule posts over at Substack. I took advantage of this time to select and pre-post four different short stories both on [Stanbrough Writes](#) and over on the Substack version. The first story will go live today at 10 a.m. to be followed by the Substack version at 10:15. And then every week for the next three weeks. You can subscribe to the Substack by visiting <https://stanbroughwrites.substack.com/>, then scrolling to the bottom of any of the stories there, and clicking the Subscribe button.

Each of the first three stories will feature one of my personas. And if you click the link provided at the beginning of the story, you can see a picture of the persona, read that persona's bio and read a bonus short story by that persona. Which I thought was kind'a cool. (grin)

By the way, Stanbrough Writes is another of those niceties provided by the donors and patrons of this Journal. So to all of you donors and patrons out there, thank you.

Anyone interested in becoming a patron or a donor, please visit <https://hestanbrough.com/patronage-and-donations/>.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "ChatGPT: 30 incredible ways to use the AI-powered chatbot" at <https://interestingengineering.com/innovation/chatgpt-30-incredible-ways-to-use>.

See "5 Tips for How to Return to Writing After a Long Break" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/5-tips-for-how-to-return-to-writing-after-a-long-break/>. In the end, you just do it.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1160 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231

Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221

Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051

Total fiction words for February..... XXXX
Total fiction words for 2023..... 46873
Total nonfiction words for February... 3000
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 23350
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 70223

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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Personas vs. Pseudonyms

February 4, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Personas vs. Pseudonyms
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“When you bad mouth your own work, all I hear is ‘I am stupid, I am stupid....’” Dean Wesley Smith

“No amount of experimentation can ever prove me right; a single experiment can prove me wrong.” Albert Einstein Somehow this feels pertinent to writing fiction

Personas vs. Pseudonyms

I haven't talked about this for awhile. I was reminded when I saw that a fairly new addition to the Journal family writes under a pseudonym.

I used to write under three main personas and several pseudonyms. As I wrote in my bio, I take a pill for that now and write under my own name, mostly.

In this new golden era of publishing, it's a good idea to write everything under your own name, or under one primary persona or pseudonym, if you prefer). Of course, if you have a specific reason to have more than one pseudonym, that's perfectly fine too.

For example, if you're a pastor who writes stories about devil-worship, it might be a good idea to publish those under a pseudonym. If you're a police officer who writes stories about your secret life as a serial killer, again, probably a good idea to publish those under a pseudonym. If your real name is Stephen (or even Steven) King or Lee Child or Jack Higgins (you get the idea) it might be a good idea to write under a pseudonym, though if that was me I'd definitely go with a full-blown persona instead.

But say you write mystery and SF and romance and YA. Simply writing in different genres is not necessarily a valid reason to use a pen name. (Well, if erotica is one of your genres, a pen name might be a good idea for that one.) But publishing under different pen names can be labor intensive.

I currently have my publisher website (StoneThreadPublishing.com), my author website (HarveyStanbrough.com), my readers' website (HarveyStanbroughWrites.com) and the Journal (HEStanbrough.com). Even that few comprise a headache.

But at one time I also had a website for each of my major personas (Nick Porter, Eric Stringer, and Gervasio Arrancado) and my major characters and/or series (Wes Crowley, Charles Claymore Task, Blackwell Ops, and a few others).

Those websites were static, meaning they didn't change much. Each held only a bio, a photo, and links to various books, sales venues and other websites. But they were still a minor PITA to maintain. And maintaining them was necessary.

Today, I don't write under my personas' names (mostly) though I still occasionally write under their influence. I also don't "hide" my personas. I don't hide the fact that they are me and I am they (Stephen King/Richard Bachman). It makes things much easier.

So what's the difference between personas and pseudonyms?

A pseudonym or pen name is just that: a fake name, an alias. It's still you, but with a different moniker. A name is only the sound people make when they want to get your attention, right? Well, a pen name is just an alternate sound.

But for me at least, a persona is very different. I never once wrote a story and then "assigned" it to one of my personas. Each persona had his own set of values, his own way of thinking about the world, and his own approach to fiction. In short, each persona has his own personality.

Most often, I wrote under a particular persona in order to get the right flavor for the kind of story I was writing. Eric Stringer, for example, wrote strange fiction. And yes, “strange” is spelled correctly. It’s Eric’s descriptor for a story that is so odd it will strain your senses.

Some of Eric’s stories are weird or just “off” to one degree or another. Some are eerie enough to make you look a little harder and wonder what’s really going on in the basement of that store that’s stood empty for years in your town. And some of them are flat-out frightening or nauseating. Well, or both. But that’s just Eric.

Gervasio Arrancado is a different guy. He’s a proud but humble Mexican man whom some believe is wise. Gervasio writes magic realism in the tradition of Isabel Allende, Gabriel García Márquez and Octavio Paz. Per his bio, Gervasio is “fortunate to have made the acquaintance of Augustus McCrae, Hub and Garth McCann, El Mariachi, Forest Gump, The Bride (Black Mamba), Agents J and K, a very old man with enormous wings, Juan-Carlos Salazar, Maldito, the chupacabra and several other notables.” He believes himself better for it.

I might occasionally still don Eric’s persona to enjoy a strange story, and I might occasionally put on Gervasio’s personality to enter the realm of magic realism. Unfortunately, I can no longer do that with Nicolas Z Porter. He was killed several years ago. I personally immortalized him in “Death of Persona.”

Frankly, Gervasio and I believe Eric killed him, though we have no direct evidence and can prove nothing. And to be honest, we aren’t that keen to keep digging, given that both of us have been on the receiving end of Eric’s “calm” look. It is not calming. It is chilling. It’s Doctor Josef Mengele, a narrow smile gracing his face, saying, “Next?”

As you might imagine, writing under a particular persona can be rewarding and a ton of fun. Writing under a persona enables me to write with a personality and voice that is not my own, or at least one I don’t have to claim.

Developing and writing under two or more personas is the ultimate in writing into the dark because, of course, each persona has access to different characters. And then too, each persona treats each story differently.

That is, the personality of each persona comes through in the writing. So even if Eric Stringer and Gervasio Arrancado wrote a story about the same cast of characters, the stories would be very different, maybe even in different genres.

Long ago, in a galaxy far, far away, professional writers (especially pulp writers) were too prolific for their magazine and book publishers. For that reason, many prolific professionals wrote and submitted manuscripts under several different pen names. So one writer might well have several stories in one edition of a magazine, but each story would be under a different pen name.

Today, if my novels were published through a single traditional publisher, I would have to write under at least five names other than my own. TradPubs don’t like publishing more than one or

two novels per year by one author. Weirdly enough, some of them (and some agents) don't want to see more than one or two *manuscripts* per year per author!

The BS myth persists even among those folks that those who "write fast" cannot produce quality fiction. And hand in hand with that nonsense, they manage to find a way to make storytelling "work" instead of the sheer joy it can be when it's done naturally.

Consider, even as they continue to say they want "unique, original voices," they also continue to encourage writers to revise and rewrite, thereby eradicating the unique, original, authentic voice the writers originally had. Maybe you who are still mired in the myths can figure out the logic in that one. It's beyond me.

But back to personas and pen names. Even if you write under a name other than your own, if you want to get paid you have to come clean to at least the publisher or, if you indie publish, the platforms through which your work is distributed: D2D, Amazon, and the others. Why? Because your personas and pen names share your social security account number.

So unless you have a very good specific reason for publishing under a pen name, I suggest you publish everything under one name, whether it's your own or a persona.

So that's my current spiel on Personas vs. Pseudonyms. For a great deal more on this topic, please see my posts from 2014:

<https://harveystanbrough.com/pro-writers/pseudonyms-part-i/>

<https://harveystanbrough.com/pro-writers/the-professional-writer-pseudonyms-personas-part-ii/>

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Interview with Gervasio Arrancado" at <https://www.smashwords.com/interview/GArrancado>. This is an interview Smashwords did with my magic realism persona.

See "Interview with Nicolas Z Porter" at <https://www.smashwords.com/interview/NZPorter>. This is an interview Smashwords did with my mainstream persona.

See "Another Note on Copyright Valuation" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/another-note-on-copyright-valuation/>.

See "The State of Social Media (As It Pertains To Writers In Particular)" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-state-of-social-media-as-it-pertains-to-writers-in-particular/>. Expect "bad" language if you click through.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1420 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051

Total fiction words for February..... XXXX
Total fiction words for 2023..... 46873
Total nonfiction words for February... 4420
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 24770
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 71643

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer because of my zen-like non-process. If you want to learn it too, either hang around or download my Journal Archives at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives/>, read them, and try WITD for yourself.

About Characters

February 6, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * About Characters
- * Writing Again, A Little
- * Of Interest

Quote of the Day

“Nobody has pronouns. You can't ‘have’ a pronoun anymore than you can have a preposition or an adverb. The concept doesn't make any sense. Pronouns are not things you can own. They aren't pets or accessories. They are parts of speech. That's it. You don't get to customize them.”
Matt Walsh

Thanks to [Robert J. Sadler](#) for the tip.

Note: Because I'm always looking for more sources of information, I looked up Matt Walsh's blog. I do not endorse any kind of extremism. I believe one person's rights stop where another person's rights begin, and that nobody—not the religious or otherwise radical political right, not any race-based hate groups, and not the radical political socialist left—has the right to tell anybody else how to live his or her life, how to think or speak, what to watch or read, whom to care about or not care about, etc. Life is difficult enough without slinging unnecessary, control-freak rules all over the place. Let's all just get on with it.

About Characters

Characters are only typical human beings. When you first meet them (just like in real life) you form a stereotypical opinion of them. If you catch only a glimpse of each other and then go your separate ways, you're left with (and the character remains) only a stereotype. (As with secondary characters.)

As you get to know a human being or a character better, you discover more and more layers, traits that are unique to that character, and the person becomes much more than a stereotype (well-rounded main character).

Those are the bottom-line basics.

In today's "Of Interest" Sue Coletta talks about characters having ring tones for their phones, and the ring tones say something about the character's personality or what they're going through at the moment, etc.

The ring tone might also be a good way to misdirect others' opinions of the character. "Daydream Believer" by the Monkees on a hitman's phone. Of course, such a misdirection would have to combine other elements with the ringtone since the ringtone typically lasts only a few seconds.

Anyway, the article spurs thought and is an excellent chance to broaden your craft. I hope you'll read it.

I noted that giving a character a particular ring tone is also an excellent way to focus down on the character and the scene and pull the reader more deeply into the story.

A ringtone might also be a good way to enhance the purpose of secondary characters, who often show up in fiction only to foreshadow some future event.

A long while back I wrote a post on dialogue, with at least one of the points being that the dialogue of secondary characters is almost always memorable. Why? Again, because they are so often used to foreshadow a future event.

So you want the reader to remember the secondary character's dialogue, something about his or her appearance and personality, etc.

And today, in another venue, I read ongoing comments, some whining, some staunch, and none at the time in the middle, about characters (people) with infirmities and disabilities and who owes them what and how much, etc.

With my personality, frankly I wondered whether those who complain can ever be comforted (or paid) enough to get them to just shut up. My thesis is—well, no. You'll see my thesis and my abstract below.

I finally left a comment, and then it dawned on me that my comment might be of value to those who want to learn about characters. A great cast of characters, scattered over all your stories and novels, should include a broad-span view of humanity, after all. Here's my comment:

News flash—Nobody has a monopoly on problems, pain or disabilities. Physical bodies endure tragedies of various sizes and kinds. It's called Life. Accept it and move on.

1. Every human being has problems and is disabled in one way or another. The biggest difference among them is how much and how loudly they complain.
2. In our current everything-is-everybody-else's-fault society, those who complain get poor-baby points for volume.
3. Those who don't complain are assumed to be problem-free and painless. They are also accused—primarily by those who make all the noise and secondarily by those whose look-at-me pretense of the week is appearing to care about those who make the noise—of being uncaring.
4. Most human beings are so tightly focused on their own problems and disability(ies) that it never occurs to them that others who are not in their particular group are similarly afflicted. Nor, once they learn that reality, do they care.

There is a certain dignity in owning one's afflictions and abiding them in silence.

* * *

Now, the question isn't whether you agree with me or think I'm a monster. The question is, do you see these folks among you characters?

Do you have a character who believes a paper cut stretches the limits of human endurance, another who never complains that his lungs are on fire and does his best to cough and spit-up in private, and everything in between?

Have you ever had a character who is missing a foot or some fingers from one hand? A character who has only one good eye or a bad speech impediment or even a different history than his current life would make you expect? (As he lay dying from a gunshot wound to the chest one of

my Texas Rangers divulged that he was once a would-be bank robber, but was arrested during the drunken attempt and escaped jail afterward.)

Let your characters be afflicted. After all, “Physical bodies endure tragedies of various sizes and kinds. It’s called Life.” Then let them handle it, or not, according to their personality.

Maybe they whine for attention. Maybe they suffer in silence. Maybe they become known as a grouch because although they don’t complain about their afflictions, they do hold forth on other aspects of life they consider problems.

It truly does take all kinds, and we human beings certainly have them. I for one believe that’s why no superior form of life has tried to make any meaningful contact. I know I certainly wouldn’t.

Writing Again, A Little

Yesterday I was able to spend a little time with a new character named Hortencia Alvarez. She seems a tough, contentious woman. No idea where the story came from.

I just saw her sitting on a rock, dangling her bare feet into a stream. In her left hand was a black, fine-grained whetstone, in her right a knife with a long, sturdy, very sharp blade. Beyond her, a group of other characters, mostly men, on their way to some objective.

We’ll see where this goes. I’m not even sure what time period it’s from, but I don’t think it’s part of Wes’ story.

As an aside, only yesterday or the day before I told a young writer that no, I never write two stories at one time. Mea culpa, I suppose.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “What Do Ringtones Say About Your Characters?” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/02/what-do-ringtones-say-about-your-characters.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1200 words

Writing of “Hortencia Alvarez” (shrug—I dunno)

Day 1..... 1089 words. Total words to date..... 1089

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051

Total fiction words for February..... 1089
Total fiction words for 2023..... 47962
Total nonfiction words for February... 5620
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 25970
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 73932

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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Writing Across the Genres

February 7, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Social Media
- * Writing Across the Genres
- * Some Genre Tidbits
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“In math, you could get 100 percent. It was very fair. That’s what I liked about math. You could figure it out, and the teacher couldn’t have a stupid opinion about it.” Norm MacDonald

“You can’t learn to write in college. It’s a very bad place for writers because the teachers always think they know more than you do—and they don’t.” Ray Bradbury, from an email from Tom Woods

Social Media

I publish this Journal not only on my own website but also on Substack so I can send it to subscribers via email.

Because I want to share the Journal with as many folks as possible, I also share each post on Twitter as soon as I publish it to Substack. I do that only because Substack makes sharing there so easy.

But every now and then I make the mistake of reading something posted there. Yesterday it was a writer who posted, “Is it okay that a novel comes in a little short at only 78,000 words?”

When I was a child, the “average” novel (per traditional publishing) was 60,000 to 80,000 words. If the manuscript ran much longer than that, they wouldn’t publish it. If they really liked it, they would send it back to the writer with a mandate to cut X number of words.

Then sometime in the 1960s or ’70s someone in the tradpubs realized they could charge more for books of a certain length. Hence, artificial price points and mandatory word counts came into being.

Thank goodness yet again for this brave new golden age of publishing in which you can write what you want, let the story be the length it needs to be, publish and let the readers decide what they like instead of being spoon-fed by some corporate overlord.

But believe it or not, most writers today—even many writers who aren’t stunted and frightened enough to continue chasing agents and traditional publication—still strive to reach the artificial word counts that lend themselves to tradpubs’ artificial price points. Of course, those word counts are what they grew up hearing. Still, it’s insane.

Anyway, even knowing there was an excellent chance my response would be pooh-pooed and set aside as ridiculous, for some stupid reason I still did what little I could to help the guy out.

I said a story should be whatever length it needs to be.

For the record, that’s a non-should. A story should never be forced to meet some artificial requirement for length, dialogue-to-narrative percentage, or anything else. And if it is, the false requirement should be established by the writer, not by someone else.

I also mentioned that literally Everywhere On Earth other than the US—and even IN the US before the tradpubs started creating those artificial price points—novels came in as short as 25,000 words.

But never mind my advice, which is based firmly on history and knowledge and experience. I suspect that writer, like most, will go ahead and pad-out his work because some other writer or even would-be writer tells him meeting the word count is essential.

And that’s annoying, because that advice is to meet some artificial requirement that means *absolutely nothing* just because some cog in some corporate entity somewhere who wouldn’t

give you the time of day if his or her middle finger was a watch said a novel is “supposed” to be a certain length. Deep breath.

And that’s why, other than clicking Share and then Post (or maybe it’s “Share” again, I dunno), I stay off social media. Too much free advice from people who have no clue what they’re talking about.

When anyone sneaks through and tells me anything about what my characters or story or anything else “should be” I catch them right between the eyes with a hearty, “Thank you! And precisely how in the hell would you know?” Feel free to use that yourself. It’s effective.

And as the clod is stammering for a response, I turn and walk away or click out of wherever I am virtually. No need to let my darker angel continue down that path.

Writing Across the Genres

You can learn something about writing Romance or Action-Adventure by reading a post on writing SF. As long as it’s written in the same language, you can learn something about writing in any genre from reading about writing in any other genre.

The accepted tropes and maybe reader expectations are different from one genre to the next, but otherwise it’s pretty much all the same. Writing fiction is writing fiction.

So I’m just saying, don’t be the woman who literally crossed her arms and said she would never even read Heinlein’s Rules because she doesn’t write SF (what?), and don’t be the guy who believes you can’t learn anything from Jack Higgins’ or Stephen King’s work because you don’t write action-adventure thrillers or horror.

All genres use the five-senses exercise, all involve grounding the reader in the setting, all include major and minor and transitional scenes, all include dialogue, well-rounded main characters and stand-out secondary characters, all regulate pacing, and so on and so on.

Some of those aspects are treated differently, sometimes, in different genres, but that should excite you, not dissuade you from learning about a genre you don’t write. You might find a treatment in one genre that hasn’t been tried yet in yours, and one that will work or even greatly enhance your own story.

Anyway, I wrote all of this partly because there’s a post labeled Genre Tips in “Of Interest.” According to the author, it’s the first of five posts on genres.

I encourage you to read all five. Why? Because you never know what you might learn even from a post that isn’t specifically about your genre.

Some Genre Tidbits

Did you realize...

SF trumps all the other genres? It's true. If a story or novel contains even one SF element, the story or novel is automatically in SF genre or subgenre.

SF, Fantasy (even not science fantasy), and Westerns are the only genres in which Setting is the most important element? The most important two elements in the other genres are

Romance = Character, Plot

Mystery = Character, Setting

YA = Character, Voice

Literary = Voice, Style

Christian = Character, the second element depends on the subgenre

Thriller = Plot, Character

By the way, you needn't automatically buy this. If you read these genres, pick a book you've already read for pleasure and see whether you can determine the most significant element, the second, third and so on.

Romance is the largest and best-selling genre, followed by Mystery, then Fantasy, then YA, then Thriller, then SF and Westerns (especially in novellas and ebooks) and Literary.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Genre Tips: How to Write Fantasy" at

<https://www.helpingwritersbecomeauthors.com/genre-tips-how-to-write-fantasy/>. Just in case there's something you can use.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1160 words

Writing of "Hortencia Alvarez" (shrug—I dunno)

Day 1..... 1089 words. Total words to date..... 1089

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231

Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221

Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026

Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051

Total fiction words for February..... 1089

Total fiction words for 2023..... 47962

Total nonfiction words for February... 6780

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 27130
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 75092

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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AI: Um, Why?

February 9, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * AI: Um, Why?
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“A curious person ... isn't impressed by people who assume the very things that need to be proven.” Tom Woods (from <http://tomwoods.com/newsletterthankyou/>)

“You fall out of your mother's womb, you crawl across open country under fire, and drop into your grave.” Quentin Crisp

“Gratification comes in the doing, not in the results.” James Dean

“Why do you have to be a nonconformist like everybody else?” James Thurber

“Space isn't remote at all. It's only an hour's drive away if your car could go straight upwards.” Fred Hoyle, English astrophysicist

“Never trust a pencil stub with a full eraser.” Wes Crowley

AI: Um, Why?

More and more writers are talking about using “generative AI” as part of their writing process. In today’s “Of Interest” there’s a link to a very informative article about it. It covers everything from AI writing prompts to AI story enhancement to AI cover design.

From the tone of the article, I thought maybe the writer was using the “generative AI” to “generate” things the writer would then apply (conscious, critical mind) while constructing the story.

So, for example, I thought the writer was using “generative AI” as a stand-in for her own conscious, critical mind to “generate” things she herself used to come up with by way of character sketches, place sketches, and maybe plot points in an outline.

Not that I would agree that even human-generated “pre-guessing” of a story that hasn’t happened yet is either necessary or preferable. But I needn’t have worried. That wasn’t what the article was about.

As horrible as predetermined characters and places and situations are to a writer like me who actually trusts in his own abilities (and have ever since I wrote my first short story into the dark), the reality described in the article was much worse.

From the article, “[O]nce I had a basic story, I used Sudowrite to expand some of the descriptions and to give me ideas for how the story might go.”

A little later, “I used Sudowrite to help me with ideas for what happened after the explosion.”

And get this: All of this construction (because it *was* construction, not creation) wasn’t even for a novella or novel. It was for a short story.

Why?

Yes, I understand AI is “one more tool,” but just because a tool is available doesn’t mean you should use it. The only tool you need to write fiction is your own creative subconscious.

If you’re among the crowd who believe you have to learn how to tell stories, here’s a reality check for you:

Even writers who have never taken a writing course or read a book about how to write fiction already know how to write fiction.

Like any artist in any artistic endeavor, they will learn new techniques and improve with Practice (in fiction writing, Practice means putting new words on the page).

They can also speed the process and enhance what they already know by learning from advanced writers various techniques they haven’t thought of on their own yet.

But Human 1.0, right out of the box, can create adequate, entertaining stories.

By simply reading fiction and watching sitcoms and movies and docudramas and even the wittier commercials on television, and films and plays in theaters, you have absorbed every kind of Story Structure. In fact, probably your creative subconscious has already decided which structure it prefers for which kind of story.

You've also absorbed Setting, Scene, and Character. You've absorbed Pacing and Rhythm and Tension. You've absorbed Sentence and Paragraph Structures and you know when to use them to create a particular effect in the reader. (No? Well, maybe that's one of those more advanced skills that hasn't occurred to you yet. But if you keep practicing, it will.)

You've learned all of those things just as surely as you've learned to automatically dot a lower-case I and cross a lower-case T when you're writing by hand and capitalize the first word of a sentence and put a period at the end of most sentences.

You also know to put a question mark at the end of a question, an exclamation point ("sparingly," you just heard in your mind) at the end of an exclamation. Oh, and you don't have to stop and wonder what an exclamation is. And yes, you've even learned how to turn a phrase.

And you've absorbed—by which I mean you've learned without consciously trying to learn—much, much, much more than that.

The problem isn't that you don't know any of those things—you DO know them—the problem is that you don't TRUST that you know them.

But most beginning and Stage 1 and 2 writers, as a result of that mistrust of the ability of their own "creative" subconscious to "create,"

1. Allow their own conscious, critical mind to second-guess the story that the characters, not the writers, are living. Then they
2. Actually invite *other* writers—outsiders who have wholly separate conscious, critical minds—to scrutinize and criticize and second-guess both the characters who actually experienced the story and the writer who experienced it with them.

(How insane is that? You, the writer, were actually there as the story unfolded around you and your characters, but you trust some outsider to tell you how you should convey that story?)

3. And now some writers are using AI. I suppose some will say that soon we will have "progressed" to the point where we won't have to use our own minds at all. But is that really progress, or is that regress, a "return to a former, less-developed state"?

Well, you know my opinion.

If writers can so quickly and easily trust "generative AI" to "generate" content they can then apply (conscious, critical mind) to their fiction, then why can't they trust their own "creative" subconscious to "create" the fiction in the first place?

Why do writers assume that of the billions of people on Earth, only they are unable to write a story without the help of total strangers, and now even machines?

Why do so many writers feel this overpowering need to demean their own work instead of, say, vehemently defending it?

Anyway, all of that said, in the spirit of fairness, you can find Sudowrite at <https://www.sudowrite.com/>.

You can also find something called Freewrite at <https://getfreewrite.com/>.

I hope you never use them. I hope you spend a lot of time trying to find “the right word” in your own mind before you consult so much as a thesaurus.

And if you don’t already, I hope for you that you eventually choose to defend your characters, your creative subconscious, and the stories they give you rather than bowing to the belief that you are wholly inadequate.

Because you aren’t.

Update: I hope to be back to writing in the next few days.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Five years ago, SpaceX launched a Roadster into space. Where is it now?” at <https://interestingengineering.com/innovation/elon-musks-tesla-roadster-in-space>. Incredible.

See “How I Used Generative AI Tools For My Short Story, With A Demon’s Eye” at <https://www.thecreativepenn.com/2023/02/08/how-i-used-generative-ai-tools-for-my-short-story-with-a-demons-eye/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1180 words

Writing of “Hortencia Alvarez” (shrug—I dunno)

Day 1..... 1089 words. Total words to date..... 1089

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231

Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221

Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051

Total fiction words for February..... 1089
Total fiction words for 2023..... 47962
Total nonfiction words for February... 7960
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 28310
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 76272

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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A New Semi-Regular Feature

February 10, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * A New Semi-Regular Feature
- * You Can't Make This Shup
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“If you're interested in AI and creativity, I have articles, interviews, and resources at <https://thecreativepenn.com/future>.” Joanna Penn, The Creative Penn

“Of the three wingback chairs in my library, only one is upholstered in human skin. There's a reason for that.” Charles Claymore “Charlie” Task in *Confessions of a Professional Psychopath*

A New Semi-Regular Feature

Because I'm a cynic at heart, which I define as a grouchy old guy who believes in humans even when they refuse to believe in themselves, I'm trying out a new feature. It's called “You Can't Make This Shup.”

In the world at present, and I'm sorry to say in our nation at present, I suspect the new section will contain at least one item per day. And that's without me having to search at all.

I plan to include items from only two newsletters I currently receive: 1440 Daily Digest, a news report that is politically unbiased, and The Blueprint, a newsletter from Interesting Engineering.

The Blueprint, like the vast majority of news and even special interest magazines (Smithsonian, Air & Space, Archaeology, et al) is not politically unbiased, but it's less than blatant so I can ignore its unnecessary slant long enough to scan the stories and links it provides.

Items in this new section won't always be about writing. In fact, they seldom will be. But I expect they will be excellent story starters, and that's the point. So here we go with the first installment of

You Can't Make This Shup

A new bill proposes [prisoners trade their organs for shorter sentences](#).

What? So can anyone get in on that? Murderers? Rapists? (Which begs the question, does the trade have to be crime-specific?) Also, if this bill passes, how far away are we from convicted folks being sentenced to give up a body part in lieu of jail time?

There's also this: Man's prostate cancer leads him to [speak in an Irish accent](#).

Again, what? Has anyone else ever heard of Foreign Accent Syndrome (FAS)? Apparently it's a thing.

On the other hand, per the article, "Some common speech changes associated with FAS include fairly predictable errors, unusual prosody, including equal and excess stress, consonant substitution, deletion, distortion, and voicing errors." So maybe it isn't a thing after all.

Believing one can speak with a different accent doesn't mean one can do so accurately.

I'm a fiction writer. I regularly speak with an accent different than my own and less regularly in a language not my own, seldom with absolute accuracy. Apparently I need to recruit more scientists, oncologists and other doctors to my readership.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Reader Friday – Inkblots" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/02/reader-friday-inkblots.html>. I encourage you to play. I did.

See "Ryting Song Lyrics" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/ryting-song-lyrics/>. More on AI-generated stuff.

See “Doctor ChatGPT? AI-bot almost passes the US Medical Licensing Exam” at <https://interestingengineering.com/innovation/chatgpt-medical-licensing-exam>. Calm down. AI is still an amalgam of human thought and utterings, nothing original.

See “First Day Superstars” at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/first-day-superstars/>. Dean mentioned speaking with Joanna Penn about AI. I left a comment. It will be interesting to see whether he offers a take on writers’ use of AI in a future post, and what that take will be.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 540 words

Writing of “Hortencia Alvarez” (shrug—I dunno)

Day 1..... 1089 words. Total words to date..... 1089

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231

Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221

Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026

Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051

Total fiction words for February..... 1089

Total fiction words for 2023..... 47962

Total nonfiction words for February... 8500

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 28850

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 76812

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72

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

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: Because It Makes Sense, I preach trusting your characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living. Duh. This practice greatly increases your productivity and provides the fastest possible ascension along the learning curve of Craft because you get a great deal more practice at actually writing. This is not opinion. It is all numbers and facts.

Story of the Week

February 11, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * You Can't Make This Shup
- * Nothing Short of Incredible
- * Story of the Week
- * A Note on Pacing
- * On Censorship
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“[AI is a l]ot more complex than anything going on on the surface. Not defending, just saying that this is the early days and the dust has not settled by a long ways. Just stay tuned and watch. And as things settle in certain AI areas, I will talk about it [on my website].” Dean Wesley Smith in response to my comment on his site

“Going to do a series on Killing the Sacred Cows on Indie Publishing and delete those old ones that are out of date. Stay tuned.” Dean Wesley Smith in response to another comment on his site

You Can't Make This Shup

Rare hissing mushroom known as [Devil's Cigar spotted in Texas](#). The Last of Us?

Nothing Short of Incredible

Not about writing but amazing. If you are intrigued by puzzles, you'll enjoy this. “A general solution to the cubic equation was long considered impossible, until we gave up the requirement that math reflect reality.”

[How imaginary numbers were invented](#) is a fascinating 28-minute video. I've long suspected all the secrets of the universe boil down to 1. Now I see it's more than likely -1.

If you're as interested as I was, there are more videos on the topic below this one on YouTube. Makes me want to go back to school.

Story of the Week

Yesterday a story of the week arrived in my in box. And it was from me. (grin) Kind'a neat. Last week I prescheduled four stories to appear, one per week on Friday morning. Of course, then I promptly forgot about it.

So receiving “Keep Calm & Carry On,” a story narrated by a sniper in the bush, was enjoyable. This is one of my more Hemingway-esque short stories, and I enjoyed it even while I was writing it.

If you aren't subscribed and would like to read "Keep Calm & Carry On" free, please click <https://harveystanbroughwrites.com/keep-calm-carry-on/>.

If you would like to subscribe via Substack and receive future short stories free in your inbox, please visit <https://stanbroughwrites.substack.com/p/keep-calm-and-carry-on>. Then scroll to the bottom and click Subscribe.

A Note on Pacing

When writers think of pacing, they typically think "page-turner" and they also typically think "fast-paced," as if the latter is a requirement of the former. It isn't.

What causes readers to turn pages has nothing to do with speed. The formula is Depth + Tension = Anticipation. And Anticipation is what causes readers to turn pages.

I've been over depth before. See any of my posts on "grounding the reader." (Search the archives if you've downloaded them or key "grounding" into the search box in the sidebar at <https://hestanbrough.com>.)

Briefly, until you escort the reader firmly into the story by grounding him or her in the setting and introducing him or her to the character, s/he will neither be invested in the story nor care either way what happens to the character.

Tension is a different technique, though you can start injecting it into the story in the opening even as you ground the reader. But whenever you inject it, sometimes a slow or steady pace is just as effective (or more effective) than a fast pace.

In my current free story of the week, "Keep Calm & Carry On," the tension is driven by a quiet and slow but relentless pace. Until everything speeds up at the end as things do in such situations.

Really, now that you know what to look for, I suspect the pacing will be fairly obvious. But the story also flows well enough that the typical reader wouldn't think about how it's paced, and that's exactly what I want.

I don't mind that most readers don't notice the pacing and other component elements. I just want them to enjoy the story. (grin) Oh, and yes, I want to manipulate their heart rate.

Although I wrote the above mini-article on pacing yesterday, this morning one reader emailed to say of the story, "Whew!! I don't think I breathed for two minutes. That was great!"

MAN I like to hear things like that! (grin)

On Censorship

This was sparked by the second item in "Of Interest."

I do not agree with censorship at any level. I have personally suffered attempted censorship by one socialist person who believes I should never write or publish even short stories about a dystopian world in which those who disagree with the totalitarian state are disappeared.

Writers should write whatever (the hell) they want and readers should read whatever (the hell) they like. It is not any government's place (or anyone else's place) to tell anyone what they can or can't write or read.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "In the shallow world of BookTok, being 'a reader' is more important than actually reading" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/in-the-shallow-world-of-booktok-being-a-reader-is-more-important-than-actually-reading/>. Submitted for your liesurely perusal and consideration.

See "Choices Narrow in Russian Bookstores Amid Anti-LGBT Law, Wartime Restrictions" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/choices-narrow-in-russian-bookstores-amid-anti-lgbt-law-wartime-restrictions/>.

See "Running a big publishing house is not as much fun as it used to be" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/running-a-big-publishing-house-is-not-as-much-fun-as-it-used-to-be/>. And they did it to themselves.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 870 words

Writing of "Hortencia Alvarez" (shrug—I dunno)

Day 1..... 1089 words. Total words to date..... 1089

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231

Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221

Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026

Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051

Total fiction words for February..... 1089

Total fiction words for 2023..... 47962

Total nonfiction words for February... 9370

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 29720

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 77682

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0	
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

Disclaimer: Because It Makes Sense, I preach trusting your characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living. Duh. This practice greatly increases your productivity and provides the fastest possible ascension along the learning curve of Craft because you get a great deal more practice at actually writing. This is not opinion. It is all numbers and facts.

Pacing Again, and Setting

February 12, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Pacing Again
- * Setting
- * Of Interest

Quote of the Day

“While there are some benefits to using AI art as an indie author, it’s essential to consider how ethical it is.” Miles Oliver at The Independent Publishing Magazine

Pacing Again

Yesterday I talked here a little about Pacing as I used it in my short story, “[Keep Calm & Carry On](#).” I mentioned that one reader emailed to say, “I don’t think I breathed for two minutes.”

Another reader left a comment on the story as it was presented on my Substack: “Loved the mood you created and the setting. This was a tense read.”

A third reader left a comment on my Stanbrough Writes website: “My coffee got cold. ... You are never disappointing.”

Finally, a fourth emailed this morning to say the story was among my best. Then he asked whether I wrote it pre-WITD. (grin) No, it wasn’t, but today’s Journal is already approaching 1200 words so I’ll talk more about that in tomorrow’s edition. (By the way, all four of those readers are also fiction writers.)

A quick point re pacing—What the first reader said about breathing and the second said about mood and tension and the third said about his coffee getting cold (he was absorbed in the story) are all effects directly attributable to pacing.

As I wrote in “A Note on Pacing” in yesterday’s edition of the Journal, what causes readers to turn pages has nothing to do with speed. The formula is Depth + Tension = Anticipation. Anticipation is what causes readers to turn pages, and you can create tension with a slower pace just as you can with a faster pace.

For more, especially if you missed it, see yesterday’s post at <https://hestanbrough.com/story-of-the-week/>.

Setting

In addition to mentioning mood and tension, the second reader/writer also mentioned the setting. Writing setting really isn’t difficult if you bear in mind three secrets (and if you Practice):

1. Invoke as many of the POV character’s five physical senses as apply to the scene, plus at least one emotional sense.

For example, if you’re purposefully lying very still behind the stock of a sniper rifle in a dense jungle and sweat is trickling down your face in rivulets, chances are the sweat is due in part to the ambient heat from the climate and the surrounding jungle—and in part to fear. So in that one image, you’ve conveyed the ambient temperature, the feel of the sweat on the skin, and the emotional sense of fear.

2. Focus down.

As you invoke those five physical senses, let the reader see, hear, smell, taste and feel (physically) specifics of the setting. Don’t just see a desk, but the nick in the front edge of the desk.

In the jungle setting I started with above, let the reader hear the buzzing of the gnat who keeps annoying the POV character’s right ear. Let the reader see and maybe feel and maybe hear a drop of sweat falling from the tip of the POV character’s nose. Let him or her feel the edge of the bright green leaf touching the POV character’s forehead (and him wondering vaguely whether it might cut him).

Let the reader inhale the rich, earthy smell (or aroma or stench, depending on the POV character) of the jungle floor and see the damp reddish-brown and black texture of the nearby rotted log, and so on. Are there maggots on the log? Focusing down is what makes the setting come to life.

3. Take. Your. Time.

This is maybe the most important technique I can pass back to beginning and early stage writers. Take your time. Don't rush through recording the POV character's sense and opinion of the setting.

Here's a great rule of thumb for writing description: Any description that comes through the POV character is essential, so take your time and get it all in. Now for an aside: if in your mind you just asked, "What if it isn't important to the story?" stop. Just stop.

The story is unfolding around the characters and you as you run through it with them, so how can you possibly know whether something is or isn't important to the story? Trust the POV character. If s/he sees, hears, smells, tastes, feels (physically or emotionally) something in the scene, it's important to the story.

And if s/he DOESN'T notice something, it ISN'T important to the story. Which brings us to the second part of the rule of thumb: Any description that comes from outside the character and the story (in other words, any description that comes from the writer, a member of a critique group, or any other conscious, critical mind) is too much. Period.

Just write (record) what the POV character sees, hears, smell, tastes, and feels both physically and emotionally, and you'll be golden. Trust yourself. You've got this.

Finally, if something in the setting reminds the POV character of something else or another experience (as it did in "Keep Calm") go with it. It will tie back in.

Also under the heading of "Take your time," understand that the reader can't see (hear, smell, etc.) what you don't put on the page. If you see, hear, smell, etc. something of the story in your mind, be sure you take the time to write it down.

This is a particularly large problem for beginning and less-experienced writers. They tend to skip from one exciting scene to the next without letting the readers see the characters crossing the intervening space.

In one romance I edited, for example, a study-like room opened on a balcony. One moment the male and female leads were in that room quietly discussing an upcoming event, the next (with no transition) they were standing on the balcony overlooking the grounds, and the next (still with no transition), they were back inside and she was reaching for his hands and looking up to say something romantic to him.

Yet they didn't GO back inside. Obviously in the story they did, and I don't doubt for a moment they did in the writer's mind too, but on the page they didn't. As the copyeditor (and reader) I felt almost physically jerked from place to place to place.

That sort of thing will make your stories will feel gapped and thin. But if you're guilty of this, don't feel bad. Many writers omit part of the story at first. Especially Stage 1 and 2 writers, when they're still focused on the words and sentences.

When you give yourself over to the Story, you will begin to slow down, focus more deeply on the setting and in the scene, and just enjoy your time running through the story with the characters. And that's exactly where you'll want to be.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “The Circus Trial of the Early 20th Century – The Hall-Mills Murders” at <http://dyingwords.net/the-circus-trial-of-the-early-20th-century-the-hall-mills-murders/>.

See “Business Musings: It Begins (A Process Blog)” at <https://kriswrites.com/2023/02/08/business-musings-it-begins-a-process-blog/>.

See “Does AI Art Affect Indie Authors?” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/does-ai-art-affect-indie-authors/>. My kneejerk reaction “not unless you want it to” aside, this is an interesting article that address the ethics of AI art.

See “Friend or Foe: ChatGPT Has Pushed Language AI into the Spotlight” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/friend-or-foe-chatgpt-has-pushed-language-ai-into-the-spotlight/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1210 words

Writing of “Hortencia Alvarez” (shrug—I dunno)

Day 1..... 1089 words. Total words to date..... 1089

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231

Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221

Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026

Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051

Total fiction words for February..... 1089

Total fiction words for 2023..... 47962

Total nonfiction words for February... 10580

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 30930

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 78892

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

Disclaimer: Because It Makes Sense, I preach trusting your characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living. Duh. Download (free) My Best Advice for Fiction Writers at <https://hestanbrough.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/My-Best-Advice-for-Fiction-Writers.pdf>.

Pre-WITD? and Post-Aicolypse

February 13, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * A particularly insightful quote
- * You Can't Make This Shup
- * Pre-WITD?
- * Post-Aicolypse
- * Of Interest

Quote of the Day

“You don't concentrate on risks. You concentrate on results.” Chuck Yeager

A particularly insightful quote—

“I think a lot of people forget what got them to the NFL. We've already defied the odds. Chances are, you shouldn't have been there statistically. ... If I want to [have a new career] I have to put in the time and effort. You have to become obsessed all over again.” Tony Gonzales, retired pro football player, on becoming a broadcaster and actor

This quote touched me because I've known so many hugely successful people who, after they retired, chose to become ficiton writers. But instead of putting in the time and effort to learn the craft and then trust what they know and PRACTICE, they chose to follow the shortcuts served by the myths.

Understand, if following the mechanical steps of story construction worked (outline, write, revise, garner critical comments, rewrite, polish, submit), it would work every time for every writer.

*“If following the mechanical steps of story construction worked,
it would work every time for every writer.”*

The more you construct stories like “everybody else” does it, the more your work sounds like “everybody else” wrote it. The only path to that original, unique voice even all the big traditional publishers say they’re looking for is to trust in your creative subconscious and convey the story that your characters, not you, are living.

You Can’t Make This Shup

“[China plans to shoot down a mystery object](#) spotted over port city. The report comes on the heels of the U.S. shooting down multiple high-altitude objects in the past week. Beijing has accused Washington of waging ‘an information war’.”

What’s next, a slap-fight between Biden and Li Keqiang?

Pre-WITD?

Thanks to my friend JG, who emailed me about my short story, “Keep Calm & Carry On.” He said he thought the story was among my best, then asked whether I wrote the story “pre-WITD.” The short answer, as I reported yesterday, is No, I didn’t write it before I started practicing WITD or before I knew what I was doing by that name.

I first learned about WITD by name in February 2014. I wrote that particular story in April 2014 during a flurry of short story writing. Most of the stories I wrote during that time came from what I consider my Hemingway-esque persona of Nick Porter and the magic-realism persona of Gervasio Arrancado. The psychotic Eric Stringer snuck in a few of his odd stories back then too.

Only Gervasio’s work (magic realism) predates my learning about WITD. I wrote and published some of that back in 2011 when I first discovered Smashwords. Otherwise most of my writing and publishing (traditional and later indie) were poetry collections, essays and articles, and nonfiction how-to books, not on writing fiction but on the language itself.

But—and this is a big but, no pun intended—I’ve never pre-planned or rewritten a short story. So I was WITD (and following Heinlein’s Rule 3) for short fiction before I knew WITD by that name and before I was aware of Heinlein’s Rules. It was just story telling, and one can hold an entire short story in one’s head without much problem.

Of course, you can’t do that with a novel, which is why so many would-be novelists succumb to unreasoning fear and start with an outline.

In those pre-WITD days, I DID outline (and outline and outline, ad nauseam) a novel. I pre-planned a cast of characters, established plot points, took care with character arcs, etc. All the

typical (and mythical) BS taught by all the non-writers in academia and parroted by would-be and young or inexperienced writers who don't know any better.

I worked on that outline for over three straight years, and I still have never written that novel. And I won't.

Most of that time, I was "stuck," partly because I was bored out of my mind (I knew the story backward and forward) and partly because I entertained a pair of unreasoning fears: One, what if I wrote the book and nobody liked it? And two, what would that do to my career as a writer?

So I stuck to writing short stories.

Then one day in early 2014 I remembered Dean Wesley Smith, whom I had met in the mid-to-late 1990s when we both were presenting sessions at a writers' conference. I was presenting on writing poetry, and he was presenting on how to land a New York agent.

Just for grins, back then Dean's advice to landing an agent was to submit your manuscript yourself to several publishers. When a publisher bites, tell him or her you'll have your agent get in touch. Then call "the" agent you would like to represent you, tell him or her you have a publisher already and only need the agent to work out the details. The agent will jump at the chance to make his or her 15% for doing nothing but negotiating rights, and you'll have a permanent agent. Tada!

Of course, these days Dean, like I, warns against agents, traditional publishing contracts, etc. No need for any of that nonsense. We are in a golden age of indie publishing. If you are dedicated to learning and practicing the craft of writing, there is no limit to how far you can go.

Anyway, I looked Dean up online, found his website, and emailed him about my fears. He responded to my first concern with, "So? Who cares?" and to my second with, "Um, what career?" And as usual he was absolutely right.

I started reading Dean's blog posts about WITD and decided to test it for myself. Frankly, I was skeptical. But it worked. What I really learned then was to give myself over to the characters, to be the vessel through which they told the story that they were living.

I did that from February through most of October, then took a deep breath and started my first novel, *Leaving Amarillo*. As I had done with my short stories, I forced myself to trust myself, my creative subconscious, and the characters (WITD). It worked, and I've never looked back.

And yes, I also continued writing at least one short story per week. I did that for 72 weeks before I foolishly and intentionally broke the streak myself. I still kick myself over that.

So I appreciate the comments on my stories. But honestly, the fact that you enjoy a story by anyone probably means it was written into the dark.

You can always tell a story or novel that wasn't WITD—one that was preplanned or thought through—because at pretty much every turn you'll be able to tell in advance what's coming. Why? Because the writer “figured out” (conscious, critical mind) what happens next, and if the writer can figure it out, so can the reader.

Only the characters themselves can outwit the reader.

When you give yourself over to the characters and let them use your fingertips on the keyboard to convey the story that they, not you, are living, they *will* surprise you. And if the characters and story twists surprise you, the writer, they will definitely surprise the reader.

If you have any questions at all about this, please either leave a comment at <https://hestanbrough.com/pre-witd-and-post-aicolypse/> or email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

Post-Alcolypse

In her comment on my post “AI: Um, Why?” writer [Kate Pavelle](#) wrote in part that she is going to mark all her works “as ‘created by one human author, not written by AI’.”

I think that's a great idea, and beginning with my next publication, I plan to do something similar. Whereas I put most such things in the end matter, this or something similar will go up front:

This fiction is a Creation, the result of a partnership between a human writer and the character(s) he accessed with his creative subconscious. This is in no part the clunky, block-by-block, artificial construction of any sort of AI or of any conscious, critical, human mind. What you read here is what actually happened there.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Getty Images Sues Stability AI For Copyright Infringement” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/getty-images-sues-stability-ai-for-copyright-infringement/>.

See “U.S. Copyright Office tells Judge that AI Artwork isn't Protectable” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/u-s-copyright-office-tells-judge-that-ai-artwork-isnt-protectable/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1400 words

Writing of “Hortencia Alvarez” (shrug—I dunno)

Day 1..... 1089 words. Total words to date..... 1089

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231

Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221

Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026

Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051

Total fiction words for February..... 1089

Total fiction words for 2023..... 47962

Total nonfiction words for February... 11980

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 32330

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 80292

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72

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

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: Because It Makes Sense, I preach trusting your characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living. Duh. See My Best Advice for Fiction Writers at <https://hestanbrough.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/My-Best-Advice-for-Fiction-Writers.pdf>.

A Final Cautionary Note on AI

February 15, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * You Can't Make This Shup
- * In Case You Wondered
- * A Final Cautionary Note on AI
- * Of Interest

Quote of the Day

“Human writing can be so beautiful. There is beauty in the human prose that computers can never and should never co-opt.” Chloe Xiang, a CompSci student who built an app that can detect ChatGPT-generated text

You Can't Make This Shup

New report finds a number of data brokers—companies that sell aggregated data typically pulled from sources including mobile apps and websites—offering personally identifiable mental health information for purchase ([More](#))

“Public needs to wisen up to nuclear winter risks, experts warn.” from Interesting Engineering

Um, why? “Wising up” to nuclear winter risks will only increase stress levels and give those who are “wised up” one more thing to worry about. Yet there is absolutely nothing the average citizen can do to mitigate either the effects of a nuclear winter or the likelihood of it. I’d rather not be tasked with worrying about things I can’t control.

In Case You Wondered

Where do BCE and CE come from?

“These abbreviations are tied to BC and AD without being explicitly tied to Christianity as well. BCE (Before Common Era) and CE (Common Era) have been used since the early 1700s by various writers and English language dictionaries.” from Antidote.info

So there y’go. Not a new thing (and not a new mandate from the PC police, or at least not an original mandate) at all. See more in “Of Interest.”

A Final Cautionary Note on AI

If you hadn’t been able to tell before now, I do not advocate using artificial intelligence (AI) to generate content for a story of any length. Not that anyone reading this will be able to keep from using AI in the future as it becomes more and more a part of everyday life.

Of course, as always, do what you want to do. The following are only the ramblings of one old guy. But then, I still bemoan the loss of television that doesn’t stop to “buffer” at the most inopportune times.

To be specific, if you want to use AI to generate a story starter or “prompt” (A character with a problem in a setting: Go), I see no problem with that. But I personally believe using it to generate actual content or even suggestions or recommendations for content is a grievous error.

How a character might react to a situation is something the writer should get directly from the character, and how a situation unfolds is something the writer should learn as it unfolds around the writer and the character(s).

Here’s the biggest problem: Feeding information into an AI program and then asking it how a situation might unfold or how a character might react *and then taking those suggestions or recommendations* WILL send a negative message to your creative subconscious and your

characters: “I don’t trust you, I don’t need you, and I don’t have the patience to run through the story with you.”

And your characters will fold their little arms and refuse to play further with you. It might take them awhile to withdraw completely, but they will. (“You have your stupid AI friend, so whaddaya need me for?”)

And if you intentionally shut off your characters by repeatedly sending messages to them that you don’t trust them (ahem—revising, rewriting, inviting outside criticism and “correction,” and now the use of AI-generated content) frankly you deserve for your characters to shut you out.

All of that being said, I believe there’s a reason human beings live only so long. They die, mercifully, about the time they’re beginning to feel overwhelmed by the advent of policies and technology that weaken human beings.

As AI pertains to fiction writers, I have absolutely no doubt that future generations—and by that I mean people currently under the age of 50 and on out through those not born yet—will use AI to generate at least part of the content of their stories. And when they do, that will be the beginning of the end of our species’ ability to actually “create” fiction.

The current collaboration that occurs between the human and his or her creative subconscious, which is either where the characters exist or the avenue by which we access them, will cease to be.

The new collaboration will exist between the human who claims to be a fiction writer and at least one AI program, which of course contains nothing new, nothing original, nothing that wasn’t thought up at one time or another by some other human being to later be skimmed and culled by some AI program.

And understand, I’m not saying those future faux-creatives will willingly and knowingly “turn against” the concept of using their own mind. The current and forthcoming AI processes will simply be part of their world. It will not be an adjunct to their own mind and creative process, but an integral part of both. Using AI will seem as natural to them as not using it seems to me.

Of course, that really isn’t much different from the way things are today. Today, most longer fictions (novellas and novels and novel series) are written by committee, though the novelists themselves will never admit that even to themselves, much less to others.

Yet they admit openly that they revise, seek external critical input, then rewrite etc. They are publicly grateful for the “input” and “assistance,” yet still claim sole authorship. Folks, the only real difference is that AI programs are more thorough and much quicker than critique groups and input from other conscious, critical minds whose basis is logic.

But in the future, fiction writers will actually brag about using the latest AI in their so-called “creations,” which are actually constructions. In fact, that’s already started. You only have to [look around the internet](#) to witness it.

Today, only those who have risked ridicule by testing, verifying, and finally trusting their own creative subconscious produce truly unique, original short stories, novellas and novels. The others revise, rewrite, and polish out the originality.

But the worm is turning. Eventually, nobody will be willing to risk true originality. Nor will anyone care. Think about that.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “What readers hate most in books” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/what-readers-hate-most-in-books/>.

See “Should We Use BCE Instead Of BC?” at <https://www.dictionary.com/e/should-we-use-bce-instead-of-bc/>. An interesting article if the topic appeals to you.

See “BC and AD, BCE and CE: What’s the Difference?” at <https://www.antidote.info/en/blog/reports/bc-and-ad-bce-and-ce-whats-difference>.

See “Not Even More Rules” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/02/not-even-more-rules.html>. Oh, did I ever leave a comment.

See “15 Things You Need to Know About the Copyright Office’s New Small Claims Court” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/15-things-you-need-to-know-about-the-copyright-offices-new-small-claims-court/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1120 words

Writing of “Hortencia Alvarez” (shrug—I dunno)

Day 1..... 1089 words. Total words to date..... 1089

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231

Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221

Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026

Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051

Total fiction words for February..... 1089

Total fiction words for 2023..... 47962

Total nonfiction words for February... 13100

Total nonfiction words for the year.....	33450
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	81412
Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date...	0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

Disclaimer: Because It Makes Sense, I preach trusting your characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living. Duh. See My Best Advice for Fiction Writers at <https://hestanbrough.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/My-Best-Advice-for-Fiction-Writers.pdf>.

All About “Of Interest”

February 16, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * All About “Of Interest”
- * Of Interest
- * My Own Writing
- * The Numbers

All About “Of Interest”

Soon I’ll be back with Part 1 of a 3 or 4 or more part series with the working title “Writing Technique (or Not): A Graphic Illustration.”

But for today, I found three items for “Of Interest” that were so important I didn’t want them competing for your attention with a usual Journal entry.

Here they are, and I’ll talk with you again soon:

Of Interest

First up, Atticus, a writing and formatting tool that rivals (and beats) the much-acclaimed Vellum. See “12 Atticus Templates For Easy Book Formatting” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/12-atticus-templates-for-easy-book-formatting/>.

In the linked article, The Passive Guy says he’s going to test this and then post the results. I clicked through to the OP from The Book Designer, then through again to Atticus and signed up for the program.

As advertised, it cost \$147. The point by point comparison with Vellum was impressive, as is the promise that all upgrades, new templates, etc. are free for life. The only downside (for me) is that it requires Chrome OS. But you only have to download and install Chrome. You don't have to use it later. Downloading and installing Chrome, which I probably will never use again, took all of maybe a full minute.

Second, an installment from the ever knowledgeable Kristine Kathryn Rusch. See “How Writers Fail Part 11: They Want To” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-writers-fail-part-11-they-want-to/>. Well worth the time to read at least the except on The Passive Voice (as I did) even if you're allergic to political sniping and don't click through to the full article.

As she notes in the opening, the title is harsh because the topic is harsh. But it's also very much true. Like Ms. Rusch, I've talked with probably dozens of would-be writers like this over the years.

Finally, a question that's actually easy to answer although very few accept the answer as fact. After all, nothing can be that easy—but it is. See “What Actually Makes You a Better Writer?” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/what-actually-makes-you-a-better-writer/>.

As with any craft or art form, what makes you better at it is practice. Not hovering over one work in an attempt to perfect it—practice.

Of course, it is wise to learn from other successful writers and from successful professionals in different fields. And it's fine to read, think, and talk about writing. You can even argue endlessly with yourself over whether to write “under,” “beneath” or “below” the porch, but in the end, only consistently putting new words on the page will make you a better writer.

My Own Writing

Thanks to those of you who were concerned at the lack of movement in the numbers below. Nothing is stalled. I'm in a bit of a holding pattern at present as I help my wife get over a bad fall (nothing broken) and fret over my little cat daughter.

Rather than going to work each day in the Hovel, I've been staying closer in the house, and with other matters on my mind, I'm less able at the moment to switch off everything else and turn my attention to the fiction. But the stories will still be waiting when I'm able to resume them.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 540 words

Writing of “Hortencia Alvarez” (shrug—I dunno)

Day 1..... 1089 words. Total words to date..... 1089

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051

Total fiction words for February..... 1089
Total fiction words for 2023..... 47962
Total nonfiction words for February... 13640
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 33990
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 81952

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: Because It Makes Sense, I preach trusting your characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living. Duh. See My Best Advice for Fiction Writers at <https://hestanbrough.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/My-Best-Advice-for-Fiction-Writers.pdf>.

Generating Graphics, and On Writing Techniques

February 17, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Generating Graphics
- * On Writing Techniques (or Not)
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“I can accept failure. Everyone fails at something. But I can't accept not trying.” Michael Jordan

“One machine can do the work of fifty ordinary [humans]. No machine can do the work of one extraordinary [human].” Elbert Hubbard, American writer

Generating Graphics

I do not personally recommend any subscription options for designing covers, social media ads, flyers and other graphics you might need as an indie publisher. There are simply too many great graphics design programs out there that are either free or that you can buy outright.

But the thing is, you aren't me. Many of you are much younger, are actively engaged on various social media, and don't mind hiring graphics software on a subscription basis.

If you want to go that way and aren't already hip-deep in Adobe's design-suite cloud, I recommend trying BookBrush (<https://bookbrush.com/>) for creating covers and for creating social media memes and ads for your work.

I don't use BookBrush myself. But having glanced over it for a few minutes, I got the impression that it's a one-stop destination for all your cover and graphic illustration needs. As a bonus, it's around a hundred dollars less per year than Adobe. If I didn't have the programs I have and if I were engaged on social media, I probably would use BookBrush.

If you'd rather own (permanently license) your software (vs. renting it) I have some other suggestions.

I spent a minute or two online and found a "Top 5 Free Book Cover Makers" article from KindlePreneur at <https://kindlepreneur.com/free-book-cover-makers/>.

The programs they list are Krita, GIMP (Gnu Image Manipulation Program), Paint.net (not the Windows one), Canva, and Over. You might check them out.

For my own covers, I personally use the now-ancient Serif PagePlus programs. In my estimation, X6 is the best and most intuitive, but Serif also released X7, 8, and 9 before moving on to their Affinity line.

You can no longer buy PagePlus programs directly from the company. You have to poke around at Amazon or ebay or some similar platform and keep your fingers crossed. I found an X6 disc for \$40. It didn't come with a license key, but the one I purchased ages ago still worked. (I keep a record of all license keys I purchase.)

I also recommend Serif's Affinity Publisher. You can also buy Photo and Designer to own the full interactive suite. Best of all, each costs a one-time fee, not a subscription. Affinity is very much like Adobe, except that it's far less expensive and isn't offered only by subscription.

Finally, for layout and formatting options to create both ebooks and print books, I strongly recommend purchasing Atticus. Again this is not a subscription. You pay \$147 to license the program, period.

From yesterday's Journal entry, "The point by point comparison with Vellum was impressive, as is the promise that all upgrades, new templates, etc. are free for life.

“The only downside (for me) is that it requires Chrome OS. But you only have to download and install Chrome. You don’t have to use it later. Downloading and installing Chrome, which I probably will never use again, took all of maybe a full minute.”

On Writing Techniques (or Not)

This is a little long, but I decided not to write the series of posts titled “Writing Technique (or Not): A Graphic Illustration” that I mentioned in yesterday’s edition of the Journal. Frankly, the end result seemed unworthy of the time and effort required to put it all together and publish it.

The primary idea was that an undecided would-be writer is standing at Point Zero on a flat-line graph. From there s/he had four options:

1. S/he could remain frozen in place, overcome by one unreasoning fear or another or addicted to reading and talking about writing but never actually writing;
2. S/he could just walk away, leave writing to those with a passion for it, and go find something for which s/he has a passion;
3. S/he could take certain “required” steps that would allegedly ensure success; or
4. S/he could back away from taking those “required” steps and Just Write.

Here I’m dealing with only the last two options. If s/he backed away s/he would not only NOT do something but s/he would let go of the requirement of following the steps.

The steps to be followed (some writers omit some steps) are

1. outline
 - 1a. character sketches
 - 1b. place sketches
 - 1c. world building
2. write
3. revise
4. self-edit
5. seek external critique
6. rewrite to apply external critique
7. send to beta readers
8. apply beta readers’ input
9. polish
10. indie publish or submit to agents

(Notice that of the 13 separate steps in the process, and some writers repeat steps 3 and 6 over and over again, only one step is to actually write.)

A few decades ago, I completed numbers 1, 1a, 1b, and 1c above.

In completing No. 1 I'd outlined a novel, complete with plot points and twists, noting in which chapter the rising action would peak, noting again where the last third of the novel would begin and where I would insert the final few try-fail sequences, etc.

At No. 1a I'd written some of the required character sketches, complete with histories, any significant dates (birth, various graduations, etc.). At No. 1b I'd done the same for some of the significant places (buildings, intersections, towns, etc.) I would include in the novel, and at No. 1c I'd completed significant world-building.

And when the outline was finished and the notes were placed and the character- and place-sketches and world-building were done and it finally came time to move to step 2 (Write)—I couldn't, because

1. I was bored out of my mind. After all, I already knew the entire story, front to back: the characters, where and how the story would unfold, where the rising action would peak. I knew the main character would try and fail twice in the second third of the novel.

Likewise I knew he would then experience a resurgence before trying and failing two more times in the last third of the novel before he finally tried and succeeded, roll the credits, thanks for coming out, you can go home now, the end.

In other words, when the outline was finished there was nothing left to "create," and thus far I'd created nothing for that novel, though I had constructed an awful lot of stuff. Or a lot of awful stuff.

2. I was scared to death. What if one of the characters went off-script? What if, God forbid, something occurred to me as I was writing the novel that wasn't in line with the outline and all the planning I'd done? All that work would be down the tube.

I could do only one thing: I had to return to the outline, make sure it was absolutely complete. Once I *perfected* it, the characters and the story itself wouldn't be able to waver. There wouldn't be room.

So I looped back to 1, 1a, 1b, and 1c. And I stayed there for over 3 years. I wasn't a writer at all. I was an outliner. A plotter. A planner. I was a hard-working (but unpaid) construction engineer, and my materials were words, sentence fragments, and sentences.

The whole time I was struggling with Just Starting to write one novel, I was churning out hundreds of poems, essays, articles, and—starting in the 1990s—blog posts. I also wrote several short stories.

During the '90s I even edited and published, in paper, three different quarterly literary reviews: *The Roswell Literary Review*, *The Raintown Review: Poetry Edition* and *The Raintown Review: Essay Edition*.

But I was never quite able to pull the trigger on actually writing that novel. I never wrote a sentence of it.

Enter February 2014, Dean Wesley Smith’s website, and Writing Into the Dark. A skeptic, I tried it with every expectation that it wouldn’t work. But it did. And here we are.

As an aficionado and practitioner of WITD I’ve expanded it and advanced it, but I can’t say I’ve added to it because there was nothing there to which anyone can “add” anything.

WITD isn’t a technique at all, but a non-technique. So in expanding and advancing it, I’ve taken away more, removed more requirements.

What I teach isn’t even a matter of “writing into the dark” because even doing that requires a conscious-mind decision. What I teach is to simply access your characters’ world, drop into the ongoing story, and race through it with the characters while recording the story as it unfolds around you.

And that’s what I wish for all of you.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Scientists made a mind-bending discovery about how AI actually works” at <https://www.vice.com/en/article/4axjnm/scientists-made-discovery-about-how-ai-actually-works>.

See “Scientists detect signs of hidden structure inside Earth’s core.” at <https://www.sciencealert.com/scientists-detect-signs-of-hidden-structure-inside-earths-core>. Probably where the Mole People live.

See “5 Strategies I Use to Launch New Books in Kindle Unlimited” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/5-strategies-i-use-to-launch-new-books-in-kindle-unlimited/>. Note that this requires distribution only to Amazon.

See “The thing about Bing” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-thing-about-bing/>. I have to admit I chuckled a little.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1490 words

Writing of “Hortencia Alvarez” (shrug—I dunno)

Day 1..... 1089 words. Total words to date..... 1089

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051

Total fiction words for February..... 1089
Total fiction words for 2023..... 47962
Total nonfiction words for February... 15130
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 35480
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 83442

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: Because It Makes Sense, I preach trusting your characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living. Duh. See My Best Advice for Fiction Writers at <https://hestanbrough.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/My-Best-Advice-for-Fiction-Writers.pdf>.

On Character and Setting

February 18, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * On Character and Setting
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“Too stupid for words and too dangerous and wow are you a lazy bastard if you can't write your own fiction.” Dean Wesley Smith on whether to use AI-generated content in stories

“PG contends that social problems are social problems, not word problems.” The Passive Guy

On Character and Setting

Awhile back I was talking with a writer about my nonfiction book, [Writing the Character-Driven Story](#).

He asked why I put such emphasis on character and setting. Aren't the events of the story what really matter?

Well, yes, they matter, but only as a catalyst to drive the characters' reactions and dialogue. Fiction is centered around events, but every scene and story is about the characters and their reactions to those events.

Setting matters too—

Overall, maybe 20% of a fiction is composed of events and those take place in a setting. The other 80% is the characters' reactions to that event, which also take place in a setting.

Nothing in real life—either events or character interaction—takes place in an empty space or against a sterile white background. There is always a background.

Always share with your readers whatever your POV character (not you, the writer) notices in the setting (sees, hears, smells, tastes, feels physically and emotionally). Likewise, always share with your readers how the POV character (not you, the writer) feels about those aspects of the setting (the POV character's opinion).

For a very brief example, one POV character might smile at the “faint aroma” of cherry pipe smoke. Another POV character might wince at the “filthy stench” of cherry pipe smoke. Depends on the character, and speaks to his or her background, personality, etc.

Characters wear clothing. The reader should be able to see that clothing.

A general description is always fine if you're dealing with a secondary character or a gaggle of them (the guy wore jeans, a t-shirt, scuffed work boots and a ball cap).

Or the airport was filled to overflowing with men in suits and women in skirts and blouses or pantsuits. The whole place smelled of travel and leather, and a boring automated announcement about unattended bags repeated every few minutes.

Or everyone at the worksite was dressed in dusty jeans, stained t-shirts, scuffed workboots and ball caps in varying colors. Or they all wore a blue ball cap with the sweat-stained Smith & Sons logo in white across the front.

Why? Because that's all your POV character would notice in passing as he's focused on a particular goal. He wouldn't notice specifically what they're wearing, but he would notice that they weren't naked.

For more prominent characters or for secondary characters who figure prominently in the story, a more detailed description might be necessary.

To be on the safe side, in every case describe what your POV character notices. This is not difficult once you learn to trust your character and to filter everything through his or her physical senses and emotional senses.

Much has been said about how to decide whether you're using "too much" or "too little" description. Here's a great rule of thumb: If the POV character notices it, include it. It's necessary to the story. If the writer adds some description of his/her own volition because s/he feels it's necessary, it isn't. It's excess.

Places wear clothing too. A house or other building has a façade with particular attributes. If your character is going to walk into that building, the reader should be able to see the door and any windows, feel the doorknob or pushbar in his hand, smell the scent or aroma or stench when the door opens, hear the sounds, if any, that wash out over him.

Obviously, if the character approaches the building from a block away, the description will be a bit longer and focus down as the character nears the entrance. If s/he leaps from a car and crashes through the door, the description will be much shorter.

Likewise a room has a particular look and smell and sound (even if the "sound" is an eerie silence) and feel. Let your readers experience it right along with your POV character.

All of that is setting. Again, nothing—no event, no conversation, no character wondering internally what's going on—takes place in an empty space or against a sterile background.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Brain implants like Neuralink could change your personality in surprising ways" at <https://www.sciencealert.com/brain-implants-like-neuralink-could-change-your-personality-in-surprising-ways>. Story ideas?

See "Some AI Opinions" at <https://deanwesleymith.com/some-ai-opinions/>.

See "If stigma is the problem, using different words may not help" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/if-stigma-is-the-problem-using-different-words-may-not-help/>. The first paragraph had me laughing out loud. And read PG's very serious take.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 790 words

Writing of "Hortencia Alvarez" (shrug—I dunno)

Day 1..... 1089 words. Total words to date..... 1089

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051

Total fiction words for February..... 1089
Total fiction words for 2023..... 47962
Total nonfiction words for February... 15920
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 36270
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 84232

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: Because It Makes Sense, I preach trusting your characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living. Duh. See My Best Advice for Fiction Writers at <https://hestanbrough.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/My-Best-Advice-for-Fiction-Writers.pdf>.

Hemingway

February 19, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Hemingway
- * I've dropped off "Hortencia Alvarez"
- * Of Interest

Quote of the Day

"Just write one true sentence." Ernest Hemingway

Hemingway

While I'm spending time away from the Hovel, I'm reading quite a lot. I recently read roughly half of *The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway: The Finca Vigia Edition*. By keying

the title into a search engine, you can find used copies for around \$7 on up. A new paperback copy on Amazon is under \$15. Extremely inexpensive for a masters class on writing.

I have this one as both an ebook and in trade paperback, the 1987 edition. To play the old game, if I were to be stranded on a desert island and could take only so many books with me, this would be my first choice. Raymond Chandler's *Collected Stories* would probably be my second choice, and then *The Stand* by Stephen King.

How about you? Which books would you take? Leave a comment.

If you are a writer and if you haven't read *The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway*, I strongly recommend it. In fact, if you haven't read it recently, I just as strongly recommend it.

As an aside, if you're one who has trouble coming up with ideas, I super-strongly recommend it. I can't read any of Hemingway's fiction without being flooded with story starters.

My recent reading was probably my fourth or fifth time through the collection. On this particular occasion, I was searching for a two-word clause that I only vaguely remembered, but one that had struck me in its powerful simplicity. It was a brief bit of dialogue uttered from one character to another.

I couldn't simply type the sentence for which I was searching into a search engine because I couldn't remember it precisely. I only knew it was "Be who you are," or "Just be yourself," or some similar clause that means that same general thing.

Plus, in the story the sentence was issued as a terse directive, so not anything at all like the flood of feel-good affirmations that crop up if you key anything similar into a search engine.

And the sentence was delivered with a certain attitude dangling off it. And of course, even the most advanced search engines don't do attitude or voice. Anyway, I'd never seen those particular words used to express that particular sentiment before, and that use is what intrigued me.

I did finally find the passage, after reading roughly half of "The First Forty-nine" stories in the book. It was in an otherwise unremarkable (for Hemingway) story titled "Fifty Grand."

As it turned out, the sentence was "Be yourself." Now imagine those two muttered words wrapped in an underlying threat and delivered by a hulking welterweight boxer in the center of a ring. The sentence was part of a longer dialogue, and the character used it twice in maybe a quarter-minute or so of story time, each time in response to something the other character said.

Hemingway's use of that dramatic sentence in that bit of dialogue was even more plaintive and striking than Lee Child's famous bit of transitory narrative: "Reacher said nothing." But this isn't a review. It's an opportunity for learning.

Understand, it wasn't the particular words that mattered. What mattered was the way the master used those sort of words in the context of the story. Truly next-level stuff. Having found the passage, I can (and will) study it off and on.

Frankly, I can hardly wait to get back to writing. In the meantime, I'm starting again on *The Sun Also Rises*.

As strange fate would have it, my buddy Dan sent me a copy of Michael Shaara's *For Love of the Game*. (Thanks, Dan.) It arrived in the mail yesterday, and I retrieved shortly after writing the above Journal entry for today.

Why is that odd? Because across the bottom of the front cover is a partial review from the Los Angeles Times. It reads, "If Hemingway had written a baseball novel, he might have written *For Love of the Game*." The coincidence is too tempting. I reckon I'll set aside *The Sun Also Rises* to read Shaara's novel instead.

I've dropped off "Hortencia Alvarez" from the numbers below because I'm not sure how long it will run. I don't want to risk interrupting WCG9SF4 to write what might become another novel.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Fear Thesaurus Entry: One's Genetics" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/fear-thesaurus-entry-ones-genetics/>. This article abounds with story starters.

See "(Comments on) Some AI Opinions" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/some-ai-opinions/#comments>. The post has exploded with comments and Dean has yet to join in. I added a couple more, responding to others' comments.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 750 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051

Total fiction words for February..... 1089
Total fiction words for 2023..... 47962

Total nonfiction words for February... 16670
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 37020
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 84982

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: Because It Makes Sense, I preach trusting your characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living. Duh. See My Best Advice for Fiction Writers at <https://hestanbrough.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/My-Best-Advice-for-Fiction-Writers.pdf>.

Roald Dahl and Blatant Censorship

February 20, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * You Can't Make This Shup
- * Dean's Post on AI
- * Roald Dahl
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“You can't script the unexpected. Life is full of unexpected events. Scripted novels are not.” Dan Baldwin

“Today, I only listen to what my characters tell me. ... This approach to writing keeps me always in suspense. The same can be said for my readers.” Dan Baldwin

“Nobody ever lives their life all the way up except bull-fighters.” Jake Barnes to Robert Cohn in *The Sun Also Rises*

“Genre is a bookstore problem, not a literary problem.” Rick Moody

You Can't Make This Shup

“Human player beats AI platform in 14 out of 15 matches of the Chinese game Go after using a separate AI to identify weaknesses in the algorithmic competitor ([More](#))”

So why bother? Why not just let the two AI's play it out? Will this human player actually have the gall to celebrate his or her "win"?

Dean's Post on AI

If you haven't been following it, there are even more comments on Dean's post about AI. See <https://deanwesleysmith.com/some-ai-opinions/#comments>. I won't mention it again, but it's generally a good idea to check back for comments.

Roald Dahl

I woke up late to a gentle rain on the roof. My back was stretched-out and not hurting, I'd slept well, and I was eager to get my coffee, check emails, construct the Journal and begin my day.

Then I encountered the article that is the subject of this segment of the Journal. I was left frowning and wondering what the hell is wrong with some people. Do they lie awake at night just trying to think up ways to bug the snot out of everyone else in the country? Do they really believe they have the right to tell others what to write and how to write it?

It doesn't work that way. Not in the real world.

1. The writer has the right to write whatever s/he wants and use whatever words and sentiments s/he wants in that writing.
2. Everyone else has the right to choose whether to read that work, or not. But they don't have the right to change what the writer wrote, and they don't have the right to keep everyone else from reading it just because they don't like it.

Now that Roald Dahl himself, who died in 1990, is unable to defend his own work, "Puffin [the publisher] and the Roald Dahl Story Company *hired sensitivity readers*" (emphasis mine) to butcher it on his behalf. See the link in "Of Interest."

Sigh. What the [expletive deleted] Ever. Puffin and the Company must be terribly (and smugly) proud of themselves, trampling the work of a dead writer, and one for whom they ostensibly care.

You realize of course that these writers (and in this case, a writer's representatives) are folding themselves into greatly diminished little blots to satisfy a small group of political-correctness control-freaks (PC Police) who are easily identifiable as a particular body part.

The PCPs are annoying and difficult to shed, like flies. And if you agree with them, that's fine. To each his or her own. But you should understand that when they've exhausted their list of current targets, they will turn their focus in other directions. Go ahead. Step out of line.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Top Ten Ways to Market Your Book in a Month” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/top-ten-ways-to-market-your-book-in-a-month/>. See whether you can find anything here that you haven’t seen dozens of times before.

See “Words including ‘fat,’ ‘ugly’ and ‘crazy’ have been removed...” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/words-including-fat-ugly-and-crazy-have-been-removed-from-roald-dahls-books-but-the-publisher-said-the-sharp-edged-spirit-of-the-original-text-has-been-maintained/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 600 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051

Total fiction words for February..... 1089
Total fiction words for 2023..... 47962
Total nonfiction words for February... 17270
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 37620
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 85582

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: Because It Makes Sense, I preach trusting your characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living. Duh. See My Best Advice for Fiction Writers at <https://hestanbrough.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/My-Best-Advice-for-Fiction-Writers.pdf>

We, Among Aliens

February 22, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Welcome
- * Happy Mardi Gras
- * We Among Aliens
- * Speaking of SF
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“Selling has little if anything to do with it. Writers don’t write to sell, we write to tell stories.”
Dean Wesley Smith in a response to a comment on his website

“The fishermen know that the sea is dangerous and the storm terrible, but they have never found these dangers sufficient reason for remaining ashore.” Vincent Van Gogh

“[S]ometimes when I’m stuck coming up with a character in a setting with a problem, I go to <http://www.seventhsanctum.com>. They have a quick story idea generator there. Really helps to get the sparks popping.” Mark Kuhn

I’m always amazed when writers say they aren’t flooded with story ideas, and frankly, I never knew it was possible to get stuck in trying to come up with a character with a problem in a setting.

Anyway, if you’re one who needs a story-idea generator, there you go. If you key-into any search engine “idea generator” or “story prompts” you can probably find many more.

Welcome to the several new recent subscribers to the Journal. I hope you find it useful for your writing. If I can help in any way, feel free to email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

To see my creds, click <https://hestanbrough.com/my-biography/>.

Happy Mardi Gras

Happy Mardi Gras to all, and especially to those who consciously mark the end of Carnival season and the beginning of Lent. May the next year be a wonder to behold.

We, Among Aliens

The phrase “aliens among us” has been around long enough to be widely recognized. But the actual reality is the reverse: we are among aliens.

I have a 10-volume science fantasy series called The Journey Home. In it, a literal boatload of humans embarked on a generation ship to one day establish a presence on a new home world. With help from one of the aliens they encountered, they arrived much earlier than planned.

On the surface of the new planet as they set about the various tasks of colonization, they encountered similar but different animals and plants than those we have on Earth.

Before I return to write more books in that series, I'll spend a great deal more time looking around right here. Why? Because if you flip everything and assume that we humans came to Earth from elsewhere (or even if you don't), you'll see that we're still discovering strange, alien activities all around us.

For just one, see "Chemical signals from [fungi tell bark beetles which trees to infest](#)." I am not making this up.

The only thing we can really pretend to know are humans, and we have only the slightest grasp of even that topic. Consider, *everything else* on this planet is an alien lifeform. Everything.

Speaking of SF

If you think AI-generated content isn't dangerous, SF magazine Clarkesworld reports they are "getting inundated with AI short stories." As a result, they temporarily blocked all submissions.

The data is almost unbelievable. See Clarkesworld's tweet at <https://twitter.com/clarkesworld/status/1628059492486115328>.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Planning For the Unthinkable" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/02/planning-for-the-unthinkable.html>.

See "The Psychology of Personality – Bringing your Characters to Life" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-psychology-of-personality-bringing-your-characters-to-life/>.

See "Last Day" at <https://deanwesleymith.com/last-day-4/>.

See "Salman Rushdie, Brian Cox slam Roald Dahl publisher for inclusive book edits" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/salman-rushdie-brian-cox-slam-roald-dahl-publisher-for-inclusive-book-edits/>.

See "Our Share of Night" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/our-share-of-night/>. Just seemed like something you might want to see.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 570 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051

Total fiction words for February..... 1089
Total fiction words for 2023..... 47962
Total nonfiction words for February... 17840
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 38190
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 86152

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: Because It Makes Sense, I preach trusting your characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living. Duh. See My Best Advice for Fiction Writers at <https://hestanbrough.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/My-Best-Advice-for-Fiction-Writers.pdf>.

US Copyright Office, and BookBub Ads

February 24, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * US Copyright Office
- * BookBub Ads
- * Of Interest

Just sharing a little today.

From 1440 Daily Digest

“US Copyright Office rules artwork and images produced using artificial intelligence tools cannot be copyrighted ([More](#))”

BookBub Ads

I recently attended a Getting Started with BookBub Ads webinar. I don't think they would mind me sharing since doing so means more potential revenue for them.

To watch the recording, click <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ucFV1PeDB-w>

To download the accompanying slides, click [PDF Download](#).

From a followup email I received from BookBub, "If you're ever in need of a quick summary of the most important topics, take a look at these resources:

[A one-page summary of Ad Creative Basics](#)

[A one-page summary of Targeting Basics](#)

[A one-page summary of Schedule, Budget, and Bid basics](#)

"If you have any questions at all about BookBub Ads, please don't hesitate to reach out to partners@bookbub.com. We're happy to help!"

Hope some of you find this useful.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Understanding Time Travel and Quantum Physics for Anyone..." at <https://e-guide.medium.com/understanding-time-travel-and-quantum-physics-for-anyone-a-guide-to-enjoying-sci-fi-movies-and-65c4881b656c>.

See "Wire Transfer Fraud" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/02/true-crime-thursday-wire-transfer-fraud.html>.

See "Retiring to Write or Writing to Retire" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/retiring-to-write-or-writing-to-retire/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 190 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051

Total fiction words for February.....	1089
Total fiction words for 2023.....	47962
Total nonfiction words for February... ..	18030
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	38380
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	86342
Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... ..	0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

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Roald Dahl Revisited, and More

February 25, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Roald Dahl Revisited
- * Short Stories
- * It's Good to Be the King
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“Following the publisher’s logic would be equal to transforming the M̄y Lai Massacre into a misunderstanding with unpleasant consequences that shouldn’t be discussed because it’s too upsetting for some people.” Jeffrey Herman in an article about so-called sensitivity readers (see “Of Interest”)

“It costs much, much less to hire a literary attorney to examine the contract before you sign it than it does to hire that same attorney to get you and your book(s) out of a publishing contract after you’ve signed it.” The Passive Guy (see “Of Interest”)

“Write what should not be forgotten.” Isabel Allende

Roald Dahl Revisited

Thanks to KC for sending me a link to an article in the National Review: “Roald Dahl Publisher Relents after Backlash over Censorship: ‘Readers Will Be Free to Choose’.” You can read the article at <https://www.nationalreview.com/news/roald-dahl-publisher-relents-after-backlash-over-censorship-readers-will-be-free-to-choose/>.

In part, the article reads that “the British publisher of [Dahl’s] books has relented, agreeing to publish Dahl’s classic texts side by side with the new, edited versions.”

Francesca Dow, managing director of Penguin Random House Children’s, explained, “By making both Puffin and Penguin versions available, we are offering readers the choice to decide how they experience Roald Dahl’s magical, marvellous stories.”

How very gracious and not at all pretentious of the publisher to grant that “readers will be free to choose” which version they want to buy.

Not to be nitpicky, but deciding to publish the “classic” version alongside the heavily edited version is not “relenting.” To “relent” the publisher would have to trash the edited version and publish only the classic version. But that won’t happen, because some folks just have to feel that position of power, that right to give others options from among which they may choose.

Short Stories

Yesterday in my inbox I received my own short story, “The Death of Federico Parizzi.” Great fun. Yes, I’m subscribed to my Story of the Week. Because I seldom remember much about any story or novel I write for more than a week, it’s great fun to receive them in my in box.

To receive the stories in your inbox, visit <https://stanbroughwrites.substack.com/>, then click on any story title, then scroll to the bottom of the story and click the Subscribe link. That URL is also the RSS feed.

Anyway, I realized that was the last of the stories I had pre-posted for release. So I went to work and posted several more. As a bonus for those of you who enjoy my fiction, this time I posted a group of previously unpublished stories.

I wrote all of them during 2020 and 2021 and simply hadn’t published them yet. And no, other than correcting a typo here and there, I didn’t change them at all before I posted them to both my [StanbroughWrites website](#) and to the Substack version.

Tomorrow I’ll finish posting the new, previously unpublished stories in my files. Those postings will make stories available every week well into May and maybe June. If you haven’t subscribed yet and you want some fun reading, hop aboard. It’s free.

It’s Good to Be the King

Stephen King

When all the coronavirus stuff first started, some guy tweeted (I'm paraphrasing) "I wonder whether this virus will be as bad as Captain Tripps in The Stand."

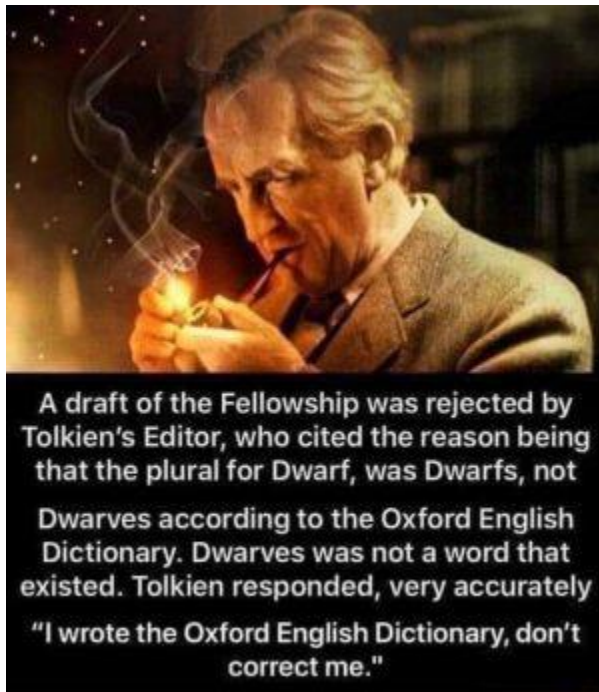
Stephen King himself tweeted in reply, "No, this is nothing like Captain Tripps. if you just wash your hands often, you'll be fine."

To which the original tweeter replied, "How the hell would you know? Have you even read The Stand?"

To my knowledge and surprise, King didn't honor him with a response.

JRR Tolkein

Then yesterday, my wife found this meme on Facebook. I thought it was too good not to share:



So there.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Special Stretch Goal and Running Pictures" at <https://deanwesleymith.com/special-stretch-goal-and-running-pictures/>. Special Kickstarter stuff.

See "8 New Novels that Envision an Alternate Future" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/8-new-novels-that-envision-an-alternate-future/>. I actually bought the short story collection.

See “When Your Publishing Contract Flies a Red Flag: Clauses to Watch Out For” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/when-your-publishing-contract-flies-a-red-flag-clauses-to-watch-out-for/>. If you’re dumb enough or fortunate enough to land a traditional publishing contract, please, please, please hire an attorney to read it for you.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 720 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051

Total fiction words for February..... 1089
Total fiction words for 2023..... 47962
Total nonfiction words for February... 18750
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 39100
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 87062

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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Some More Thoughts on Ernest Hemingway

February 26, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Some More Thoughts on Ernest Hemingway
- * You Can’t Make This Shup
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“Ernest Hemingway’s signature style broke the mold. His short, declarative sentences, intentional repetition, and general absence of adjectives were a departure from the style of every previous novelist.” Jessica Leader

“It’s hard to imagine a writer who hasn’t been affected by him. He changed the furniture in the room.” Author Tobias Wolff

“It is enough that the people know there was an election. The people who cast the votes decide nothing. The people who count the votes decide everything.” Joseph Stalin

“Ideas are more powerful than guns. We would not let our enemies have guns, why should we let them have ideas.” Joseph Stalin

Some More Thoughts on Ernest Hemingway

I don’t think Ernest Hemingway wrote into the dark, not that it matters. I’ve heard others whom I respect say that he did, but I don’t believe it. His output wasn’t large enough for one thing. But more importantly, much of what he wrote wasn’t even fiction. More than anything, I believe, he engaged in reportage.

Certainly he wrote some fiction, most notably *The Old Man and the Sea*, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, and some of his short stories. I’m certain he himself never actually lived those two experiences, at least not to the extent that the characters lived them, and I’m almost certain he wasn’t the “Nick” in the diner when the two killers came in in the short story “The Killers.”

But mostly he wrote memoir in both his long and short fictions, although he certainly fictionalized the names of most of the characters.

That said, I see nothing wrong with it. A story is a story is a story. Writing fiction is a way of remembering something that hasn’t happened yet. As I used to tell students in my seminars, even memoir is more akin to fiction than nonfiction because it’s how only one person remembers an event or a series of events.

If you don’t believe me, write a memoir about an event in your childhood, then send it around to your siblings. They will quickly point out where you “erred,” which means where you remembered something in a different way than they remembered it.

Neither of you is wrong, of course. You simply remember the same event differently, having experienced it from a different perspective.

I can almost hear some of you wanting to say “But a memoir is of an event or series of events that actually happened.” You’re right, of course. And so is a fiction an event or series of events that actually happened, at least to the characters who lived it.

But I digress. There is still a difference between fiction and memoir, slight though it may be. Parts of Hemingway's memoirs were fictionalized, maybe to take the memory in a direction in which perhaps he wished it would have gone. Or more likely, maybe just to enhance the story.

Hemingway's contemporaries (and therefore his literary rivals) were the likes of William Faulkner, John Dos Passos, Gertrude Stein, and F. Scott Fitzgerald among many, many others.

But whereas those great novelists were writing fiction informed to one degree or another by their own lives, prejudices and observations, Hemingway mostly wrote the events of his life. The biggest fictions in most of his stories and novels were the names of the characters.

A Short Story Memoir

I became interested in exploring Hemingway all over again because yesterday I wrote a short story memoir—a combination of the two forms—and I had an epiphany.

And yes, before you ask, I still wrote that story memoir into the dark. I didn't plot or plan anything or even devise where or when to insert memories of actual events. They just popped in where the characters wanted them.

I also decided not to publish the story until after it appears as a story of the week. Yesterday I went through my files. I formatted and uploaded all of my unpublished stories to HarveyStanbroughWrites.com as pre-scheduled posts, then uploaded the same stories to release from my StanbroughWrites substack 15 minutes after they go live on the website.

The story memoir, "Ten Tight Indians," is currently scheduled to post on June 17, both at StanbroughWrites and on the Substack account by the same name, so you'll see it then.

Anyway, the epiphany—as I finished that short story memoir, it occurred to me that many if not most of Hemingway's "fictional" works were that same hybrid form.

To me, that's fascinating, especially because I teach that even when writing "pure fiction" the writer's only job is to "report" the story as it's unfolding. And as I've mentioned before, even Stephen King agrees. He calls himself his characters' stenographer.

As an aside, my novel *Confessions of a Professional Psychopath* was also a hybrid. It was roughly one-third memoir and two-thirds fiction. But unlike yesterday's short story memoir, which I intentionally set out to write in that form, I wrote *Confessions* without realizing that's what I was doing.

Go figure.

But the great writer's primary legacy isn't even what he wrote but how he wrote it, his bare-bones, straightforward style. And at least some folks believe that style actually was pioneered by a writer named Ellen N. La Motte (see "Of Interest"). Regardless, La Motte and Hemingway were still different writers, and therefore would have delivered that style in different ways.

Recommended Reading

As I mentioned recently, I strongly recommend reading [The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway: The Finca Vigia Edition](#). (The new paperback is actually less expensive than the Kindle edition.)

After that, I recommend reading all of his novels (there are only 10) and all of his nonfictions, of which there are only 9, including [Ernest Hemingway on Writing](#). At the moment, that paperback is also less expensive than the Kindle edition.

I'll end this awkward essay with Hemingway's 4 Rules for Writing Well:

1. Use short sentences.
2. Use short first paragraphs.
3. Use vigorous English.
4. Be positive, not negative.

I will immediately add that Hemingway himself often broke rules 1 and 2. But I also assert that those two are the benchmarks of his style, the techniques that so vividly flavor his works.

I have to note also that in addition to the overall story, Hemingway focused on perfecting individual sentences. One of his more famous bits of advice is, "All you have to do is write one true sentence. Write the truest sentence that you know."

Focusing on the sentence level is not something most writers would be able to do well, if at all, and still manage to write a smooth, cohesive story into the dark. If you want to try it, more power to you, but don't let it drag open a door through which your conscious, critical mind can enter. If you have to choose, focus on Story and let the sentences take care of themselves.

You Can't Make This Shup

See the article, "Does ChatGPT produce fishy briefs?" in which ChatGPT is prompted to produce legal briefs regarding the California Court of Appeal, Third District, decision that "bumblebees are in fact 'fish' because they're invertebrates." You know, like all other fish.

Okay. Well, that's California for you. Actually, bees don't have a spine because they have an exoskeleton. You know, like most other *insects*. One would think that wouldn't be difficult to understand even in California.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Did a censored female writer inspire Hemingway's famous style?" at <https://theconversation.com/did-a-censored-female-writer-inspire-hemingways-famous-style->

[113722](#). About Ellen N. La Motte. She “wrote a collection of interrelated stories titled The Backwash of War.” I bought the collection, and I can hardly wait to read them.

See “Elisa Lam’s Ghastly Death at the Notorious Cecil Hotel in L.A.” at <http://dyingwords.net/elisa-lams-ghastly-death-at-the-notorious-cecil-hotel-in-l-a/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1300 words

Writing of “Five Tight Indians” (memoir/story)

Day 1..... 4862 words. Total words to date..... 4862 Done

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231

Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221

Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026

Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051

Total fiction words for February..... 5951

Total fiction words for 2023..... 52824

Total nonfiction words for February... 20050

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 40400

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 93224

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72

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

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

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Changes to the Journal and More AI

February 27, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Changes to the Journal
- * More AI Stuff
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“All fungi are edible. Some fungi are only edible once.” Terry Pratchett

“There are plenty of valuable (that is, profitable) use cases for this tech [AI] but faking human creativity ain’t it.” Felix Torres

Changes to the Journal

Owing in part to a pair of brief discussions recently with a couple of other folks, I’ve changed the appearance of the Journal.

One discussion had to do with serif vs. sans serif fonts. In the latter, it’s all but impossible to distinguish between an uppercase I and a lowercase l.

For anyone who doesn’t know, the idea behind serif fonts is that the serifs—the little tics at the bottoms and tops of the risers (on letters that have risers)—direct the reader’s eye from one letter to the next and so on, enhancing the flow of the reading experience.

The other discussion was more generally about readability. The two discussions combined to start me thinking about fonts, font styles, font sizes, weights, etc.

The most notable change to the Journal is the body font itself. I was using Open Sans but I wanted to change to a serif font. Initially I considered one system font and probably 25 Google fonts.

I dropped some fonts from consideration immediately, usually owing either to the appearance of the lower-case e (in some fonts like Times New Roman it can easily be confused with a lower-case c), whether the comma was easily differentiated from the period, the size of the serifs, and so on.

In the end, the finalists in alphabetical order were Droid Serif, Noto Serif, Old Standard TT, Sanchez, and Source Serif Pro. Going back and forth from one to another and comparing the various attributes I mentioned above, soon the list narrowed to include only Noto Serif and Droid Serif, which to me looked identical, and Source Serif Pro, which to me just looked a bit “cleaner.”

So Source Serif Pro it is, at least for now. For those who want to know, when your browser is set to 100%, the body font size on the Journal is 20, the font weight is 500, the line height is 1.4, and the paragraph margin is .8 em.

For headings, I'm also using Source Serif Pro with a font weight of 600 and then different sizes for H1 through H3: 30, 26, and 22. If I could figure out how to upload the font Kymer-Awon SC to my website, I would probably use it for the headers. It's the graceful font that forms the letters in the current header of the site.

How about you? Do you give thought to the font or fonts you use on your website(s)? If you don't, I suggest you start. After all, it is far more important to you that the reader can read and understand your blog posts than it is to the reader.

More AI Stuff

Although I would be perfectly fine if all content-generating AI programs and algorithms suddenly fell out of existence, I am aware some folks actually enjoy using AI and/or considering its possible uses.

Either way, I did find this article interesting and thought you might too: See "Chat GPT detector by ZeroGPT: detect OpenAI text" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/chat-gpt-detector-by-zerogpt-detect-openai-text/>. The Passive Guy has included a link at the end of the article so you may run and play as you will.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Shock collars could keep elephants out of conflict with humans" at <https://www.newscientist.com/article/2361283-shock-collars-could-keep-elephants-out-of-conflict-with-humans/>. Anyone else see how very deeply wrong this is?

See "The new science of happiness: Simple, research-backed ways to boost your well-being" at <https://www.sciencefocus.com/news/new-science-of-happiness/>. Soma. I read somewhere that Soma works too.

See "What's In A Name?" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/02/whats-in-a-name-2.html>. A bit of silly fluff.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 630 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051

Total fiction words for February.....	5951
Total fiction words for 2023.....	52824
Total nonfiction words for February... ..	20680
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	41030
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	93854
Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... ..	0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

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[Live in Tombstone](#)

February 28, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

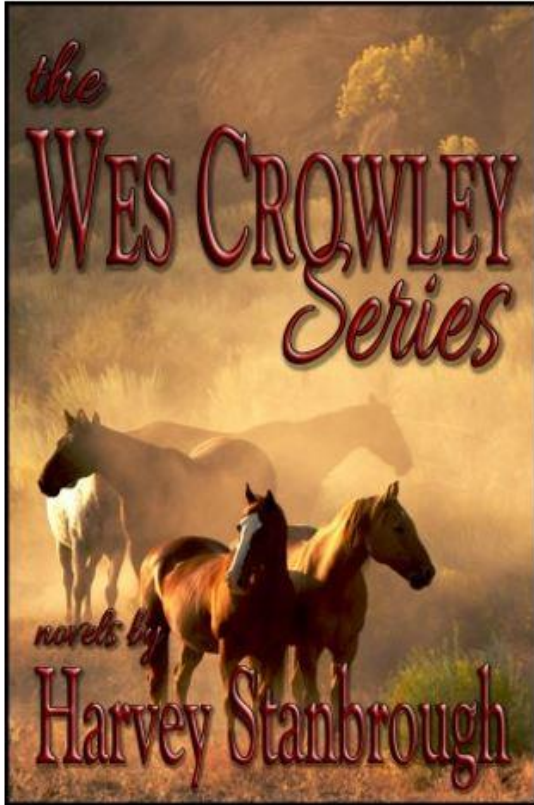
- * A Short Post
- * You Can't Make This Shup
- * Of Interest

A Short Post

A short post today, mostly to pass along the "Of Interest" items and to let you know I probably won't publish an edition of the Journal tomorrow.

I'll be at Schieffelin Hall on the main drag in Tombstone Arizona to take part in a book fair, an extremely rare occurrence for me. If any of you happen to be in the vicinity, please stop by. I'd enjoy chatting with you.

Here's the graphic my wife created for her Facebook announcement:



What Would You Give to Ride Wild on a Good Horse in a Just Cause?

Join Texas Ranger Wes Crowley

In 20 novels and counting, you can accompany Wes on a 50 year journey from the 1860s Texas Panhandle.

Ride through southern New Mexico and southeast Arizona, eventually to Agua Perlado, a fishing village on the Pacific Coast of Mexico.

This is an overpowering tale in which the lines between right and wrong are often blurred, but never for Wes. Upright is not a matter of degree.

You Can't Make This Shup

“[A] new study says the harmful effects of marijuana outweigh its benefits.

“Cannabis contains heavy metals, which can lead to physical, muscular, and nervous system degeneration, mimicking diseases such as Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s disease, according to one study. High-potency strains have been found to raise the incidence of psychotic disorders.

“Furthermore, frequent marijuana use has been linked with a 34 percent increase in the risk of developing coronary artery disease (CAD)...”

Well, duh.

Here we go again.

“Ian Fleming’s James Bond books edited to remove a number of racial references ahead of the 70th anniversary republishing in April ([More](#))”

Whatever. Stick to the script, you. Say what the nice people tell you to say. Say it with exactly the right words and in the right tone or you’ll pay. Do what the nice people tell you to do or else.

Sigh. Why can’t people just leave each other alone?

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Are Writers Obsolete Yet?” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/02/are-writers-obsolete-yet.html>. More silliness about AI.

See “Writing Action-Adventure for Women” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/writing-action-adventure-for-women/>. Be sure to read Jamie’s comments below the post, especially the second one. Extremely informative and well-written.

See “Genre Tips: How to Write Mystery” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/genre-tips-how-to-write-mystery/>. For what it’s worth.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 300 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051

Total fiction words for February..... 5951
Total fiction words for 2023..... 52824
Total nonfiction words for February... 20980
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 41330
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 94154

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: Because It Makes Sense, I preach trusting your characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living. Duh. See My Best Advice for Fiction Writers at <https://hestanbrough.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/My-Best-Advice-for-Fiction-Writers.pdf>.

St. David’s Day, and Women’s History Month

March 2, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * A Day Late
- * And a Dollar Short
- * Good Comments
- * Women's History Month
- * A Little More on AI
- * Of Interest

A Day Late

I was surprised to learn the 1st of March is St. David's Day, though that matters mostly in Wales. However, since I live just outside a tiny town called St. David, I thought I'd mention it, albeit a day late.

The "small but mighty nation" of Wales celebrated the Welsh saint's day yesterday. From Updraft Plus—a company that designs WordPress plugins and many of whose employees live in Wales—yesterday was a "day for daffodils, dragons, delicious Welsh cakes, and a chorus of 'Hen Wlad fy Nhadau.'" So for anyone out there who can read it, "Dydd Gŵyl Dewi Hapus, everybody!"

And a Dollar Short

Yesterday's first annual Tombstone Book Fair was a financial bust. Very few would-be buyers stopped in. (Well, it was on a Wednesday, duh).

When the day was over, I'd sold one book, given away three, and paid \$25 for the privilege. (grin) I did meet Phil Mills, Jr., the current president of Western Writers of America. Yes, I'll be following up with him.

I also got to visit with a long-time friend and fellow writer and meet a few interesting people I'd never met before, some readers, some writers. That alone was worth the price of admission.

I was also interviewed for a podcast called [Voices of the West](#). Great fun. I've emailed them to ask when and where the podcast will go "live." Naturally, I'll pass that information along as soon as I know for those of you who want to hear my twangy voice.

Of course, there are still a few instructional DVDs left (see <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives-gifts-dvds/>).

Also, I've updated my Patronage & Donations page. Now my audio lectures are available both outright at low cost *and* to patrons at every level. See <https://hestanbrough.com/patronage-and-donations/> for details.

Good Comments

A lot of good comments on “Some More Thoughts on Ernest Hemingway.” Somehow my posts on Hemingway always seem to stir comments. You can read them at <https://hestanbrough.com/some-more-thoughts-on-ernest-hemingway/#comments>.

Women’s History Month

See “March 2023 theme for Women’s History Month is ‘Celebrating Women Who Tell Stories’” at <https://www.foxnews.com/lifestyle/everything-need-know-womens-history-month>. So to all of you out there who tell stories, thank you. (And to you guys, thank you too.)

A Little More on AI

You’ll remember that I’ll be including this statement in the front or back matter of every story of any length I publish from this point forward:

This fiction is a Creation, the result of a partnership between a human writer and the character(s) he accessed with his creative subconscious. This is in no part the block-by-block, artificial construction of any sort of AI or of any conscious, critical, human mind. What you read here is what actually happened there.

Now, “The 13,000-member Authors Guild in New York City—the United States’ leading writer-advocacy organization—has today (March 1) issued an update to its model trade book contract and literary translation model contract with a new clause that prohibits publishers from using or sublicensing books under contract to train ‘artificial intelligence’ technologies.”

Very interesting. To see the new clause for yourself, visit “‘AI’ at Bologna: The Hair-Raising Topic of 2023” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/ai-at-bologna-the-hair-raising-topic-of-2023/>:

I think I’ll create a similar but less-wordy statement of my own for my stories too, banning anyone in the future (so basically my heirs) from allowing the use of any of my fictions to train AI technologies. Something to think about.

I hope you’ll spend some time in the “Of Interest” section today. It holds links to some really intriguing articles.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “The Dark Risk of Large Language Models” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-dark-risk-of-large-language-models/>. Story ideas abound.

See “Why rockets don’t crash into airplanes” at <https://interestingengineering.com/video/this-is-why-rockets-dont-crash-into-airplanes>. Story ideas abound.

See “February 2023 Notes ” at <https://franktheodat.substack.com/p/february-2023-notes>. A new flash fiction market, among many other things.

See “The Art of Being Interviewed” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/03/the-art-of-being-interviewed.html>. Timely. (grin)

See “Connotation vs. Denotation: Definitions, Examples, and the Difference” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/connotation-vs-denotation-definitions-examples-and-the-difference/>.

See “Dictionary.com adds 313 new words” at <https://www.dictionary.com/e/new-dictionary-words-winter-2023/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 670 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051

Total fiction words for March..... XXXX
Total fiction words for 2023..... 52824
Total nonfiction words for March... 670
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 42000
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 94824

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 8
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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Story Ideas About

March 4, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Welcome
- * LaMotte vs. Hemingway
- * Comment Policy
- * Story Ideas Abound
- * Stay Tuned
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“When he could stand it no longer, he fired a revolver up through the roof of his mouth, but he made a mess of it.” Ellen N. LaMotte, opening sentence of “Heroes” from [The Backwash of War](#)

“The strange thing was, he said, how they screamed every night at midnight.” Ernest Hemingway, opening sentence from “On the Quay at Smyrna”

“That night we lay on the floor in the room and I listened to the silk-worms eating.” Ernest Hemingway, opening sentence from “Now I Lay Me”

“Of the three wingback chairs in my library, only one is upholstered in human skin. There's a reason for that.” Charles Claymore Task in [Confessions of a Professional Psychopath](#)

Welcome to all new subscribers. If I can do anything to help with your writing or publishing, feel free to email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

LaMotte vs. Hemingway

A few days ago I linked in “Of Interest” to a post by Cynthia Wachtell in which she posited that Ellen N. LaMotte “wrote like Hemingway before Hemingway.” I bought her only collection of short stories, *The Backwash of War*, and read it today.

In 6×9 trade paperback, *The Backwash of War* contains an Introduction and 13 short stories that run through 69 pages. From what I can tell, that is the extent of her fiction writing: approximately 400 words per page and approximately 70 pages for an estimated 28,000 words.

To be sure, LaMotte's writing is spare, but it wouldn't be difficult to maintain a “spare” writing style through 28,000 words. That said, LaMotte's writing doesn't resonate the way Hemingway's does either. His writing is spare but full. Ms. LaMotte's is spare but thin. It omits a lot that might be useful to know.

Then again, I'm painfully aware that I'm comparing apples and orange crates. LaMotte was a nurse, not a professional writer, so any liability in the comparison between her and Hemingway should be borne by Ms. Wachtell, not Ms. LaMotte.

Opening sentences—hooks—are all-important to fiction. The one opening sentence I included in the Quotes of the Day above was one of the only two good “hooks” of the lot. The other, the opening line to “A Citation”—“As a person, Grammont amounted to very little”—was adequate to gain my interest but not as thoroughly as the one I listed in the Quotes of the Day above.

In fact, the writing in all her stories was adequate to hold my interest, but only those two openings actually pulled me in from the opening sentence. From the standpoint of possibly studying LaMotte’s work for style, I was a little disappointed. After reading that first hook, I expected great hooks in the other dozen stories.

As to whether LaMotte’s stories influenced or informed Hemingway’s style, we have no way of knowing whether he ever read any of them. If he did, it is certainly possible that her writing helped inform his style. After all, every writer’s style is informed to varying degrees by writers who came before them.

I recommend LaMotte’s stories. I do not recommend studying them for style unless you just want to. You’d be better served studying someone who has written in the same style over a much larger body of work. If you’re looking to write tight prose—and I should add, in English (not to demean or ignore any authors in other languages)—again I specifically recommend reading and studying Hemingway’s work.

So I don’t forget, Mark left a comment that read, in part, “I downloaded and listened to a public domain recording of Ellen Newbold La Motte’s *The Backwash of War*: https://archive.org/details/backwash_of_war_2006_librivox.” So there you go. Thanks, Mark.

Comment Policy

Unfortunately, I also deleted most of one comment and all of a second comment by another writer who wanted to convey his apparent pleasure with AI and “neural-generated plots.”

As I explain in detail in my Comment Policy, I will never let such comments through on this website. There are plenty of other sites out there (almost all of them) that will welcome comments praising construction, whether by the conscious, critical mind of a writer or a collective of writers or so-called artificial intelligence, and calling it “creation.” This Journal will never be one of them.

Story Ideas Abound

Wow. If you want half a boatload of story ideas—action-adventure to mystery to crime to dystopia to time-travel and more—read “Is it time to hit the pause button on AI?” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/is-it-time-to-hit-the-pause-button-on-ai/>.

I recommend reading the excerpt at The Passive Voice so you can also see David Vandegriff’s (the Passive Guy’s) comment, but you might want to click through to the original post as well.

Stay tuned. Tomorrow, I’ll be back with one of two posts I’m preparing.

One is a post on your choices as a writer: You can write like a writer (create) or you can write like a critic, (construct).

The other is titled “Going for an MFA?” Spoiler alert—I’ll recommend strongly against it and explain exactly why.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Your Favorite?” at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/your-favorite/>.

See “How to Get Emotion on the Page: 2 Most Critical Tactics” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-to-get-emotion-on-the-page-2-most-critical-tactics/>. A pretty good post.

See “3D printing living cells inside human body becomes a reality” at <https://interestingengineering.com/health/3d-printing-living-cells-human-reality>.

See “Scratching the Surface” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/03/scratching-the-surface.html>. Nostalgic and interesting.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 900 words

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Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051

Total fiction words for March..... XXXX
Total fiction words for 2023..... 52824
Total nonfiction words for March... 1570
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 42900
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 95724

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
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Going for an MFA?

March 5, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Going for an MFA?
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“You take people as far as they will go, not as far as you would like them to go.” Jeannette Rankin

“I know I was writing stories when I was five. I don't remember what I did before that. Just loafed, I suppose.” P.G. Wodehouse

Going for an MFA?

A writer asked me awhile back whether I would recommend attending an MFA program.

No, I wouldn't.

Listen, if you're thinking about going for an MFA so you can write fiction, just don't. An MFA program can run you anywhere from \$25,000 to over \$70,000. During the program, you will learn a bunch of “rules” that are not only unnecessary but will actually harm your career.

It isn't uncommon for an MFA grad to “lock up” and be unable to write fiction at all because s/he feels pressured to succeed because of all the money s/he spent on that MFA. Vicious circle, anyone? Pressure is never conducive to writing quality fiction. Never.

Still, somehow it makes perfect sense to would-be writers to pay upward of \$25,000 to an instructor with a few short story collections and a “really great theory” to teach them how to write.

Yet somehow it makes no sense at all to those same would-be writers to spend 1/10th or even 1/100th of that to learn how to write from a guy who's written 72 novels, 9 novellas, and around 230 short stories across several genres, all in a period of around 6 years. Go figure. (grin)

The Would-Be Writer Mindset—The big problem is that, like pretty much all writers (and I was no exception), you’re beginning with a “would-be writer” mindset. Because practically everyone says so, you feel there is something you have to do, a series of boxes you have to check or dues you have to pay, before you can write quality fiction.

I’m here to tell you that is simply not true.

And some believe they can check off that series of boxes by attending an MFA program. That also is not true.

Via the MFA program, you’re hoping to attain two things:

1. knowledge—

But you already have a lot of knowledge. You only need to apply it through practice. To gain more knowledge, you need to learn from more advanced writers who have been where you are now, who have put millions of words of fiction on the page, not from someone who is operating strictly on a theory.

2. confidence—

Confidence is the belief that you have the necessary knowledge. This requires you to believe in yourself. Do you stop and question whether to put a period or a question mark at the end of a sentence, or do you do it automatically? Of course, you do it automatically, without thinking about it. Because that knowledge is lodged deep inside your creative subconscious.

Likewise, your knowledge of Story is there too. You have been learning and absorbing Story, both in and out of classrooms, your entire life. Most of what you learned about Story you learned subconsciously, outside the classroom. You absorbed and learned that knowledge from books you read and television shows and plays you watched, and even from some of the better commercial advertising.

Now you only have to believe in yourself, trust in yourself and what you know without realizing on a conscious level that you know it.

Shysters Abound—Any number of self-appointed writing gurus out there (MFA programs included) will gladly tell you that you have to learn how to write. Well, duh. They do that because the less you *believe* you know and the less you believe in yourself, the bigger their bank account will grow with your hard-earned dollars.

Have I asked you for money? No? Good. So trust me. I don’t have an agenda here. You don’t need all that nonsense. You don’t need an MFA, and you don’t need most of the how-to writing books out there. At least pause for a moment and ask yourself whether the how-to book you’re thinking about buying is exactly like one you’ve bought before. If it doesn’t teach you something new and exciting, put it back on the shelf and save your money.

The bottom line is this: If you want to write, you can. Right now. You've got this.

But of course, you have free will, and therefore you have options:

1. You can spend all that money on an MFA to learn exactly the same fear-based rules you can learn from almost any how-to writing book or self-appointed writing guru out there for a LOT less money.

Here, I'll give them to you free of charge right now. To write quality fiction (*um, I'm Lying*) you must

- a. outline, character sketch, and world build
- b. write, but mechanically, consciously, critically, carefully, word by word, sentence by sentence, being sure to include "rising action," "mirror moments," "plot points," "plot twists," and all the other deconstructionist BS ad nauseam (more on this tomorrow)
- c. revise
- d. seek and accept critical input (because you can't write a story alone—it takes a village)
- e. rewrite to apply the critical input
- f. send the semi-finished product to beta readers for more critical input
- g. polish

These are a few of the rules you will learn, and if you follow them they will actually harm your career as a writer.

- a. They will slow you down so that you practice far less, and
- b. because you aren't practicing as much they will retard your progress along the learning curve of the craft.

2. Or you can forget the MFA. In fact, if you paid me even 1/10th of what you were going to blow on an MFA, I would personally teach you everything you need to know to write quality, salable vignettes, flash fiction, short stories, novellas, and novels, both literary and across several commercial genres. If you wanted, I would even throw-in how to write verse and essays at no additional cost. And yes, I've got the chops to teach all of that. BUT—

3. I'm only kidding about paying me. You don't have to pay me. If you want, of course, you can become a patron of this Journal (see <https://hestanbrough.com/patronage-and-donations/>) at any level. You're more than welcome and I'm certainly grateful.

But all you really have to do to learn how to write quality fiction is stick around and read this stuff. Through this Journal and the Journal Archives (see <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives-gifts-dvds/>), I will STILL teach you everything you need to know to write vignettes, flash fiction, short stories, novellas, and novels, both literary and across several commercial genres.

As a result, you will actually have FUN writing fiction, and as a bonus, you won't have to pay off a b'jillion dollar student loan.

Tomorrow, I'll be back with a post on your choices as a writer: You can write like a writer (create) or you can write like a critic (construct).

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Your Favorite?" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/your-favorite/#comments>. If you're considering taking any of Dean's workshops you might check out the comments.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1190 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051

Total fiction words for March..... XXXX
Total fiction words for 2023..... 52824
Total nonfiction words for March... 2760
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 44090
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 96914

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: Because It Makes Sense, I preach trusting your characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living. Duh. See My Best Advice for Fiction Writers at <https://hestanbrough.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/My-Best-Advice-for-Fiction-Writers.pdf>.

Create or Construct: Your Choice

March 6, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Create or Construct: Your Choice
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“[Imagination] is the one thing besides honesty that a good writer must have. ... If he gets so he can imagine truly enough, people will think that the things he relates all really happened and that he is just reporting.” Ernest Hemingway

“[S]imiles are like defective ammunition (the lowest thing I can think of at this time).” Ernest Hemingway

Interviewer: “Do you know what is going to happen when you write a story?”

Hemingway: “Almost never. I start to make it up and have happen what would have to happen as it goes along.”

“Last year, Lily Anolik wrote an article in Vanity Fair that documented the search for the “real” Judy Poovey. Everyone was sure she was a thinly disguised real person. ... But guess what? Nobody has found the “real” Judy Poovey. And that’s probably because Donna Tartt is a talented fiction writer who can make stuff up.” Anne R. Allen

Create or Construct: Your Choice

If you write like a writer with your creative subconscious, you will create. If you write like a critic, with your conscious, critical mind as most of the world recommends, you will construct.

Writing like a writer is fun and exhilarating. The experience is an odd combination of excitement and anxiety as you plunge into the unknown, yet always with the knowledge that you will not be physically harmed.

Writing like a critic is work. There is no fun or exhilaration because you know every step of the way what will happen next. The “work” is forcing your way through the boredom of already knowing the story from beginning to end.

Writing like a critic is timid, hesitant, and predicated by unreasoning fear. You HAVE to outline and plot and plan because What if some unexpected event happens? What if a character goes off-script or out-of-character in his or her physical reaction or verbal response?

What if I don't know in advance what's going to happen next? What if I lose control of the story and the characters? What if the other writers in the critique group don't like what I've written? And the biggie, What if it doesn't sell?

Hyperventilating yet? (grin) Of course, the two answers to all of those unreasoning fears is “Doesn’t matter” and “So what?” Because in any of those eventualities, nothing bad will happen. Nothing.

Writing like a critic is also *filled with* unreasoning fears: Should you write “beneath” or “under”? Should you shorten that sentence? Use a longer paragraph here, a shorter one there?

Know what? Get out of your own way. It really, really, really doesn’t matter.

I’ve talked about the myths of writing a lot in the Journal, but I don’t think I’ve ever talked about their source. Many of them came from traditional publishing—required page counts for certain genres (and therefore “padding” text), for example, or the need to rewrite to satisfy one agent’s or editor’s personal taste.

But most of the myths came from people we trusted, our teachers and professors. The problem is, they learned those same myths from critics and other deconstructionists, not from active long-term short story writers and novelists.

That’s like learning how to walk a tightrope from Inspector #6 in a cord manufacturing facility or learning fine carpentry from a building inspector or taking film-making advice from a movie buff.

None of us would entertain doing any such thing, yet we buy “how-to” writing books from people who have never written a novel, and we take MFA degrees from authors who have published not at all or only minimally.

In yesterday’s post (<https://hestanbrough.com/going-for-an-mfa/>) I wrote that according to the fear-based rules practically all of us are taught, the second “step” to writing (after outlining, etc.) is to “write, but mechanically, consciously, critically, carefully, word by word, sentence by sentence, being sure to include ‘rising action,’ ‘mirror moments,’ ‘plot points,’ ‘plot twists,’ and all the other deconstructionist BS ad nauseam.”

In other words, you should apply what you learned from those who have bought into the critical, deconstructionist BS, like your teachers.

In schools, even high schools maybe and certainly in colleges, students are taught to be critics, not writers.

They’re taught to dissect and “deconstruct” poems and stories and novels, and they are led to find all sorts of things that simply aren’t there, or at least that the writer didn’t purposely put there. Then, by extension, they’re taught it’s important to add those same things to their work, again consciously.

Hemingway, in talking about “symbolism” in *The Old Man and the Sea*, wrote, “Then there is the other secret. There isn’t any symbolism. The sea is the sea. The old man is an old man. The

boy is a boy and the fish is a fish. The sharks are all sharks no better and no worse. All the symbolism that people say is sh*t. What goes beyond is what you see beyond when you know.”

And when Frank O’Connor was asked about the symbolism in “Guests of the Nation,” he said (paraphrasing), “Any symbolism anyone finds in any of my stories is put there by people who need to make grades or write critical articles. I didn’t put any symbolism in anything. Writers don’t do that. Critics do.”

And there it is. I believe deconstruction is the critics’ way of wrapping their mind around the creative process. They think logically, critically, so they literally can’t imagine how something concrete—a story—can be brought to fruition without that logical, block-by-block, process of construction.

I feel sorry for them. Apparently they lack the ability to simply absorb and enjoy a story or play or film or novel. But that’s their cross to bear, and if deconstruction is a tool they need to make sense of a raw creation, so be it.

But when it’s used by an instructor as a basis to teach writing, deconstruction becomes a major problem. The same teachers and professors who “deconstruct” fiction to look at its component parts also teach that the best way to write a story is to reverse that deconstruction process.

When the deconstructionist instructor notes that a story moves in a certain direction, s/he assumes it was planned that way. Hence, “You must outline.”

When the deconstructionist instructor realizes each character has a history and certain stereotypical traits and certain unique traits and quirks, a new rule is born: “You must create character sketches.”

When a story takes place against a unique background, that too must have been planned. Hence, “You must world build.”

And so on, down through the list. Even after meticulous planning, everything must be accomplished with the conscious, critical mind:

- b. write (but not from the creative subconscious)
- c. revise
- d. seek and accept critical input
- e. rewrite to apply the critical input
- f. send to beta readers for more critical input
- g. polish

That isn’t creation, folks, it’s construction.

Of course, it’s all up to you. If you want to do that, put on your hard hat and go for it. But if you want to experience the sheer joy of creativity, sit down, put your fingers on the keyboard, and write whatever comes. As Dean Wesley Smith says, “Dare to be bad.” Take a chance.

You've been learning and absorbing Story all your life. Trust yourself, trust what you know, and trust your characters as they convey the story that they, not you, are living.

Oh, and if you start to feel stuck, that's okay too. It's all part of the process. Don't be afraid, don't worry about where the story's "going," and for goodness' sake don't "make up" or force anything.

Just write the next sentence, whatever comes. Then the next, then the next, and so on. Soon you won't be stuck. You'll be exhilarated and flying along in the story once again.

But as I've written here before and as I alluded to above, to do that you have to take off the Authorial robes and come down out of the ivory tower. Be a real writer. Slip into a pair of jeans, a t-shirt, and sneakers. Then roll off the parapet into the trenches of the story and race through it with your characters. Enjoy the story as it unfolds around you.

That's where the fun is, and that's where creation happens.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "What's Autofiction? ..." at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/whats-autofiction-should-you-fictionalize-the-story-of-your-life/>.

See "People started to be noticeably nervous ..." at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/people-started-to-be-noticeably-nervous-when-they-were-coming-near-a-description-of-my-disability/>. Just so you know, this is a compilation of a short post (the first paragraph) and various replies. Anyway, I couldn't begin to agree more. Also see the next item.

See "The Moral Case Against Equity Language" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-moral-case-against-equity-language/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1450 words

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Total fiction words for 2023..... 52824
Total nonfiction words for March... 4210

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 45540
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 98364

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: Because It Makes Sense, I preach trusting your characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living. Duh. See My Best Advice for Fiction Writers at <https://hestanbrough.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/My-Best-Advice-for-Fiction-Writers.pdf>.

The Point, a Podcast, a Lie, and Did You Know

March 7, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * What's the Point?
- * Voices of the West Podcast
- * Something That Might Have Happened
- * Did You Know...
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“Even if it turns out that time travel is impossible, it is important that we understand why it is impossible.” Professor Stephen Hawking

I believe time travel is impossible because there is only Now. Time is a human construct, something invented by our consciousness to compare and contrast our experiences. That said, I look forward to writing my next time-travel novel.

“Plot is no more than footprints left in the snow after your characters have run by on their way to incredible destinations. Plot is observed after the fact rather than before. It cannot precede action.” Ray Bradbury

“Scott (Fitzgerald) took LITERATURE so solemnly. He never understood it was just writing as well as you can and finishing what you start.” Ernest Hemingway

“Writing is an act of faith, not a trick of grammar.” E. B. White

What's the Point?

Just a thought that occurred to me—

The point of writing to the best of your ability is to write so the reader gets what you want him to get and so he gets it in the way you want him to get it. Otherwise there is no reason to write at all, much less to the best of your ability.

This is why it makes my eyes water and my eyelids twitch when some would-be writer slaps something on the page—for example, about how something caught the character's "eye" instead of her attention—and then dismisses any concern over clarity or even responsibility with a wag of her hand. The wag is usually accompanied by an inanity: "Ah, the reader will know what I mean."

This doesn't annoy me because the typical reader is so stupid that *s/he won't* know what you mean. It annoys me because the writer shouldn't be so lazy as to shift responsibility for clarity from the writer's self to the reader. It is not the reader's job to decipher what you've written.

The reader's only job is to be entertained. The writer's job is to write so well and so thoroughly that the reader has no choice but to see, hear, smell, taste and feel, physically and emotionally, exactly what the writer is passing out.

Voices of the West Podcast

I wasn't going to share this, but my wife said she didn't think it was all that bad. Of course, believing at least most of the things I do "aren't all that bad" is her job, and she performs it admirably.

My voice is scratchy and sounds parched. It's also a little extra twangy because of the subject matter and the "aw-shucks" tone of the main interviewer. As I spoke with him, I was more a sidekick of Wes Crowley than the guy who wrote the stories.

Basically, at the interviewer's prompting, I told the origin story of the Wes Crowley series, though I went into a little more depth than I have here at the Journal. We also went off-topic a bit and talked about other genres, writing in general, etc.

So if you want to risk your sense of hearing shutting down forever to protest this unnecessary abuse, you can listen to the podcast at <https://voicesofthewest.net/tombstone-book-festival-3-4-23/>. My stuff starts at 35:05 and runs on for about 12 minutes.

Enjoy, if that's the right word.

Something That Might Have Happened

In yesterday's post I talked about deconstructionism and about how planning and writing fiction from the conscious, critical mind is the standard taught in most classrooms. I've addressed

creatives in university classes before, but none of those real encounters rose quite to the level of teaching opportunity as the fictional one below does.

Also, I've always wanted to write a story titled "Something That Might Have Happened." Someday I will, but for now the following will suffice:

When I was invited to talk with a creative writing class at a university awhile back, the young professor talked briefly with the class about the "dedication and sacrifice" that's required of a novelist. Then she gestured toward me. "For example," she said, "about how long does it take you to outline a novel?"

I smiled and shook my head. "I don't outline."

"Really?"

I nodded. "I prefer to race through the trenches of the story with the characters. I record what happens and what the characters say and do as the story unfolds in real time around us."

"Ah," she said, then offered a tight-lipped smile and wagged one hand in my direction. "Oh, but surely you outline first." Then, without leaving space for a response, she addressed the class. "Students, here's Mr. Stanbrough."

Fortunately, the students were interested in my response to the instructor and followed up on that. Thus, it was a productive day for me and a good day of learning for the students.

But afterward, even now, years later, I ruminate on that experience. At first I thought how odd it was that the instructor would dismiss my assertion that I don't outline with a wave of the hand and "Surely you do."

Then I realized that's how deeply ingrained all this stuff is. And that was only for outlining. Deconstructionists, critics, and the teachers and others who've bought into the lie teach that you must outline, plan, and plot, and then write accordingly.

Yet long-term professional writers (at least those who aren't also selling self-serving how-to books) agree with Ray Bradbury: "Plot is no more than footprints left in the snow after your characters have run by on their way to incredible destinations. Plot is observed after the fact rather than before. It cannot precede action."

So there. It's difficult for me to understand how anyone can not see the simple truth of that statement.

Did You Know...

Splitting an infinitive isn't actually grammatically incorrect at all?

For an excellent article that taught me a few things, see “9 famous quotes that are (technically) grammatically incorrect” at <https://theweek.com/articles/465231/9-famous-quotes-that-are-technically-grammatically-incorrect>.

For example, “The ‘rule’ against split infinitives is just a grammatical superstition. It was invented in the 1700s by a grammarian who wanted to ‘improve’ the language along Latin lines. English, however, is not Latin, and the option of putting words between to and the verb root has always existed and has often been made use of by respected authors.”

Turns out a lot of the “rules” concerning what is or is not grammatically incorrect were actually misinformation passed along by unwitting teachers. You know, like the myths of writing.

I especially enjoyed examples 1, 2, and 4 and 9 (especially when writing dialogue).

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Time travel might be possible ...” at <https://interestingengineering.com/science/time-machine-using-lasers>.

See “Microsoft Bing a ‘train wreck’” at <https://interestingengineering.com/innovation/engineer-google-warns-bing-ai-train-wreck>.

See “Bundling Your Ebooks” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/03/such-a-dealbundling-your-ebooks.html>. The meat starts about 1/3 of the way down.

See “Difference Between ‘Quote’ and ‘Quotation’” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/difference-between-quote-and-quotation-what-is-the-right-word/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1150 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051

Total fiction words for March..... XXXX
Total fiction words for 2023..... 52824
Total nonfiction words for March... 5360

Total nonfiction words for the year.....	46690
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	99514
Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date...	0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

Disclaimer: Because It Makes Sense, I preach trusting your characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living. See My Best Advice for Fiction Writers at <https://hestanbrough.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/My-Best-Advice-for-Fiction-Writers.pdf>.

An Easter Egg from DWS

March 8, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * An Easter Egg from DWS
- * Back to Writing Fiction
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

from Ernest Hemingway on "The Writer's Life"

"I don't think there is any question about artistic integrities. It has always been much more exciting to write than to be paid for it...."

"I only think about writing truly. Posterity can take care of herself."

An Easter Egg from DWS

I used to read Dean Wesley Smith's blog every day. More recently, I read the headline. If it seems more advertising than substance, I skip it. I skipped the one on Monday.

The title of this morning's post grabbed me so I read it and found this at the end of the post: "Easter Egg from Monday's blog is still active."

Okay, so I had to go look. And in Monday's post, which I had skipped, I found the Easter Egg:

“And something special for those of you who read this blog regularly. Not announcing this anywhere else but here. Until Friday night late, March 10th, anything on Teachable is half price for those of you who see this and use the code: DeansBlog03.”

So there you go. Enjoy. Passing that along is really the only reason I decided to post today.

But I can also share some good news. I’m headed

Back to Writing Fiction

I’m excited. And let me say up front, I’m not bragging but only sharing. The whole premise of the Journal is that what happens to me as a writer can also happen to you. What I achieve or accomplish as a writer, you also can achieve or accomplish.

It has been well over a month since I added any new words to the novel. I’ve had dozens of other story ideas dancing around in my head, with several new ones each day. I wrote the memoir short story “Five Tight Indians” on February 25, but otherwise I have written no fiction at all since January 27.

Now, happily, my wife is well along the path to a full recovery from her accident. We’ll attend her final session with the physical therapist later this morning. She’ll continue to do special exercises to rebuild strength in her back, but the difficult part is past. Of course, that alone is good news.

Plus, because she won’t require my attention and presence as often or as long at a time, now I can return to writing fiction. That is good news as well, even if only for my own mental well-being. (grin)

I’ve said many times before that every novel seems to write differently. I suppose that will be especially true for this one. As I return to it, I’ll be testing a brand-new process, a new way of writing, that’s come to me recently.

Some history—Having written only a little over 10,000 words, I had decided I wouldn’t read back over any of that. I had decided instead to ignore what I’ve already written and start what would amount to a separate story with a new opening.

Then later, when that new story was close to ending (or somewhere along the way, if possible) I would “plug in” the chapters I’d already written where they fit best. In fact, I even talked about this briefly with a friend only a week ago during the book fair in Tombstone.

Then everything changed.

In the month or so that I’ve been away from writing fiction, I’ve been reading short stories and novels by a few writers whose work I admire. As usual, I re-read passages that affected me strongly to determine how they accomplished that. Nothing new there, and I made a mental note or two as I went along.

I also read and studied hooks. I read the opening lines from dozens of short stories and novels in my own collection and used Amazon’s “Look Inside” feature to read the opening line (the hook) of several other novels. If the opening paragraph was short (no more than seven or eight lines) I read the whole opening paragraph.

Finally, I read and studied Hemingway’s collected thoughts on writing and writers as presented in *Ernest Hemingway on Writing*, edited by Larry W. Phillips (see <https://www.amazon.com/dp/0684854295>).

And as a result of all of that—plus, I suppose, everything that has gone before in my fiction writing experience—a new way of writing came over me. I feel brand new, with freshly opened eyes.

I won’t be leaving behind Dean Wesley Smith’s *Writing Into the Dark* or Robert A. Heinlein’s *Business Habits for Writers*, but building on them. In fact, I believe you can come to this particular way of writing only by devoting yourself to those two disciplines:

- letting go of the unnecessary (via WITD), and
- believing in yourself (via Heinlein’s Rules).

Note that I didn’t say you have to “master” those disciplines—I doubt that’s possible—but only devote yourself to them. I’m convinced that’s the only way you can come to your version of this place.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Having Fun” at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/having-fun/>.

See “I Never Made a Living Wage...” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/i-never-made-a-living-wage-when-i-worked-in-publishing/>.

See “Old and Middle English” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/old-and-middle-english/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 870 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051

Total fiction words for March.....	XXXX
Total fiction words for 2023.....	52824
Total nonfiction words for March...	6230
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	47560
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	100384
Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date...	0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

Disclaimer: Because It Makes Sense, I preach trusting your characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living. See My Best Advice for Fiction Writers at <https://hestanbrough.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/My-Best-Advice-for-Fiction-Writers.pdf>.

Italics, Who's Talking? and Hypocrisy

March 9, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Italics, and Who's Talking?
- * The Hypocrisy of Writers' Organization Magazines
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“After you learn to write your whole object is to convey everything, every sensation, sight, [smell, sound, taste,] feeling, place and emotion to the reader.” Ernest Hemingway

“When writing a novel a writer should create living people; people not characters.” Ernest Hemingway

“Prose is architecture, not interior decoration.... For a writer to put his own intellectual musings... into the mouths of artificially constructed characters... does not make literature.” Ernest Hemingway

Italics, and Who's Talking?

In today's Kill Zone blog, Elaine Viets references an article by "Ron Charles, the Washington Post book critic," for "Writers Beware: Here's what readers really hate." See <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/03/writers-beware-heres-what-readers-really-hate.html>.

I generally agree with the list, but I took exception to points 5 and 6, both because they aren't explained very well.

5) *Readers hate long italicized passages.*

Okay, but why? Well, because long passages of italics are difficult to read. Italics attribute tires the reader's eyes.

I cover that and a great deal more in the second edition of [*Punctuation for Writers*](#), as well as the appropriate uses for italics and the importance of consistency within a work.

The next point is not only a massive ball of ugly, but a category error besides. The response does not address the problem in the complaint:

6) *Readers hate when writers don't use quotation marks.* "Sometimes you have to reread a passage to determine who is speaking."

Yes, but that's two different problems.

Like at least some other readers, I too dislike the lack of quotation marks. Quotation marks, which readers don't consciously notice while they're reading, are a subliminal signal to the reader that the text within them is being spoken aloud by someone. Text that is not set off with quotation marks is narrative. The lack of quotation marks can leave a reader confused.

But all of that said, when readers have to reread a passage to determine which character is speaking, that isn't because the quotation marks are missing. That problem is caused by

- a missing dialogue tag line (he said, she said),
- a missing brief descriptive narrative (both enhances the scene and identifies which character is about to speak or is speaking), and-or
- the writer not differentiating between the characters' voices (no two characters should speak in exactly the same way, especially when engaged in dialogue with each other).

To learn the difference between dialogue tag lines, brief descriptive narratives, and character voice—and how each works—please read "Real Dialogue Tips" at <https://harveystanbrough.com/pro-writers/real-dialogue-tips/>. I recommend reading this brief article even if you believe you already know.

Hemingway's short story "Hills Like White Elephants" is an excellent example of the momentary confusion that might ensue if you omit too many character hints in a row. At one point in that story, the characters exchanged 14 lines of dialogue without the writer indicating which character was talking.

Then came a descriptive paragraph, then a much shorter paragraph that included the dialogue tag “she said,” and then another volley of 12 lines of dialogue without any indication of which character was speaking.

Perhaps most importantly, Elaine Viets’ entire article falls under one overall rule of fiction: Don’t put anything on the page that will interrupt the reading of your work. If you adhere to that one rule and strive to improve in that regard with every story you write, your writing will improve much more quickly.

The Hypocrisy of Writers’ Organization Magazines

For the magazine of any professional writers’ organization to offer less than professional rates for articles it seeks or accepts for publication is the absolute height of hypocrisy.

But writers are as much to blame as the magazines. Writers who are so lacking in self-confidence and professional demeanor that they will accept “contributors’ copies” in lieu of actual payment or a pittance in lieu of professional rates should not be writing articles that endeavor to explain anything at all to their fellow writers in or out of the organization.

And any professional writers’ organization who refuses to offer professional rates to those who write articles for their official magazine should be ashamed of themselves. You are “serving” your membership with articles written by amateurs.

I wonder, do the editors of such magazines pay their plumber with a photo of the pipes the plumber fixed? Do they pay their automobile mechanic with a photo of the engine he recently restored to running order? And in their day job, do those same editors accept anything other than cold, hard cash in exchange for their skills or labor?

I’m a professional writer. Pay me what I’m worth. Contributors’ copies don’t put groceries on the table or pay the rent. Just sayin’.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Ghostwriting 101” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/ghostwriting-101/>. Interesting. I’ve heard Dan Baldwin talk about this many times.

See “How Bad Publishers Hurt Authors” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-bad-publishers-hurt-authors/>. Sigh. Yet one more complaining writer. Yet they keep lining up to be abused on the Agents and Publishers Ride.

See “Slavery in the Americas: Separating Fact from Fiction” at <https://mises.org/wire/slavery-americas-separating-fact-fiction>. Story ideas.

See “Is History History?” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/is-history-history/>. See PG’s take. I couldn’t begin to agree more.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 870 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051

Total fiction words for March..... XXXX
Total fiction words for 2023..... 52824
Total nonfiction words for March... 7100
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 48430
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 101254

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: Because It Makes Sense, I preach trusting your characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living. See My Best Advice for Fiction Writers at <https://hestanbrough.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/My-Best-Advice-for-Fiction-Writers.pdf>.

Copyright Valuation and Half-Price Workshops

March 10, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Copyright Valuation and Half-Price Workshops
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“Without question, the greatest invention in the history of mankind is beer. Oh, I grant you that the wheel was also a fine invention, but the wheel does not go nearly as well with pizza.” Dave Barry

Copyright Valuation and Half-Price Workshops

I hadn't planned on publishing the Journal today but Dean wrote an arguably good “sort of rant” on copyright valuation. For that, see <https://deanwesleysmith.com/copyright-valuation-a-sort-of-rant/>.

Also, a reminder that his half-price sale on everything on Teachable expires late today. So go to WMG Publishing Workshops and Lectures on Teachable (<https://wmg-publishing-workshops-and-lectures.teachable.com/>). When you find what you want, enter code DeansBlog03 to get it for 50% off. (There's no shopping cart. You can buy more than one, but you have to enter the code each time.)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “An Egg Freezing in Mid-Air” at <https://interestingengineering.com/video/watch-eggs-literally-freeze-mid-air-from-the-minnesota-cold>. Just for fun.

See “Scientists achieve the impossible by creating a baby from two male mice” at <https://interestingengineering.com/science/baby-from-two-male-mice>. Sure, why not. What could possibly go wrong?

See “3 easy ways to subscribe to your favorite authors online” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/3-easy-ways-to-subscribe-to-your-favorite-authors-online/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 170 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051

Total fiction words for March..... XXXX
Total fiction words for 2023..... 52824
Total nonfiction words for March... 7270
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 48600
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 101424

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date...	0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

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Interested in AI Audio?

March 11, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Interested in AI Audio?
- * Extended Sale
- * Of Interest

Quote of the Day

“Always read for pleasure first. Then if you want to go back and analyze [a passage] that’s fine.”
Dean Wesley Smith

Interested in AI Audio?

If you're interested in AI Audio, see “The Research (Part Two) AI Audio” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-research-part-two-ai-audio/>. I posted this one so you can see PG's take.

However, I recommend clicking through to Kris Rusch's original post at <https://kriswrites.com/2023/03/08/business-musings-the-research-part-two-ai-audio/>. Be sure to read the comments.

One commenter mentioned that she got “Blakify ... for a one time payment on Appsumo.” I checked, and at Appsumo the program is available for a one-time payment of \$67 (usually \$299). If you're interested, that might be something to look into.

You can also find Part One, “The Research Part One (AI Audio)” at <https://kriswrites.com/2023/03/01/business-musings-the-research-part-one-ai-audio/>. I did not read that one.

Extended Sale

Dean Wesley Smith decided to extend his half-price sale through Sunday. For details, see “Of Interest.” As I reported yesterday, the code to enter to get half-price is DeansBlog03.

As long as I’m selling other people’s stuff, I also still have instructional DVDs available at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives-gifts-dvds/>.

I also have low-priced audio lectures at <https://harveystanbrough.com/lecture-series/>. Just sayin’.

Writing

With the new way of writing that has come to me, I’ve decided to start again on the novel. With an hour yesterday, I wrote over 1400 words.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Quick Update” at <https://deanwesleymith.com/quick-update/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 240 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231

Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221

Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026

Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051

Day 5..... 1451 words. Total words to date..... 11502

Total fiction words for March..... 1451

Total fiction words for 2023..... 54275

Total nonfiction words for March... 7510

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 48840

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 103115

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: Because It Makes Sense, I preach trusting your characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living. See My Best Advice for Fiction Writers at <https://hestanbrough.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/My-Best-Advice-for-Fiction-Writers.pdf>.

A Great Comment on Estate Planning for Writers

March 13, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * A Great Comment on Estate Planning for Writers
- * Of Interest

A Great Comment on Estate Planning for Writers

This was important enough to spread the word through a new edition of the Journal.

I've been keeping up with comments on Dean's post from a few days ago on "Copyright Valuation."

One great comment was from C.E. Petit, whom I believe is an IP attorney. C.E. writes in part,

"One other very important note (this is general advice, not legal advice...):

"Don't be Andre Norton.

"If you set up an IP holding entity ..., be complete and consistent.

"Don't put things in your personal estate plan that you transferred to the corporation; and don't treat as business-entity assets things that need to be in your personal estate plan

"Ensure that there's a formal succession plan for the business entity's management in the business entity's papers ..., and specifically defer to that plan in your personal estate plan. ...

"Ensure that there is a very specific clause in your will ... regarding how the ownership of the business entity will be distributed, and if there are specific income bequests ... that what you put in your will is also reflected in the business entity's records.

"Have that lawyer read both the probate plan and the business entity records to make sure that the language used is both internally consistent and follows governing law.

"Perhaps most important of all, get good clear instructions on what to do with the recordkeeping for new works that you prepare after the date on which you execute your estate plan."

You can read the entire comment and several others, including Dean's responses, at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/copyright-valuation-a-sort-of-rant/#comments>.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "The Man of Your Dreams For \$300" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-man-of-your-dreams-for-300/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 290 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051
Day 5..... 1451 words. Total words to date..... 11502

Total fiction words for March..... 1451
Total fiction words for 2023..... 54275
Total nonfiction words for March... 7800
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 49130
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 103405

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

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Practice Makes Perfect, and Stupid Mistakes

March 15, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Practice Makes Perfect
- * Stupid (or Lazy) Mistakes
- * Writing
- * Of Interest
- * Ahem. Sorry, but I don't buy it.

Quotes of the Day

“Life is tough, but it's tougher if you're stupid.” John Wayne

“The fact that I was a girl never damaged my ambitions to be a pope or an emperor.” Willa Cather (Specifically to address the last item in “Of Interest”)

Practice Makes Perfect

We live in a world in which experience rules and practice makes perfect. Not that we can ever actually achieve perfection because what is perfect depends on individual perception. That said, we can continue to improve, but only by continual practice.

For writers, just like for other artists, “practice” does not mean hovering in place over one work (revising over and over, rewriting, seeking critical input, polishing) in an attempt to perfect it.

Practice means putting new words on the page. It means doing your best according to your current ability on the current work the first time through. Then you take a little time to learn something new. Then you do your new, improved best on the next work.

Comparisons are useful too, if you compare who you are today with who you were yesterday. But if that person is the same—if you're still hovering over one work instead of putting new words on the page—you're wasting valuable time.

Grow some confidence, believe in yourself, and conversely understand that a story of any length is still only a story. Any individual story doesn't matter except as it matters to the reader, and that is something over which you have zero influence.

Stupid (or Lazy) Mistakes

The writer or writers on one of my otherwise favorite Brit crime shows, **Death in Paradise** (on Amazon Prime, Britbox, and maybe Netflix), regularly exercises lazy writing. In different episodes, the detective sergeant claims a firearm is “nine millimeter caliber.”

Um, no. A five-second search on any search engine will tell you that a millimeter and a caliber are different measurements.

A caliber is a standard measurement equaling 1/100th of an inch. A millimeter is a metric measurement, 1/10th of a centimeter. A projectile or the weapon that fired it can't be both.

From [Sage & Braker](#),

“There are 10 millimeters (mm) in 1 centimeter (cm) and 2.54 centimeters in 1 inch (in). Therefore, multiply a bullet or bore caliber given in inches by 25.4 in order to convert it to millimeters. The opposite is also true: divide a given caliber expressed in millimeters by 25.4 in order to convert it to inches.”

For example, the diameter of a .38 caliber round is 38/100 of an inch or 9.652 millimeters.

The diameter in calibers (1/100th of an inch) of a 9mm round would be .3543307086614173. So roughly .35 caliber. Doesn't exist. So stop it.

Excellence

If you enjoy great stories, I recommend [The Hemingway Hoax](#), a short SF novel by Joe Haldeman. It won both the Nebula and Hugo awards. I'm not sure where I first heard of the book, but I'm glad I did. I only wish I'd thought of the idea first.

Writing

As a few of you have noticed, I've allowed fiction writing to slide lower in my priorities recently. That's due to a few personally significant matters that are beyond my control. As I tend to those matters I do have time to do other things, including writing fiction.

Unfortunately, being away from the familiar surroundings of the Hovel, I've allowed myself to develop other habits to fill that time. I'm currently attempting to develop new habits that will rectify the situation. With any luck you'll see the results of that attempt soon in the numbers below.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “A Fun Challenge” at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/a-fun-challenge/>.

See “Survival Tips for Conferences” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/03/survival-tips-for-conferences.html>. Good as far as it goes but nothing new here.

See “Why We Don't Need “Heroines”” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/why-we-dont-need-heroines/>.

Ahem. Sorry, but I don't buy it.

No woman was ever called a “heroine” (or a “chairwoman” or a “postmistress” etc.) as an attempt to demean her. Rather, I believe it was to call attention, rightly, to the fact that she is female and therefore elevated by nature above other human beings.

Such titles served as an advance warning to all who approached that they were about to come into the presence of the divine feminine and that they should act accordingly. That basically meant minding their manners, which people on both sides of the gender aisle should do anyway even if being polite and respectful somehow “offends” them.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 750 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051
Day 5..... 1451 words. Total words to date..... 11502

Total fiction words for March..... 1451
Total fiction words for 2023..... 54275
Total nonfiction words for March... 8550
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 49880
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 104155

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: Because It Makes Sense, I preach trusting your characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living. See My Best Advice for Fiction Writers at <https://hestanbrough.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/My-Best-Advice-for-Fiction-Writers.pdf>.

Ian Fleming, and a New Free Story Every Week

March 16, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Welcome
- * Ian Fleming on How to Write
- * A New Free Story Every Week

- * The Craft Boils Down
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“You have to get the reader to turn over the page.” Ian Fleming (see “Of Interest”)

“I have a charming relative who is an angry young littérateur of renown. He is maddened by the fact that more people read my books than his. ... I asked him how he described himself on his passport. ‘I bet you call yourself an Author,’ I said. He agreed, with a shade of reluctance, perhaps because he scented sarcasm on the way. ‘Just so,’ I said. ‘Well, I describe myself as a Writer. There are authors and artists, and then again there are writers and painters.’” Ian Fleming

“I looked for the simplest and plainest name I could find. I chose Jack, and not as a diminutive for John, either. It’s just Jack. ... I wanted to underpin Reacher’s blunt and straightforward manner with a blunt and straightforward name.” Lee Child on how Jack Reacher’s first name came about

Welcome to new subscribers to the Journal.

If there’s anything I can do to help you as a writer or publisher, let me know. I’m pretty much always available via email at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

Ian Fleming on How to Write

Thanks to my friend Gary V. for the link to the first item in “Of Interest” today. It’s an article Ian Fleming wrote 60 years ago about how to write a thriller. If you read nothing else today, read that. I’ve encountered it before, but I read it again this time too. Great stuff.

Please don’t be like the woman who crossed her arms over her chest and said she would never read Heinlein’s Rules, that they couldn’t possibly pertain to her because she doesn’t write science fiction. Puhlease.

Even if you don’t write thrillers, folks, fiction writing is fiction writing and storytelling is storytelling and Ian Fleming was a Stage-the-Hell Five writer.

A New Free Story Every Week

I keep forgetting to mention the new free short stories that come out once a week on Friday over at <https://harveystanbroughwrites.com/category/short-story-of-the-week/>. I have them scheduled well into June or July to come out every Friday at 10 a.m. on the site and a little later on the Substack. The current batch are all previously unpublished.

If you don’t want to miss any, you can subscribe to the substack. If you’d like to subscribe, visit <https://stanbroughwrites.substack.com/>, click on any story, and then click the subscribe button at the end. The current short story, a psychological suspense, is “A Long Way Down.”

One person, Bobbie J. Herring, left this comment: “An engaging story. Such detail. Thx for sharing. Almost made me want to restart writing again.”

Of course I thanked her and mentioned the Journal, a unique place where you can not only learn to write but to write with “such detail.”

The Craft Boils Down to Hooks, Openings (wherein you ground the reader in the setting via the POV character’s physical and emotional senses), scene or chapter Cliffhangers, and pacing.

Beyond that, you only need to get down in the trenches of the story with your characters and race through it with them. Then simply write what happens and what the characters say and do as the story unfolds all around you. Then practice, by which I mean put new words on the page.

Most of the time when I hear about writers who stopped writing fiction, they stopped because they lost interest, and they lost interest because they stayed in one place too long. They hovered over one work, outlining, revising, rewriting, etc. That nonsense will freeze any writer solid.

If you want to become a prolific, long-term professional writer, you have to make storytelling through writing something you enjoy. You have to make it fun. And the best way to do that is to stop taking it so seriously.

As I’ve written many times before and alluded to above, come down out of the authorial ivory tower, lose the robes, slip into jeans and a t-shirt and an old pair of tenny go-fasters. Then roll off the parapet of the story into the trenches and race through it with your characters.

Most important of all, remember the One Ring Truth, the truth that will control everything else you do as a fiction writer: THAT you write is all-important because, um, you’re a writer. But WHAT you write, the individual story or novel, is only a few minutes’ or hours’ entertainment. A passing fancy. It’s nothing more important than that.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Ian Fleming Explains How to Write a Thriller” at <https://lithub.com/ian-fleming-explains-how-to-write-a-thriller/>.

See “Orwell, Camus and truth” at <https://thecritic.co.uk/orwell-camus-and-truth/>. An extremely good article. Thanks to The Passive Voice.

See “Dean Challenges... Two of them” at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/dean-challenges-two-of-them/>.

See “Why Are All Action Heroes Named Jack, James, or John?” at <https://slate.com/culture/2023/03/john-wick-james-bond-action-heroes-j-names.html>. Beyond that, most action hero figures have single-syllable first names or nicknames.

See “Using the Big Five Personality Traits for Character Development” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/03/using-the-big-five-personality-traits-for-character-development.html>. Read, study, learn. Then forget it while you’re writing.

See “The Battle for Your Brain” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-battle-for-your-brain/>. Story ideas.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 870 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051
Day 5..... 1451 words. Total words to date..... 11502

Total fiction words for March..... 1451
Total fiction words for 2023..... 54275
Total nonfiction words for March... 9420
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 50750
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 105025

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: Because It Makes Sense, I preach trusting your characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living. See My Best Advice for Fiction Writers at <https://hestanbrough.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/My-Best-Advice-for-Fiction-Writers.pdf>.

Recommendations, and Bradbury

March 17, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Recommendations

- * Bradbury on Writing
- * The Fireman
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“I don’t believe in college for writers. ... The intellect is a great danger to creativity. ... You must never think at the [keyboard]. You must feel. ... If there’s no feeling, there cannot be great art.” Ray Bradbury

“All my characters write the books. I don’t write the books. All these characters come to me and say, ‘Listen to me,’ and I listen to them and I put it down, and that’s how the books get written.” Ray Bradbury

“I like to think of myself as part of the universe waking up, and looking around and saying, ‘Hey, this is remarkable. Look at this.’” Ray Bradbury

“All these lovers (characters) surround me, and they love life, and they tell me about it.” Ray Bradbury

Recommendations

I watched a few short videos with Ray Bradbury yesterday and this morning. During one of those he mentioned that while in the library as an adult he often wandered into the children’s book area to find something purely fun to read.

Who knew? But that made an impact on me for some reason.

Then when I checked The Killzone Blog this morning, Steve Hooley had a brief post on St. Patrick’s Day. At the end of the post, he mentioned the fifth book (of six) in his Mad River Valley series.

The book—*United We Stand, Dude*—is listed as “Clean Teen and Young Adult Fantasy, set in the magic Mad River Valley and the enchanted forest of Cedar Heights.”

The cover was attractive, so on a lark I clicked through, and I used Amazon’s Look Inside feature to read a bit of it. I was hooked. What a fun story! And the price was only 99 cents!

(Note: The Look Inside feature made this sale. If you currently have books listed on Amazon, be sure the Look Inside feature is activated. There, my marketing tip for the day.)

I scrolled down and bought all six books, and I have to say I would have bought all six at a higher price. As I told Steve in a comment on TKZ, now when I’m not writing, I intend to forget everything and go play with him and his friends in the Mad River Valley.

I recommend you at least read the Look Inside for *United We Stand, Dude* (see <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0B3FB7T72/>). Be sure to check out the “Introduction—Prologue, Epilogue, or Paralogue.” Great fun. I love stuff like that.

Bradbury on Writing

I always learn or re-learn something when I listen to Bradbury. In my recent foray into his wisdom, I learned that I need to free up my mind and fall in love again, with writing fiction. Release any pressure and just have fun. It was an inexpensive and invaluable lesson delivered in less than a minute.

On a separate note, one of the better Bradbury interviews I listened to was “Bradbury 13, Episode 9 interview {1984}” at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FOJlJmoX38>. Within the first three minutes or so he talks about the process of writing the short story “The Veldt.” Excellent.

By the way, I have a whole long list of YouTube video URLs about Bradbury. If you’d like to view or listen to them, email me and I’ll send you the list. Free, of course.

The Fireman

By the way, during recent browsings I found you can download a free PDF copy of the February 1951 issue of *Galaxy Science Fiction* (magazine), which contains “The Fireman,” the short story that was the first version of what later became *Fahrenheit 451*.

To download the issue free, click <https://archive.org/details/galaxymagazine-1951-02/page/n5/mode/2up>, then click either Get PDF or Get ePub on the left side.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Why Short Stories?” at <https://franktheodat.substack.com/p/why-short-stories>.

See “An Evening with Ray Bradbury 2001” at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W-r7ABrMYU>. About a half-hour. Thanks to Frank T. for the reminder.

See “Update to Award On the Full Challenge” at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/update-to-award-on-the-full-challenge/>. If you already own a lifetime subscription, Dean has added other awards.

See “St. Patrick’s Day Books and Traditions” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/03/reader-friday-st-patricks-day-books-and-traditions.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 680 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051
Day 5..... 1451 words. Total words to date..... 11502

Total fiction words for March..... 1451
Total fiction words for 2023..... 54275
Total nonfiction words for March... 10100
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 51430
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 105705

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: Because It Makes Sense, I preach trusting your characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living. See My Best Advice for Fiction Writers at <https://hestanbrough.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/My-Best-Advice-for-Fiction-Writers.pdf>.

Plague for Our Times, and Wattpad

March 19, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Story Idea
- * Wattpad
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“Publishing your own book may not come with the prestige of earning a book deal. However, publishing prestige is an outdated concept, and readers certainly don’t care.” Dave Chesson

“The Universe is not obliged to conform to what we consider comfortable or plausible.” Carl Sagan

“Writer’s block is a misnomer and can be compared with turning off a faucet. Like the ability to write, faucets can develop problems when they’re seldom used. You get all this rust in the pipes. When you turn on the faucet, a lot of rust comes out.” Susan Neville

“Three years since the COVID-19 pandemic began, 47% of Americans believe prepandemic normalcy is unattainable for them.” Megan Brennan for Gallup

Story Idea

Wow. Talk about a story idea falling into your lap! That last quotation, eh?

Maybe start with a news anchor reading Ms. Brennan’s quotation into the camera while his or her co-anchor looks on with—confident/compliant approval? nervous (hoping for compliance) approval? disbelief? disdain? fear? horror? disgust? or something else entirely. You choose.

Of course, the original anchor should betray his or her opinion of what s/he just read as well, albeit in a more subtle way. (S/he is more cognizant of being on camera.)

Maybe one of the anchors has a background in science and actually knows more about what’s going on than the other one does. Maybe s/he plans to escape. But to where?

There’s your idea, writers: A Plague for Our Times or something. Run with it. Oh, and the plague doesn’t have to be caused by a virus. Maybe it’s propaganda, looming statism, or whatever.

All About Wattpad

I heard of Wattpad several years ago, but I never looked into it. Now, primarily thinking of Harlan Ellison and his “writing in public,” I’m thinking of trying it.

The article that got me interested is “Wattpad for Authors: It’s Not Just for the Young Folks” at <https://www.janefriedman.com/wattpad-for-authors-its-not-just-for-the-young-folks/>.

I found this article to be comprehensive and chock full of little gems, so I thought I’d pass it along. I’m not so interested in the feedback aspect of the platform but am very interested in maybe introducing a new generation of readers to my work.

Also I naturally write short chapters (the article says that’s what Wattpad readers like) so from my current vantage point—outside looking in—Wattpad looks like it might be fun.

If they’ll allow me to try Wattpad with an existing, already published work, I’ll give it a shot. I probably won’t report back though because my experience might vary wildly from yours.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Learning In Writing” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/learning-in-writing-not-like-other-skills/>. Linking through the TPV post because I was flat stymied by the first comment. Silly me. When I find a long-term pro in *any* field who’s willing to share his or her knowledge, thank goodness I’m smart enough to shut up and listen.

See “To Speak Or Not To Speak” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/03/to-speak-or-not-to-speak.html>.

See “Amazon’s Ending of Kindle Newsstand Could Severely Impact SF/F Magazines” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/amazons-ending-of-kindle-newsstand-could-severely-impact-sf-f-magazines/>.

See “How to Get a Book Deal in 4 Steps + Why You Shouldn’t Bother” at <https://kindlepreneur.com/how-to-get-a-book-deal/>.

See “Pricing Ebooks: How to Choose Your Price” at <https://kindlepreneur.com/pricing-ebooks/>.

See “Nearly Half in U.S. Think Their Lives Will Never Return to Pre-Pandemic Normalcy” at <https://news.gallup.com/poll/471953/not-expect-return-pre-pandemic-normalcy.aspx>.

The Numbers

The Journal.....550 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051
Day 5..... 1451 words. Total words to date..... 11502
Day 6..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for March..... 1451
Total fiction words for 2023..... 54275
Total nonfiction words for March... 10650
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 51980
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 106255

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: Because It Makes Sense, I preach trusting your characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living. See My Best Advice for Fiction Writers at <https://hestanbrough.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/My-Best-Advice-for-Fiction-Writers.pdf>.

Language as a Precision Instrument

March 20, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * AI Blockers
- * Try And vs. Try To
- * The Writing
- * Of Interest

Quote of the Day

“Reason is God’s crowning gift to man[kind].” Sophocles

AI Blockers

Sigh. Whatever.

“Researchers release free app that protects artists’ work from being scraped by AI training models; program adds nearly imperceptible changes to images that go unnoticed by current AI image generators” (<https://techcrunch.com/2023/03/17/glaze-generative-ai-art-style-mimicry-protection/>)

It was inevitable, I suppose. It’s what humans do. One human creates Something New, which in every case may be used for good or for evil. Then another human creates Something Else that thwarts the first thing, not only in evil instances but in all instances just in case they might be evil.

This goes back and forth for a decade or two, and then one day pretty much everyone accepts the original Something New in all its forms, even the most terrifyingly evil, which of course becomes accepted as part of the new norm.

But don’t believe me. If you have a few decades ahead of you, sit back and watch. Or, if you have several decades behind you, think back to how things once were compared to how they are now (I’m not talking faulty guilt memories here, but actual facts).

Me? I just ignore all the nonsense and let others battle it out.

Try And vs. Try To

Language is a precision tool, but like any precision tool its precision use requires training and practice.

That said, if a person on the street in a casual conversation screws up the use of the language, who cares. But when a *writer*—a person who makes all or part of his or her living (or not) regularly putting words together to convey something to other people—screws it up, that annoys me. Why?

Because that person is pretending to be a professional. S/he might even believe s/he is a skilled, proficient professional, but s/he isn't. If you don't want to take the time to 1) study the nuances of the language and 2) continually hone your craft, you shouldn't pretend to be a writer.

It isn't like there's any shame in not being a writer. Millions of people around the world aren't things: they aren't mechanics or lawyers or cops or carpenters. They aren't plumbers or heavy-equipment operators or pilots. Or any number of other professions.

But one thing is certain. If they ARE any of those things, they have more than likely familiarized themselves with the requirements and tools of the profession and at least tried to remain current with new trends and concepts.

But those who call themselves “professional” writers or even just writers? Not so much.

I personally read, study, and practice in pretty much every waking moment. Many of you do too, and maybe some of you don't. One of those who doesn't wrote an article for *thrillist* (e-magazine) on planets that will be visible in the night sky in late March.

As part of the article, she wrote, “[U]se a pair of strong binoculars to try and see it.”

This is one of those inane uses that makes zero sense yet has entered the common vernacular. You can't both “try” to see something and “see” it. Truly, there is no “try.” You either do or you do not. It isn't “try and,” it's “try to.”

Does it matter? Of course, but only as a matter of professional pride. So it's all up to the writer, many of whom will fall back on, “Ah, the reader will know what I mean.”

While we're on the topic, who else here cringes when you read or hear “You can't have your cake and eat it too”?

Um, actually, yes, I can have my cake and eat it too. I have done so many times. First you have your cake (or whatever, it works with other foods too) and then you eat it. Step 1, step 2. In fact, that's is most often the sequence of events. First you have it, then you eat it.

However, as with the “try and” crowd, again people wander about grinning like they know something you don't know and saying, “Hey, you can't have your cake and eat it too.”

Groan. I want to say, “For goodness’ sake, crack a book. Or even just back up and think your way through what you just allowed to spill out of your mouth. It’s only 9 words delivered in 9 syllables. It won’t take long. Just ask yourself, can you really not have your cake and eat it too? Really?”

Of course, the saw isn’t meant to be literal. It’s a way of saying you can’t have the good without also experiencing the “bad.” You can’t have a rainbow without rain, for example (which actually you can).

Or that if you grab a handful of roses by the stems, chances are you’ll experience a thorn or two. Or if you rush down to the beach to witness that tsunami first hand, you might experience a little moisture. I get that.

But the original saying was still “You can’t eat your cake and have it too,” which still alludes to the broader meaning AND actually makes sense. Or according to Ben Zimmer in the “On Language” column in **The New York Times Magazine** (Feb. 18, 2011),

“The version of the proverb with ‘eat your cake’ followed by ‘having it’ does make more sense to many people, and *that is in fact how it was first formulated in English* [emphasis mine]. The *Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs* quotes a 1546 compendium by John Heywood, ‘Wolde ye bothe eate your cake, and haue your cake?’ In his *Yale Book of Quotations*, Fred Shapiro supplies a more typical phrasing from John Davies in 1611: ‘A man cannot eat his cake and haue it stil.’”

Of course, I don’t doubt for a moment the very next morning after Davies wrote or said that, someone, possibly even someone from his own household, was merrily skipping into town singing, “You can’t have your cake and eat it too.”

And they let it go.

And here we are.

The Writing

During the past couple of months of downtime I got into a bad habit of playing silly games as I waited to be needed for one thing or another. When that need slacked off to almost nothing, I continued to engage in silly games. (That’s why they call it a habit. Duh.)

But yesterday I started again working my way through the novel. Very soon I will reach that place where I can begin putting new words on the page again. You’ll see the numbers below. All of which has me amazed, once again, that anyone can take longer than a month or so to write a novel. I don’t like not-writing even when not-writing is necessary so I can tend to more important aspects of life.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “More On Dean Challenges” at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/more-on-dean-challenges/>.

See “How To Read Body Language” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/03/how-to-read-body-language.html>.

See “Copyright: The ‘Protect the Creative Economy Coalition’” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/copyright-the-protect-the-creative-economy-coalition/>. See PG’s take.

See “How to Write for the Web: All Writers Need to be Web Content Providers Now” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-to-write-for-the-web-all-writers-need-to-be-web-content-providers-now/>. I didn’t read this. I’m just a storyteller.

See “GrammarlyGO” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/grammarlygo/>. The day you start using this, stop calling yourself a writer.

See “Have Your Cake and Eat It Too” at <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/20/magazine/20FOB-onlanguage-t.html>.

See “You’ll Be Able to See 5 Planets in the Night Sky All at Once This Month” at <https://www.thrillist.com/news/nation/planetary-alignment-how-to-see-march-2023>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1240 words

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Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051
Day 5..... 1451 words. Total words to date..... 11502

Total fiction words for March..... 1451
Total fiction words for 2023..... 54275
Total nonfiction words for March... 11890
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 53220
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 107495

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	217
Short story collections.....	31

Disclaimer: Because It Makes Sense, I preach trusting your characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living. See My Best Advice for Fiction Writers at <https://hestanbrough.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/My-Best-Advice-for-Fiction-Writers.pdf>.

A New Personal Challenge

March 22, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * A New Personal Challenge
- * What Is A Short Story?
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“A new piece of work will drag the old piece of work after it. ... Sometimes you're just tired. You've done a thing too often. ... I go do another short story. The energy I borrow from that, I go back to the novel, and boom, everything comes into focus again. So you borrow energy. Find ways to borrow energy.” Ray Bradbury

“The intellect is a great danger to creativity . . . because you begin to rationalize and make up reasons for things, instead of staying with your own basic truth—who you are, what you are, what you want to be. I've had a sign over my typewriter for over 25 years now, which reads ‘Don't think!’ You must never think at the typewriter—you must *feel*. Your intellect is always buried in that feeling anyway.” Ray Bradbury

A New Personal Challenge

As some of you know, a long while back (April 2014) I started writing at least one short story per week. That started a streak that lasted either 70 or 72 weeks (I forget). I broke the streak intentionally. Why? Beats me. Probably because I'm a moron.

Anyway, from April into October of that year, I wrote only short stories and nonfiction, which primarily consisted of entries in my then-fledgling Journal. Even after I started writing novels in mid-October of that year, I continued turning out a new short story every week.

Many call that The Bradbury Challenge. Ray Bradbury once advised a group of would-be writers to “write one short story per week for a year. It's impossible to write 52 bad short stories.”

Of course, he was right. By the time anyone writes 52 short stories, if those stories are between say 2000 and 10,000 words each, s/he will have practiced writing fiction to the tune of somewhere between 102,000 words and 520,000 words of fiction, all ostensibly while studying and then applying new bits of craft.

To put those numbers in context, most fiction writers feel really accomplished if they can turn out 100,000 words per year.

If the writer can combine this challenge with a dedication to Heinlein's Rules (especially Rule 3) and to writing into the dark, so much the better. (See Bradbury's admonition to "Don't think" above.) If you can do that, you're well on your way to becoming a successful and probably very prolific professional fiction writer.

(By the way, if all you're writing are those short stories, even if all of them are 10,000 words each, that's still an average of just over 1 hour of "work" per day. $10,000/7 = 1429$ words per day. So there really are no excuses, especially for those of you who enjoy writing short stories.)

Anyway, here I go again.

As I wrote several years ago in my poem [Rejuvenation](#) (free PDF copy),

"It's time to reconnect some frazzled ends,
unbend a few warped planes, demagnetize
a short in my long circuit."

In other words, I need something to help me get back to how I used to be as a writer, how excited I used to feel each day to get out of bed and rush to the writing. So I'm starting a new personal challenge. In addition to keeping up with writing my novel(s), starting today I will begin writing at least one new short story every week. The due date each week will be Sunday at midnight, because who doesn't need a little drama? (grin)

Because I'm doing this for fun, I'm placing no restrictions of any kind on myself re word count, genre, or whatever else. Only that I must write at least one short story per week. I'm not out to prove anything to myself or anyone else. I'm only out to have fun.

Come to think of it, I might not even publish them. Or maybe I'll publish them only on [Stanbrough Writes](#) or only in collections.

My goal is to write at least 1 short story per week for 100 weeks. If I write more than one during a week, that doesn't count for the following week. If I miss writing one during a week, the streak ends.

In other words, the goal is not to write 100 stories in 100 weeks, which would mean I could skip a week or more and then play catch up. And I promise, if I make it to 100 weeks without missing, I won't break the streak intentionally this time. (grin)

So all that remains is to ask the question: Anyone out there want to join me?

It would be great fun to share this with other writers. Not to critique each other's work or any of that inane nonsense, but just to share our accomplishment.

I might even create a new section in the Journal called The Bradbury Challenge or something like that. If you join me, you would keep me apprised of your progress. You would email me with the title of your short story, the genre and the word count, and I would post it in the Journal once a week. If you publish it or post it online, be sure to include a buy link or a view link. Of course, you could jump in at any time.

Hey, you can't beat free publicity.

What Is A Short Story?

Much has been said about short stories being a "tighter" or more restricted form of fiction than novels, that the short story is a form that requires greater economy of words, the compression of thoughts into quicker live-action bites, etc.

I know that instinctively sounds right. After all, a short story is presented in a smaller package. But the smaller package really only means there are fewer words inside. It doesn't mean anything inside the package is more compressed or compact, or that it should be.

Some also spout that writing short stories requires special skills, deeper but somehow briefer descriptions and so on. In fact, you'll find that nonsense in almost every commercial how-to book out there on writing short stories.

And all of that (and more) is a pile of fresh, steaming, bovine excrement.

In any good story, long or short, it is necessary to

- hook the reader at the start with an enticing sentence or paragraph
- ground the reader in the setting of each scene through the POV character's physical and emotional senses and opinions of the setting
- keep the reader at depth with engaging writing, every word of which comes from or through the POV character
- keep the reader turning pages with appropriate pacing
- a cliffhanger at the end of each scene to pair with the hook at the beginning of the next scene, and
- a satisfactory ending and denouement (to entice the reader to find more of your work)

All of that is necessary in a good short story just as it is necessary in a good novel or a good series. The only real difference between the short story and the longer story (novella or novel) is this:

A short story is about One Event.

It really is that simple. You might even say a novel is just a short story that got out of hand and kept going.

I'm excited about this new challenge, especially when I think of all the new people I'm going to meet and the new adventures they will graciously share with me. As I said earlier, I'm doing this only for fun. But I'm also excited knowing I'll probably get some new novels out of some of these stories.

Some of those new stories and novels probably will be in my existing series (Wes Crowley and/or Rider Jones westerns, Blackwell Ops thrillers, Stern Talbot detective/PI mysteries, The Journey Home SF, The 13-Month Turn SF, the Nick Spalding action-adventure series, etc.) but some will almost certainly be stand-alones or even the beginning of new series. It's all very exciting.

I do hope some of you will load up and come along.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Are Orca the Serial Killers of the Sea?" at <https://www.suecoletta.com/orca-verse-serial-killers/>. Special offer in this. Scroll to the bottom for her announcement.

See "Kickstarter for My Books" at <https://deanwesleymith.com/kickstarter-for-my-books/>.

See "Workshops in Kickstarter" at <https://deanwesleymith.com/workshops-in-kickstarter/>.

See "Anatomy Of A Book Signing" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/03/anatomy-of-a-book-signing.html>.

See "Ray Bradbury's Greatest Writing Advice" at <https://lithub.com/ray-bradburys-greatest-writing-advice/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1390 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051

Day 5..... 1451 words. Total words to date..... 11502
Day 6..... XXXX words. Total words to date..... XXXXX

Total fiction words for March..... 1451
Total fiction words for 2023..... 54275
Total nonfiction words for March... 13280
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 54610
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 108885

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: Because It Makes Sense, I preach trusting your characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living. See My Best Advice for Fiction Writers at <https://hestanbrough.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/My-Best-Advice-for-Fiction-Writers.pdf>.

Fears About the Challenge

March 23, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Fears About the Challenge
- * Of Interest

Quote of the Day

“If you want your children to be intelligent, read them fairy tales. If you want them to be more intelligent, read them more fairy tales.” Albert Einstein

Fears About the Challenge

Yup, I'm not exempt.

Yesterday, I announced a personal challenge to write at least one short story every week for 100 weeks. My personal report date will be Sunday at midnight every week, beginning with this coming Sunday, March 26.

I invited others to join me in the challenge. One writer jumped in immediately, and a second one came aboard a few hours later. Others, for varying reasons, said they were “thinking about it.” That’s fine. Hey, whatever you need to do.

But all of that gave rise to this little article. Because believe me, I understand. As I wrote above, I’m not exempt from the same silly, unreasoning fears that assail other writers. The difference is, I see them for what they are and don’t let them stop me.

Even with all the writing I’ve done in the past, I was assailed with these silly, unreasoning fears almost from the time I published yesterday’s Journal. Here’s a rough transcript of my self-talk since then:

1. *What about the novel?* Writing short stories will take away from writing the novel, won’t it?

Okay, first, as Ray Bradbury said in the Quotes of the Day yesterday, “A new piece of work will drag the old piece of work after it. ... I go do another short story. The energy I borrow from that, I go back to the novel, and boom, everything comes into focus again. .. Find ways to borrow energy.”

So this challenge and the stories that will result are my way of borrowing energy.

And second—Oh, you mean the novel I started way back in January and then all but abandoned during all of February and most of March so far? That novel? Writing one short story per week certainly won’t interfere with writing (or not writing) the novel, will it? (grin)

2. *But the first story due on Sunday, March 26! before midnight!*

Yeah, I know. I set the deadline, remember?

But first, it’s only a short story. Second, from the next hour on the clock as I write this until midnight Sunday night, there are 65 hours. Some of those hours will be lost to sleep, but if I a) want to write a short story, and b) can’t steal a few hours to do just that, then where do I get off calling myself a writer?

3. *Still, this coming Sunday is so close!*

Okay, fine. Here’s the thing—nothing bad will happen if I write the stupid story, and nothing bad will happen if I miss writing it. At worst, I’ll slide my opening date to April 2. Or even to a different day and time. That’s all up to me, and none of it matters.

A streak doesn’t start with 0. A streak starts with 1. Duh.

That said, I refuse to slide the opening date. The whole purpose of a challenge in the first place is to drive the writer to the keyboard, isn’t it?

4. Ah, but the pressure of the looming deadline makes it all but impossible to come up with a good story idea.

Ah, baloney. That one's easy. I don't need a story idea. I only need a character with a problem in a setting, don't I?

I only need to slip the veil in my subconscious aside and peek in on a character, then write down what happens in that world and what s/he says and does as the story unfolds. In other words, I need only trust myself and the character and write whatever comes.

5. But what if the story's no good?

Right. Don't let's get confused. My job as a writer isn't to judge the story and decide whether or not it's "good." My job as a writer is simply to provide the story. The reader decides whether the story is good or not and to what degree.

Of course, you are also a reader with an opinion, but—and get this—it's *only one opinion*. Fortunately. Because no other reader will see the story exactly the same way you do. If you love it, some will agree, some will be indifferent, and some will hate it. Likewise if you think it sucks pond scum from all 50 states, some will agree, some will be indifferent, and some will love it.

Okay? Now, as Bradbury also said, "Don't think." Thinking spoils the creative process. Get over yourself and just write.

Barring any unforeseen external complications, I'll have the first short story of this challenge started and finished today. Then I can return to the novel and/or start "worrying" about the story that's due on April 2. (grin)

There's still plenty of room in the pool. Come on in. I'll report numbers for all participants each week on Monday morning. (And yes, if you write two or more stories during a week, I'll report each story.)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Branding" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/branding-2/>. And click the next link too. (grin)

See his first post on "Branding" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/branding/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 860 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051
Day 5..... 1451 words. Total words to date..... 11502
Day 6..... 1886 words. Total words to date..... 13388

Total fiction words for March..... 3337
Total fiction words for 2023..... 56161
Total nonfiction words for March... 14140
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 55470
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 111631

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: Because It Makes Sense, I preach trusting your characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living. See My Best Advice for Fiction Writers at <https://hestanbrough.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/My-Best-Advice-for-Fiction-Writers.pdf>.

One More Post on the Bradbury Challenge

March 24, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * One More Post on the Bradbury Challenge
- * My First Story
- * Come On In
- * Of Interest

One More Post on the Bradbury Challenge

This is to follow up on two earlier posts. If you haven't read those, I recommend you read them now:

First see "A New Personal Challenge" at <https://hestanbrough.com/a-new-personal-challenge/> and then "Fears About the Challenge" at <https://hestanbrough.com/fears-about-the-challenge/>.

So why one more post on the challenge? Mostly for fun. I really had to laugh. After my second post (above) I received a few comments and several emails yesterday and this morning asking how I could possibly know the exact fears the conscious, critical mind handed to several different folks.

Well, I knew because my own critical mind tried to BS me into believing those same fears. Which just goes to show you we all are subject to the same unreasoning fears. That's why I'm able to talk straight with you and help you overcome them.

My First Story

Awhile back I started a story (or novel or something) titled "Hortencia Alvarez." The character still intrigued me when I came up with this challenge, so I still wanted to write about her, but I didn't want to use anything I'd written before.

So yesterday I wrote the first part "The Writing of Hortencia Alvarez," a metaphysical short story featuring both the writer of the story and the characters. I don't think I've ever written a story like this before in which the writer is also a character. Great fun. I recommend trying it for yourself.

Although the story didn't wrap as quickly and cleanly as I would have liked, it still feels really great to have taken that first step and be on the streak path again. I can only barely wait to see what will unfold from here.

Come On In

Several writers are enrolled in the challenge now, and there's plenty of room for more. It's a great way to push yourself or give yourself a gentle nudge without it costing you anything.

And of course, anyone can jump in at any time. Every Monday, I'll report the names of the writers, the title of the story, a link to buy or read the story (if available) and the word count for the story.

Participants can report any time after they finish a story. Send me the story title, the final word count, and the buy link or viewing link if you have one.

If you happen to finish more than one story in a week, send me that information on both or all of them.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Kickstarter Campaign" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/kickstarter-campaign/>. Posting this mostly because it has info about Kickstarter campaigns.

See “Scientists develop ‘cosmic concrete’ to construct habitats on Mars” at <https://interestingengineering.com/innovation/cosmic-concrete-construct-habitats-mars>. I did something similar (but on Luna) in my novel *In the Siberian Fields*.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 480 words

Writing of “The Writing of Hortencia Alvarez” (short story)

Day 1..... 2164 words. Total words to date..... 2164

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231

Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221

Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026

Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051

Day 5..... 1451 words. Total words to date..... 11502

Day 6..... 1886 words. Total words to date..... 13388

Total fiction words for March..... 5501

Total fiction words for 2023..... 58325

Total nonfiction words for March... 14620

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 55950

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 114275

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 0

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 217

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: Because It Makes Sense, I preach trusting your characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living. See My Best Advice for Fiction Writers at <https://hestanbrough.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/My-Best-Advice-for-Fiction-Writers.pdf>.

[Another New Story](#)

March 25, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Another New Story
- * A Final Note on the Challenge
- * A Final Note on Generative AI
- * Another New Story, Part 2
- * Of Interest

Another New Story

My previously unpublished science fiction short story “Fifth Mind” went live yesterday over at Stanbrough Writes. To read it free, visit <https://harveystanbroughwrites.com/fifth-mind/>.

The story also went out to a list of subscribers in the Stanbrough Writes substack. To subscribe, visit [https://stanbroughwrites.substack\[dot\]com/p/fifth-mind](https://stanbroughwrites.substack[dot]com/p/fifth-mind) and click the Subscribe button that appears just below the story.

A Final Note on the Challenge

Apparently there have been some misunderstandings.

The Bradbury Challenge is a personal challenge I set for myself mostly to jumpstart my writing after a slump. I only invited others to join me for the same reason, to help them jumpstart their own writing and, above all, to have fun. No other reason, and certainly no pressure.

You may join me in the challenge at any time, even later in the year if you want. The only benefit to joining my challenge (other than to jumpstart your writing and have some fun) is to have me list each Monday whatever stories you’ve written during the week and where others can read them.

Certainly, Dean also has win/win paid challenges in which you can take part and receive massive rewards win or lose. You can find those on the WMG Teachable page. And of course, you can always start your own challenge yourself. You don’t have to tell me or anyone else.

A Final Note (Please) on Generative AI

For some reason I still occasionally receive a comment or email extolling the virtues of generative AI, and the tone is always just as if that use is something I endorse. It isn’t.

I suppose I shouldn’t be surprised, but I am. I am also a bit saddened, and flatly amazed that so many writers are expending so much effort toward finding a way to reach Author status (Author = have-written) without actually doing the writing (Writer).

My work has been both traditionally published and self-published. I have glad-handed bookstore owners and signed stock and talked endlessly with readers while smiling and entertaining how they “would have written it.” I have found many different ways to say exactly the same things over and over and over since the early 1990s while teaching others how to write, and I have had those same writer-students flash sly looks at me as if I’m trying to put something over on them.

I have listened patiently from behind a tight-lipped smile as would-be writers and beginning writers lecture me on the “right” way to write a short story or novella or novel. And I have gently extricated myself from more conversations than I can remember in which the other party was spewing the myths of writing just as if s/he had come up with them as original thoughts in that moment.

And I told you all of that to tell you this: *The Writing Is The Fun Part*. If I gave the writing over to AI, I would no longer be a writer. But apparently (sigh) not everyone feels that way.

Well, that’s fine. You do you. But let me be absolutely clear:

Please do not talk with me ever again about the “benefits” of generative AI. They are exactly the same benefits a college student gets from paying someone else (or some AI platform) to write his or her thesis: all of the credit and none of the effort. I will never see generative AI as anything but a way for a writer to cheat.

Another New Story, Part 2

Now back to something fun. Wow. I think maybe my creative subconscious is glad I’m back.

You know how I’ve said before if you don’t let your creative subconscious play when you write, it might shut down on you? Happily, I’ve just experienced the opposite reaction.

The first story I wrote for my challenge gave me some problems. My conscious, critical mind kept coming at me, trying to bully its way in. I kept fighting it off. I restarted the story four or five times, each time throwing out what I’d written before and starting fresh.

That’s why it took me two days to write a short story that was only around 3500 words. I probably put seven or eight thousand words into the story before I finally finished it.

But that persistence paid off and sent a message directly to my creative subconscious. Yesterday, I was playing a silly computer game (Mah Jong) to relax for a half-hour or so. Then I was going to return to writing the novel.

But as I was playing the game, a line popped into my head. So I opened a Notepad document and scribbled it down. I was going to stop there and go back to the game, but the characters kept doing things and things kept happening and then the characters were talking and I just wrote it all down.

When I came to a natural break, I copied and pasted the text into a Word document, saved it under a tentative title, then came here and wrote this.

What scribbled out across the page came so fast that I don’t even know the characters’ names yet. (That’s never happened to me before.) I used all-cap fillers (NAME and NAME2) for both of them. The names will come to me later today as I write the story, I’m sure, but in the meantime I have an opening of 630 words.

And yes, for a fleeting second, I thought I ought to let this one sit until after Sunday so it will count for next week.

But I'm not gonna do that. I think doing that would tell my creative subconscious I'm hedging my bets. That's the wrong message. I want it to know I trust it completely to come up with more and more stories. (grin) So I'll finish "Sinister" tomorrow and then see what happens.

I shared this only to recommend you do the same. If stories start coming hot and heavy, run with them. Remember THAT you write matters above all; WHAT you write doesn't matter in the slightest. Have fun.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "An Adventure In My Own Fiction" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/an-adventure-in-my-own-fiction/>.

See "How to Kill a Character Without Enraging Readers" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-to-kill-a-character-without-enraging-readers/>. Whatever. I just write the story that happens as it happens.

See "5 Reasons to Write Your 'Taboo' Stories" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/5-reasons-to-write-your-taboo-stories/>.

See "Humanly Possible" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/humanly-possible/>. I posted this link only for PG's take.

See "Golden Haiku: 2023 Winners" at <https://goldentriangledc.com/events/golden-haiku-2023-winners/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1090 words

Writing of "Sinister" (tentative title, short story)

Day 1..... 630 words. Total words to date..... 630

Writing of "The Writing of Hortencia Alvarez" or "The Siren" (short story)

Day 1..... 2164 words. Total words to date..... 2164

Day 2..... 1319 words. Total words to date..... 3483 (done)

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051
Day 5..... 1451 words. Total words to date..... 11502
Day 6..... 1886 words. Total words to date..... 13388

Total fiction words for March..... 7450
Total fiction words for 2023..... 60274
Total nonfiction words for March... 15710
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 57040
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 117314

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 1
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 218
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: Because It Makes Sense, I preach trusting your characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living. See My Best Advice for Fiction Writers at <https://hestanbrough.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/My-Best-Advice-for-Fiction-Writers.pdf>.

Contradictions in Writing Advice

March 26, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Contradictions in Writing Advice
- * Still Working into a Routine
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“I often get questions about what it takes to become a long-term, full-time fiction writer. My answer is never quit, and when you do fall down, get back up and keep going. My answer is also get everyone out of your writing and your work and keep learning.” Dean Wesley Smith

“We didn't exactly believe your story, Miss O'Shaughnessy. We believed your two hundred dollars....I mean that you paid us more than if you'd been telling the truth....and enough more to make it all right.” Dashiell Hammett

“We would love to use the paper you sent us, but it appears you have written on it.” A rejection letter I occasionally considered using (but never did) back when I was acquiring stories, essays and poems for publication

Contradictions in Writing Advice

I’m never surprised when those writing gurus who teach the old outline-revise-critique-rewrite-polish nonsense contradict themselves. However, I’m constantly amazed that they do so, apparently, without realizing it.

Stop over at the Kill Zone blog and read “What Preys on Your Fiction?” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/03/what-preys-on-your-fiction.html>. I recommend scrolling down to the three main points. I’ll wait.

Did you see the contradictions?

In every case, I agreed with the author’s opening statement, but I couldn’t disagree more with the contradictions. And yes, I left a comment, though one not quite as thorough as what I wrote here:

Self-doubt—“Every writer goes through periods of self doubt You will not be shocked to learn that the remedy is to write.”

Yes, I absolutely agree.

For various reasons (most often, I suspect, to sell nonfiction books on writing), some writing gurus actually instill and propagate self-doubt in writers. In you.

They do that by teaching you to invoke your own conscious, critical mind—to outline, revise, and rewrite—and then to invoke others’ conscious, critical minds with critique groups and beta readers. To actually invite criticism of your work. On the other hand, I teach that you should defend your work.

Then, as in the first point of the article, they say writers shouldn’t doubt themselves. In my book, that makes them wonderfully right and supportive in theory, but wildly wrong and irresponsibly harmful in practice.

They actively teach you to doubt yourself and the knowledge you’ve acquired over a lifetime of absorbing Story. They teach that you cannot write an excellent short story, novella or novel on your own. From where I stand, that is the very definition of self-doubt.

Trust yourself. You really can write a short story, novella or novel on your own. You are capable. Learn with your conscious, critical mind, then Don’t Think and apply what you know (write) with your creative subconscious.

Inner critic—“If you find yourself prey to the inner critic, you need to get used to turning it off.”

Again, absolutely. I couldn't begin to agree more.

But don't intentionally turn your inner critic back on later and invite it in to "correct" your creative subconscious. If you do that enough times, very soon your creative subconscious will realize you don't trust it and it will stop wanting to participate. Ideas will dry up and your characters will refuse to talk with you. Everybody has their own idea of Hell. That is one version of mine.

And this brings us back to self-doubt. The inner critic is a function of self-doubt. Believe in yourself. Trust yourself, and trust the characters to convey the story that they, not you, are living. Again, defend your work. Guard against that inner critic and any external critic.

Risk aversion—"We need to bring our unique voice, heart, perspective, passion to the page!"

Again, oh-dear-god *yes*, I absolutely agree.

But once you've done that, don't then dilute and erase that unique voice, heart, perspective and passion by allowing your own logical, critical mind and the logical, critical "I would have done it this way" minds of others to pick your work apart.

Again, you've been absorbing story since before you even knew there was an alphabet. Learning a craft technique (becoming aware of it) with your conscious, critical mind gives your creative subconscious permission to use it.

At that point you only need to sit down at the keyboard, shut out the critical mind, and write. When the story is finished, run a quick spell check, then send it off to a trusted first reader who won't "look for" anything consciously. The first reader's job is to point out misspellings, wrong words, and inconsistencies that pop out at him/her as s/he reads. Then publish it and move on to write the next story.

Still Working into a Routine

Apparently I'm still developing my new routine. (grin)

I didn't finish the second story yesterday (as I should have easily). I just let the minutes, hours and day get away from me. I wrote only another 600 words or so. I suspect I'll finish it today. That will give me two for this first week of the challenge.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Where Do You Score on the Big Five Personality Traits?" at <http://dyingwords.net/where-do-you-score-on-the-big-five-personality-traits/>. Very interesting. My characters are just who they are so I won't use this for them, but it's still interesting.

See “In a Swift Decision, Judge Eviscerates Internet Archive’s....” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/in-a-swift-decision-judge-eviscerates-internet-archives-scanning-and-lending-program/>. Yay.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 900 words

Writing of “Sinister Intent” (short story)

Day 1..... 630 words. Total words to date..... 630

Day 2..... 580 words. Total words to date..... 1210

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231

Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221

Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026

Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051

Day 5..... 1451 words. Total words to date..... 11502

Day 6..... 1886 words. Total words to date..... 13388

Total fiction words for March..... 8030

Total fiction words for 2023..... 60854

Total nonfiction words for March... 16610

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 57940

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 118794

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 1

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 218

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: Because It Makes Sense, I preach trusting your characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living. See <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives-gifts-dvds/>.

Bradbury Challenge Participants

March 27, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Bradbury Challenge Participants
- * TKZ Revisited
- * Finished “Sinister Intent”
- * Of Interest

Bradbury Challenge Participants

This will be a recurring weekly feature of the Journal, at least as long as those who are involved in the challenge keep letting me know how many stories they finished each week. (grin)

Yesterday I emailed all participants and asked them to send me their info. What you see below is from those who responded. A few others in the challenge set their deadline days later, so I hope to report their stories and numbers next week.

Anyone can jump in and join at any time. This really is a great way to jumpstart your writing and get more practice pushing down the critical voice. Especially during this time of year, the prelude to what DWS calls “the time of great forgetting.” If writing is important to you (so if you’re a writer) this can help.

Note to Challenge Participants: Just so you know, I probably won’t email you every week to ask for your production input. This section will go live every Monday morning, so get me your info by Sunday night each week if you want me to share it.

Writer	Story Title/Link	Words
Chynna Pace	Bootleg Ghosts	8100
Christopher Ridge	Sickies	3500
KC Riggs	The Wrong Foot	2244
Harvey Stanbrough	The Writing of Hortencia Alvarez (The Siren)	3483
Harvey Stanbrough	Sinister Intent	3482

TKZ Revisited

The author of the TKZ article I featured in [yesterday’s edition of the Journal](#) and I had a pretty good back and forth.

I recommend reading it, especially if you’re on the fence regarding whether to revise, rewrite, polish etc. You can find our exchange (the first several comments) at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/03/what-preys-on-your-fiction.html#comments>.

Finished “Sinister Intent”

I finished the story, sort of, with a little over 2200 words yesterday, so I managed two stories last week. I don't like this one as much as I thought I would, though.

I might revisit the story later. If I do, of course, I won't count it again. Either way, someday I'll publish it and let the readers be the judge. Anyway, today I'll get back to the novel for awhile unless another short story presents itself. Woohoo!

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Five Months Ago" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/five-months-ago/>. SALE!

See "It's a Mystery!" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/03/its-a-mystery.html>. Talking about genres under the Mystery umbrella.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 380 words

Writing of "Sinister Intent" (short story)

Day 1..... 630 words. Total words to date..... 630
Day 2..... 580 words. Total words to date..... 1210
Day 3..... 2272 words. Total words to date..... 3482 (done)

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051
Day 5..... 1451 words. Total words to date..... 11502
Day 6..... 1886 words. Total words to date..... 13388

Total fiction words for March..... 10302
Total fiction words for 2023..... 63126
Total nonfiction words for March... 16990
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 58320
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 121446

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 2
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 219
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: Because It Makes Sense, I preach trusting your characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living. See <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives-gifts-dvds/>.

Bradbury's "Full" Challenge

March 28, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * So Much Easier
- * Bradbury's "Full" Challenge
- * Some Publishing Nostalgia
- * Writing
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

"A writer should have this little voice inside of you saying, 'Tell the truth. Reveal a few secrets here.'" Quentin Tarantino

"Writing is my job. Selecting what to read and judging it is the reader's job. I like my job better." Me, in a comment on yet another article on AI at The Passive Voice

So Much Easier

Although I read only the first five (very short) paragraphs of the article on "Backstory" I've linked to in "Of Interest," doing so left me feeling almost exhausted. So much work. And for what?

It is SO much easier and actual fun to just write the characters as they are, as they and you move through the story that is unfolding all around you. Any necessary "backstory" will come out naturally, and any that does not is not necessary.

Bradbury's "Full" Challenge

Bill Sinclair is a writer friend and a new participant in the Bradbury Challenge to write at least one short story per week. (Coincidentally, Bill also shares his name with a former colleague of mine in the USMC, a fact that greatly piqued my curiosity when this Bill and I first met. Per his cropped-circle photo, his facial features even resemble those of Captain Bill Sinclair of old.)
(grin)

Anyway, all of that nostalgic nonsense aside, yesterday Bill emailed me to say he was joining in the Challenge, but with a twist. He's going to follow another piece of Ray Bradbury's very good advice and "read a short story, an essay, and a poem" every day.

Bradbury originally recommended that discipline as a way for a writer to fill the well from which s/he would later draw material. (By the way, I still have that list of Bradbury interview links if anyone wants them. Just email to let me know.)

Bill also recommended I expand my own challenge to include the reading too. I won't do that, but it's a great idea if you aren't already widely read. Which is to say, if you haven't already absorbed more Story than most folks have, and continue to do so. Why? Because writers *should* have absorbed more Story than most folks have.

When I say "absorbed more Story" I mean read and watched enough to learn by osmosis the constituent parts of Story: so Structure, Hooks, Openings, Grounding the Reader, Cliffhangers, Metaphor and its appropriate uses, Simile and its appropriate uses, the Rhythms of the language and so on.

Reading novels is strangely absent from Bradbury's list of recommended activities, probably because one generally can't read an entire novel plus a short story, essay and poem in a sitting.

However, if you're interested in writing novels, I recommend that you read a chapter or XX number of pages of a novel every day in addition to the short story, essay, and poem.

But again, I won't require this of myself for my own challenge because I've been doing that my whole life (and I'm old). And I won't require it for participants in the challenge because that would presume they don't already do it (or their own version of it).

Some Publishing Nostalgia

A few days ago, another commenter over at The Passive Voice and I shared a back and forth nostalgic look at software over the years as computers and the programs they ran steadily progressed.

First, I realized PG and I had similar paths with regard to the transition from IBM Selectrics to dedicated word processors (my first DWP was a Smith-Corona that displayed six lines of text at a time) to personal computers.

Before all that, my favorite manual typewriter was a Remington portable that folded into its carrying case, then a large, electric Olympia that was somehow clunkier than my little Remington, and then those wonderful iterations of the Selectric.

I can still hear the series of Zs the Royal emitted as I rolled a sheet of paper behind the platen, the confident clacking of the keys and their soft puff of sound on the paper, the smooth vibration and the quiet ding as I worked the lever to slide the carriage back when I reached the end of a line.

Anyway, our discussion eventually brought me to remember Aldus PageMaker, which I understand is the precursor to Adobe In-Design. I first learned PageMaker in a desktop publishing course in college. It was the only software on which I took a formal course.

Back in the '90s I founded, edited and published 3 quarterly little literary magazines (*The Roswell Literary Review*, *The Raintown Review: Essay Edition* and *The Raintown Review: Poetry Edition*, at least one of which I believe is still publishing under other owners). Anyway, I was editing, printing, stapling, cutting (a local print shop had a machine), stamping and mailing around 500 copies of one or the other every month. All with Aldus PageMaker. Great times.

Writing

I did pretty much nothing yesterday, being a bit under the weather. Today and for the rest of the week I'll work on the novel, at least unless and until a story starter pops into my head. (For me it's usually a character uttering a line of dialogue or something drastic happening.)

If that happens I'll write my story of the week, then return to the novel. If it doesn't happen before Sunday morning, I'll drop a character with a problem into a setting and go with that. (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Chabelo: The Mexico TV legend who became a meme" at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-55734398>. I used to watch this guy. He will be missed.

See "Subtext..." at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/03/subtext-guest-post-by-karen-albright-lin.html>. Sounds a lot to me like "deep POV" which is actually regular POV with every word coming through the POV character, the POV character's physical and emotional senses and the POV character's opinion of the setting.

See "How to Make Backstory Work for You" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-to-make-backstory-work-for-you/>. SO much easier to just write the characters as they are as they and you move through the story that is unfolding all around you.

See "Do Donkeys Know About Spiders? ..." at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/do-donkeys-know-about-spiders-some-thoughts-about-the-impact-of-ai-on-book-publishing/>. Yet another article on AI.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1040 words

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051
Day 5..... 1451 words. Total words to date..... 11502
Day 6..... 1886 words. Total words to date..... 13388

Total fiction words for March..... 10302
Total fiction words for 2023..... 63126
Total nonfiction words for March... 18030
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 59360
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 122486

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 2
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 219
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: Because It Makes Sense, I preach trusting your characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living. See <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives-gifts-dvds/> for free stuff on writing.

Bowing to (and Actually Defending!) Unreasonable Fear

March 29, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Bowing to (and Actually Defending!) Unreasonable Fear
- * Writing
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“”If you do not tell the truth about yourself, you cannot tell it about other people.”Virginia Woolf”

“Our business is infested with idiots who try to impress by using pretentious jargon.” David Ogilvy

“Learning and innovation go hand in hand. The arrogance of success is to think that what you did yesterday will be sufficient for tomorrow.” William Pollard

“Swim upstream.” Sam Walton

“A satellite has no conscience.” Edward R. Murrow

Bowing to (and Actually Defending!) Unreasonable Fear

Some of the more timid folks bow to unreasonable fears, meaning fears that have zero consequences. These are the What If crowd. They spend their entire life Not Doing because what if they Do and something bad happens? What if I write a novel and everybody doesn't like it? My career will be over! (Um, what career?)

I'm not putting them down. Unfortunately, that unreasonable fear is not only natural but necessary has been hammered into them for so long and so deeply that they are beyond any outside help. They're mired. Like the baby turtle that doesn't make it back to the sea before a bird of prey swoops in, that's just what life is supposed to be for them I guess.

I don't mind those folks, of course, and why should I? How or even whether they choose to write fiction doesn't affect my bottom line. And besides, most of them will be gone from writing fiction in short order.

In fact, tens if not hundreds of thousands of them never even hear about writing into the dark or the benefits of trusting themselves because that isn't the popular path to publication and I'm just one tiny voice among millions.

They will come to writing, decide that following what they're “supposed to do” (the myths) is just too difficult (and possibly feels too counterintuitive, because it is). And they will leave writing without they and I ever having met, even virtually. Because most writers who attempt to follow all the rules laid down by the myths eventually do give up and find something fun to do.

Yet even as they're walking away, they stringently defend the myths that froze their writing down solid and eventually drove them from the craft. That is incredibly, head-shakingly insane to me.

I left a very brief comment on a post by yet another writer who preaches the myths: I wrote, “SO much easier to just write the characters as they are as they and you move through the story that is unfolding all around you. Any necessary ‘backstory’ will come out naturally, and any that does not is not necessary.”

Three writers (well, I assume they were writers but maybe not) sprang immediately to the defense of the author of the article.

So, basically because I'm a moron who doesn't mind wasting my time, I left two more comments. Long comments. They seemed a pretty good post for the Journal so I thought I'd share them here.

Misspellings, typos, and inconsistencies aside—and my first reader catches those with his own creative subconscious as he reads (to enjoy the story, as a reader, not “looking for” problems) and things pop out at him—I'll stick with my original statement.

But yes, of course, to each his or her own. Personally, I've been there, bought the t-shirt, never going back. I once spent 3 years doing nothing but outlining a novel. It still has never been written. I would no more spend the time writing something when I already know the ending than I would paying for tickets to watch a movie after someone told me the ending.

Since I learned to trust myself and my characters, I've written 72 novels, 9 novellas, and around 230 short stories, all in a period of 7 years. And I had a ball doing it. Not a minute of it was the horrible labor I hear beginning writers talk about. (That's what they were taught, that writing should be hard work. And who taught them and keep the myths of writing alive? Those who sell books saying that writing should be hard work.)

And I'm not alone. Lee Child's New York editor, over lunch one day, mentioned a certain event in the book might have been better had it happened at a different specific place. Child dabbed at his mouth with his napkin and nodded. “I agree. But that isn't how it happened.” The passage remained where it was.

Many, many long-term professional writers trust themselves and their characters. Instead of forcing events and character actions and reactions from some authorial ivory tower, they slip into a t-shirt, jeans and sneakers, roll off the parapet into the trenches, and run through the story with the characters. There, they record what happens and what the characters say and do as the story unfolds all around them.

It's great fun, and in the end you get the authentic story instead of something that was plotted and planned to within a screaming inch. As Bradbury said, (I'm paraphrasing), “Plot is only the footprints left in the story as the characters race through to exotic destinations.” And Stephen King calls himself his characters' stenographer. And of course, I learned to let go and trust myself from Dean Wesley Smith.

It's wonderful to understand that a fiction is only a few minutes' (short story) or hours' (novel) entertainment, nothing more. I also understand that what one reader will like another will loathe, so what readers think of my work, good or bad, is none of my business. I've written stories that I personally didn't like but over which readers happily effused. Go figure. That taught me an important lesson (as I wrote in another comment in this venue [The Passive Voice] a day or two ago): Writing is my job. Selecting what to read and judging (liking or disliking) it is the reader's job. I like my job better.

I've found a way to produce better, more unique and more original stories and have a ton of fun doing so. Why would I ever turn around of my own free will and trudge back into the mines?

Anyone who's curious can learn more free of charge by downloading free PDF articles on my instructive Journal website at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives-gifts-dvds/>.

PS: I do understand that a lot of writers, because we're inundated with the nonsense every single day that you can't write a novel on your own, are too frightened to ever break away from the myths (you must character-sketch, world-build, outline, revise, seek critical input, rewrite and "polish").

But if you will allow me a brief digression, think about this: If following those myths really does work, then why isn't everyone who follows them successful? Why in fact do so few who follow them actually finish and publish work? Why do so many simply give up and go find something else (probably something fun) to do?

If a writer tries this zen-like way of writing and it doesn't work, s/he will have lost nothing but a few days and s/he can always go back to outlining, etc. But if it does work (and if you give it an honest try, it will), a whole new world will open to you. Yet the unreasonable fears are so strong that few will even try. They break out in a sweat when they even consider it.

Every writer I know who lets go of the myths and Just Writes the story as it unfolds around him or her and the characters as they run through it is still writing and having a ton of fun doing so. Just sayin'.

Anyway, makes no difference to me how others write. Doesn't increase or decrease my bottom line. Just trying to spread the word that it's all right to trust yourself and your characters. And unlike those who propagate the myths, I'm getting nothing out of it but a good feeling).

Writing

I'm going to stop saying in this space that I'm going to do such and such today. Never works out. Yesterday we had a trip to Sierra Vista planned that I had forgotten about. Between that trip and watching the girl cats playing outside (it was a snuggly warm day) I let the day slip away.

I feel a bit like I'm jinxing things when I predict in this space what I will accomplish during the day, so no more of that. I hope to work on the novel today, but whatever happens will happen.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Getting Back In The Chair" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/getting-back-in-the-chair/>. This is great news.

See "What Is Upmarket Fiction?" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/what-is-upmarket-fiction/>. See PG's take. (grin)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1460

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051
Day 5..... 1451 words. Total words to date..... 11502
Day 6..... 1886 words. Total words to date..... 13388

Total fiction words for March..... 10302
Total fiction words for 2023..... 63126
Total nonfiction words for March... 19490
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 60820
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 123946

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 2
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 219
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: Because It Makes Sense, I preach trusting your characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living. See <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives-gifts-dvds/> for free stuff on writing.

MLB Opening Day 2023

March 30, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * MLB Opening Day 2023
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“These would-be censors are monsters. And they will always be with us because the two most common things in the universe are hydrogen and stupidity.” a misquote attributed to Harlan Ellison

“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.” Harlan Ellison

“There is more stupidity than hydrogen in the universe, and it has a longer shelf life.” Frank Zappa

“Chance favors the prepared mind.” Louis Pasteur

In a rare occurrence, nothing about writing today.

MLB Opening Day 2023

Welp, the 2023 Major League Baseball season will go on without me. The vampires have managed to suck all the fun out of it. It was already, as sportscaster Howard Cosell once bemoaned, “Two minutes of excitement crammed into four hours.” Now it’s far more boring.

Baseball (at every level) used to be fun for me. Like a truly good cigar, it was a relaxing, enjoyable way to spend time doing nothing. Unlike a cigar, it lasted 3 to 4 hours or longer. Which was fine. It was only once a week or so, after all.

In addition to the other goofy changes the organization has levied on teams in recent years, now (according to an article in 1440 Daily Digest) “certain defensive shifts—where infielders take positions based on a batter’s hitting tendencies—have been banned...” (see <https://www.mlb.com/rule-changes-2023>).

Oh. Well good. We wouldn’t want to allow defenders to use their knowledge of a particular hitter’s tendencies and set up an adequate defense, would we? Maybe all infielders should be required to wear boots that weigh at least 10 pounds each. That would rid the game of even more of those pesky “good plays.”

What’s next? Participation trophies and an end to the championship series so nobody is left feeling bad? Why not just go back to T Ball so pitchers can’t use their wiles to slip pitches past hitters. That isn’t fair, is it?

All professional team sport should have only one hard rule—a firm salary cap that’s far below the current obscene levels, say 1 million for 4 years—and only one general guideline: You put up your best offense and I’ll put up my best defense and let’s just play the game.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “How To Get Away With Murder” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/03/how-to-get-away-with-murder-3.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 440

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051
Day 5..... 1451 words. Total words to date..... 11502
Day 6..... 1886 words. Total words to date..... 13388
Day 7..... 2002 words. Total words to date..... 15390

Total fiction words for March..... 12304
Total fiction words for 2023..... 65128
Total nonfiction words for March... 19930
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 61260
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 126388

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 2
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 219
Short story collections..... 31

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Why I Talk About This Stuff

March 31, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Yet More Comments
- * Why I Talk About This Stuff
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“Self-esteem is the prison of the pampered. Self-confidence is the realm of the practiced.”
Harvey Stanbrough

Yet More Comments

There are yet more comments in an exchange between me and another commenter (Felix Torres) on “How to Make Backstory Work for You” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-to-make-backstory-work-for-you/>. A lot of food for thought. I recommend reading it.

Understand, I don’t bring this up for purposes of argument, but only as a springboard to pass along something that I think might be useful.

Frankly, I’ve never understood why so many people see writing into the dark and Heinlein’s Rules as such a threat. I’m only offering a different way. Writers can try it (as I did), or not. Doesn’t matter to me. It isn’t like I get a kickback from some secret society for every new member I enlist. (grin)

Although people who sell books touting the myths suppress what I teach so hard and so fast that those who WITD might as well comprise a secret society. Hey, there’s you a story idea. Those who WITD and follow Heinlein’s Rules are rounded up and locked away in camps to await programming. (grin)

Anyway, WITD is no threat. If writers do try it and it doesn’t work, they can fall straight back on the safety net of outline-revise-critical input-rewrite-polish that they’ve always used before. They will have lost absolutely nothing.

But if they try it and it DOES work (and it will if they don’t succumb to fear), it opens up an exciting, whole new world for them. Please, somebody explain to me how that is anything but a win-win situation?

Anyway, in response to my previous two long replies, this time Felix wrote (in part), “Not that I object to anything you said—whatever works for you—but out of curiosity, what is your main genre? Things change depending on the type of story. ... My main area of interest is SF. And in SF&F backstory matters.”

So many words put in my mouth, so much innuendo, so many references to things I never said. But that’s how deeply mired many are in the myths. That’s how willing they are to read-into or alter my replies to suit their own agenda.

Anyway, if you read the thread, you’ll see that I never once said or implied that backstory doesn’t matter. I only wrote that “if you record the story as it unfolds around you, any necessary backstory will come out naturally, and any that doesn’t isn’t necessary.”

I thought about printing my full response here, but you have the link above. I advise you to go read all the comments, then make up your own mind. In the meantime...

Why I Talk About This Stuff

The popular phrase “whatever works for you (or me)” is tossed about a lot these days. But the phrase actually means “whatever you want to do is fine, whether or not it actually works.”

For many, I suspect it means, “whatever makes me feel like a fiction writer.” And that’s fine, if your goal isn’t to put new words on the page.

So despite the fact that I’m rapidly growing tired of my own voice here, let me ‘splain:

When I (personally, myself) say “whatever works” for whomever, “works” means “results in success,” and “success” means “writing and publishing fiction regularly and without interruption.”

Now, if you are outlining, revising, seeking critical input, then rewriting and polishing as a result of that input, you are no doubt doing what you want to do.

Maybe you honestly believe that system is the best path to (your definition of) success. Or maybe you don’t believe that, but you’re driven by unreasoning fear, and maybe the mistaken notion that it’s easier to keep doing what you’re doing than to actually write fiction prolifically.

Either way, chances are you are not working to your full creative potential as a writer. If that’s true, and if it’s all right with you, rest assured, it’s perfectly fine with me.

Okay, so if that’s true, then why do I keep talking about this stuff? Why do I teach an expanded version of WITD and adherence to Heinlein’s Rules?

To pay it forward. As I wrote in my (final) comment over there on the article at *The Passive Voice* today, back in early 2014—

“I stumbled upon a blog post about something called ‘writing into the dark’ and following Heinlein’s Rules. It was all about the value of believing in yourself....” Like pretty much everybody who hears about WITD, “I didn’t buy in at first. But [unlike most writers who hear about it] I didn’t dismiss it out of hand either.

“Fortunately for me, I was able to set my ego aside, see that what I was doing wasn’t working for me. That’s with ‘working’ defined as ‘resulting in success’ and ‘success’ defined as ‘being a prolific professional fiction writer.’

“I chose to try [WITD and following Heinlein’s Rules], if only to disprove it for myself. ... to my never-ending surprise, [it] actually worked. ...

“Finally, it dawned on me that yup, a guy who had written and published much, *much* more than I [Dean Wesley Smith] probably knew more than I did about writing and publishing fiction. Who knew?”

There you go. That's the whole thing, folks: It's perfectly all right to believe in yourself and in your own abilities. You really CAN write a novel or a whole series of novels with ZERO critical input from your own critical mind or from anyone else.

Remember, it's only a story. You're only telling a story, not curing cancer or eradicating hunger. Have fun with it.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "A Special Class [on Licensing] For the Sale" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/a-special-class-for-the-sale/>.

See "Google accused of ripping off OpenAI's ChatGPT" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/google-accused-of-ripping-off-openais-chatgpt/>. PG wrote "Copyright irony abounds." (grin)

See "GPT-5 expected this year, could make ChatGPT indistinguishable from a human" at <https://interestingengineering.com/innovation/gpt-5-chatgpt-indistinguishable-human>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1000

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051
Day 5..... 1451 words. Total words to date..... 11502
Day 6..... 1886 words. Total words to date..... 13388
Day 7..... 2002 words. Total words to date..... 15390
Day 8..... 1060 words. Total words to date..... 16450

Total fiction words for March..... 13364
Total fiction words for 2023..... 66188
Total nonfiction words for March... 20930
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 62260
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 128448

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 2
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 219
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: Because It Makes Sense, I preach trusting your characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living. See <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives-gifts-dvds/> for free stuff on writing.

A Final Word

April 1, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * A Final Word
- * Of Interest

Quote of the Day

“All human-generated fiction begins in one of only two places: Block-by-careful-block, step-by-polished-step Construction comes from and through the conscious, critical mind. Unique, original Creation comes straight from the creative subconscious.” from “A Final Word” by Harvey Stanbrough

A Final Word

Earlier today I wrote in a last-ditch comment on another website,

“All human-generated fiction begins in one of only two places: Block-by-careful-block, step-by-polished-step Construction comes from and through the conscious, critical mind. Unique, original Creation comes straight from the creative subconscious.”

Didn't make a dent. I'm the Saul turned Paul of fiction writing and they are Corinthians who have no ears to hear. (Or something. Shrug. I dunno.)

Much as I enjoy talking about fiction writing with others, it's both silly of me and a ridiculous waste of my time and energy to testify anyplace other than right here in the Journal to the zen-like freedom, incredible power, and unique originality a writer can achieve by writing into the dark.

The effort is especially futile at sites like The Passive Voice or Kill Zone blog. Oh, my comments maybe pique the interest of some of those who only lurk but never join in the discussion, but since they very seldom or never speak up, that's difficult for me to know.

I'm sure many don't speak up in support of me because they don't want to end up at the bottom of the sam dogpile (with my apologies to dogs everywhere).

Feel free to correct me if I'm wrong, but I don't believe I've ever gotten a follower for the Journal by commenting at either Kill Zone blog or The Passive Voice. I'm pretty sure the only followers who came to me from another blog are the rare few who came from one comment or another that I left on Dean Wesley Smith's blog.

So I'm wising up, finally. From now on I'll leave the battle to others.

Which of course means there won't be any battles. They'll all join hands, agree with each other that writing by committee and constructing stories with their and others' conscious, critical minds is far slower and therefore far superior to trusting in their own abilities and creating with the creative subconscious.

And off they'll go in joyful lockstep, marching away to write one or (at the most) two novels per year, all the while outlining, revising, seeking critical input, rewriting, "polishing" (I still don't know what that is) and proclaiming themselves and each other to be prolific.

And that will be that. Shrug. Their loss, not mine. And seriously, what do I care?

Come to think of it, more power to them. Less output and the resulting smaller body of work from self-defeating folks who are up to their ears in fear only means less competition and more readers for people like me, who are turning out multiple novels and dozens of short stories per year and getting 700,000 or 800,000 or a million words of practice per year instead of 120,000.

I'm exhausted from talking with people whose arguments don't have even a passing acquaintance with logic and are powered by unreasoning fear. Every. Single. Time. And the kicker is, they know it. They'll never admit it because it's embarrassing, but they know it. Some of them break out in beads of sweat when they even think about WITD, much less talk about it.

Sigh. Fiction writing is one of the very few, if not the only, art or craft forms in which novices and even would-be writers believe they actually know as much or more than those with far more experience.

In fact, it's one of the few, if not the only, art or craft forms wherein newbies, even as you open the box and toss aside their wrapping paper, spring up bright eyed and Ready to Instruct Others, often without ever having written a word of fiction themselves.

Maybe they should be required to wear one of those little conical green or red satin hats with a little furry ball at the top. (grin) Nah. Only joking.

But seriously, even as a 10-year old kid, on the rare occasion when my paternal grandpa wanted to tell me about his adventures as a US Army quartermaster in France during World War I, I was smart enough to shut up and listen. He knew things I didn't know. I wouldn't have dreamed of correcting him with my vast knowledge of World War I.

Joe Konrath knows what I mean.

JA Konrath, a very prolific professional fiction writer, used to post fairly often at his blog, A Newbie's Guide to Publishing. With his final post on Friday, July 19, 2019, he left writers with "Six Things Writers Need to Stop Worrying About." You can read that wonderful post at <http://jakonrath.blogspot.com/2019/07/five-things-writers-need-to-stop.html>. I recommend it, even if you've seen it before. It is very good stuff.

I never saw myself writing a final, goodbye post like that for the Journal and just walking away, but I guess maybe that time has come. As I wrote earlier, I'm exhausted.

Plus I'm not getting any younger. I really need to turn all my remaining energy to my own fiction. Writing fiction both energizes and exhilarates me.

On the other hand, writing blog posts begging people to just TRY writing into the dark so they can gauge for themselves what it can do for them is tiring. Especially when they make it obvious they believe I'm trying to con them. As if I will somehow benefit from them putting out far more stories of much higher quality.

And as I said at the outset of this post, commenting on others' sites about WITD is nothing short of exhausting. A real energy drain. Writing the Journal practically every day is almost as rough. Besides, it's all here for you even when I'm not.

You can always visit Archives, Gifts, and DVDs at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives-gifts-dvds/> to download the completely free and searchable Journal archives in PDF, as well as "What Heinlein's Rules Mean to Me," "My Best Advice for Fiction Writers," and other freebies.

Frankly, I don't know why everyone hasn't already done that. Shrug. You can lead a horse to water....

So anyway, that's it, folks. I guess I'm done.

Well, or I might be if it were any day other than today. Happy April 1. (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Challenge Starts!" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/challenge-starts/>. Here's another challenge you can shadow if you want. (I will be.) Just keep track of your numbers.

See "Mathematicians Excited About New 13-Sided Shape Called 'the Hat'" at <https://gizmodo.com/new-13-sided-shape-the-hat-tiles-aperiodic-monotile-1850268575>. Just kind'a neat.

See “Marketing” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/04/marketing.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1110

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051
Day 5..... 1451 words. Total words to date..... 11502
Day 6..... 1886 words. Total words to date..... 13388
Day 7..... 2002 words. Total words to date..... 15390
Day 8..... 1060 words. Total words to date..... 16450

Total fiction words for March..... 13364
Total fiction words for 2023..... 66188
Total nonfiction words for April... 1010
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 63270
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 129458

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 2
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 219
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: Because It Makes Sense, I preach trusting your characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living. See <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives-gifts-dvds/> for free stuff on writing.

How Can You—Oh. Never Mind. You Can’t.

April 2, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * How Can You—Oh. Never Mind. You Can’t.
- * The Writing
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“Everything is theoretically impossible until it is done.” Robert A. Heinlein

“Today I want to focus on the micro level—the scene—and make a pitch for the mini-outline.”
James Scott Bell

Does this guy ever allow the characters to breathe and just be who they are?

Anyway, I assure one and all, I wrote the topic for this post before I checked Kill Zone blog this morning, which is where Mr. Bell holds court. Enjoy.

How Can You (Plot A Novel)? Oh. Never Mind. You Can't.

I thought about writing a series of posts under the umbrella title How Can You. Then I realized no matter what subtopic I addressed in the series, the answer is always the same. And really, there isn't even room for discussion. More on that in a moment.

The point is, only one post is necessary. This, which was going to be my debut post in the series, is it. Because Oh. Never mind. You can't.

Currently, at least, actual time travel is impossible. (Bear with me here.) Even if it ever does become possible, to avoid direct conflict with various time-travel paradoxes, it will have to be more of a lateral move than a move backward into the direct past or forward into the at-this-moment-intended future.

The time traveler could still visit the past or future, but only in a different timeline: they would visit amidst what might have happened if something else had happened to cause it. S/he won't be able to travel within the same timeline, so s/he won't be able to say or do anything that might affect his or her own past or future. Say for example, a novel s/he would like to write.

So how can you plot a novel? You can't.

How can you look back on and record or write or convey in any manner to others something that hasn't happened yet?

Again, the answer is You Can't. But go ahead and work it out for yourself if you want. I'll wait.

Or if you want, here is a given and some practice questions:

When you first chance upon your characters or their situation or whatever other story starter you might use, the story hasn't happened yet, right? So...

- How can you plot that?
- How can you foretell a timeline of events or occurrences?
- How can you know a character's response to an event or to another character before the event happens or before the other character does or says anything?

- How can you witness the character's response before s/he responds?
- How can you see what s/he hasn't yet done or hear what s/he hasn't yet said?

Your characters (and you) can only experience events as those events unfold. You can look forward to things or look forward to putting them behind you. You can even look forward to the time when the sharper edges of a bad memory will finally go dull.

You can hope certain things will happen and that certain things will not. You can fervently hope someone will say yes or at least maybe and you can just as fervently hope someone will say no. You can even make plans that you hope will unfold as a result of any eventuality.

Certainly you can hope the story you're writing as you run through it with your characters will progress in a certain direction and come to a satisfying conclusion. You can hope some characters will be preserved and others killed or otherwise lost. You might even believe particular facets of the story will occur at certain times in certain places and happen to (and-or be caused by) certain characters.

So we've come full circle and here we are. We can hope for whatever we want, but if we're dedicated to creating, in truth we can only hope and roll the dice. Because what happens in the future, in our own lives and in our characters' lives, is something we can't foretell. And it's certainly something we can't control.

You can't look back on something that hasn't happened yet.

A Way Out—If you're really that frightened of what might happen and you absolutely *have* to know in advance, there is a way.

You can give up any pretense of "creation," turn away from your creative subconscious and turn TO your logical, conscious, critical mind. And with that staid and solid tool, you may build, block by tightly controlled block, a faux story, one that never happened and never will but is only a product of your conscious, critical mind.

Writing it won't be fun. That's the tradeoff. Well, and it won't be original or unique in any way. It will sound (and smell) like everything else in the slush pile. And readers won't be excited because they will be able to see what's coming in advance. Why? Because they have a conscious, critical mind too. What you can "figure out in advance," so can they.

But at least you can plot that sort of thing. You can world-build and mind-map and character-sketch and outline to your heart's content. In fact, I recommend it. I'm a big fan of consistency. Why switch horses and start believing in yourself and your characters midstream?

Good luck with that.

Oh, and welcome to Broxton and other recent subscribers. See what you've wandered into? (grin)

The Writing

I've had an enjoyable surprise visit with my youngest son this weekend. Great fun digging the holes and setting in concrete two new pressure-treated posts for a new front gate for the yard. Well, mostly I watched him do it.

Exhausted me just watching him work the trenching spade, post-hole digger, and shovel. I did add water to the quick-set cement and help backfill and tamp the holes.

Visits like that take precedence over everything else for me, even writing. I still worked on the novel very briefly, but mostly I wrote the Journal posts. Today, sometime, I'll write a short story for the Bradbury Challenge.

I hadn't forgotten about it, but I did manage to put it off until the last day. Still, as I write this I have 19 hours until midnight. That's potentially 19000 words and I only need a few thousand, so I'm not worried. (grin)

No idea what the story will be about, what genre, etc but I'll report it in tomorrow's edition of the Journal along with input from the others who jumped into the Challenge with me.

Of course, you can still jump in. The water's warm and crystal clear. And no sharks.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Some Suggestions (about the half-price sale)" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/some-suggestions/>.

See "ALA: Book Bannings in the USA Broke All Records in 2022" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/ala-book-bannings-in-the-usa-broke-all-records-in-2022/>. See PG's very short take.

See "Belgian woman blames ChatGPT-like chatbot ELIZA for her husband's suicide" at <https://interestingengineering.com/culture/belgian-woman-blames-chatgpt-like-chatbot-eliza-for-her-husbands-suicide>. Well, here we go. Hands inside the ride, please, and hold onto your hats.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1170

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051
Day 5..... 1451 words. Total words to date..... 11502
Day 6..... 1886 words. Total words to date..... 13388

Day 7..... 2002 words. Total words to date..... 15390
Day 8..... 1060 words. Total words to date..... 16450

Total fiction words for April..... XXXX
Total fiction words for 2023..... 66188
Total nonfiction words for April... 2180
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 64440
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 130628

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 2
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 219
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: Because It Makes Sense, I preach trusting your characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living. See <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives-gifts-dvds/> for free stuff on writing.

Challenge Writers Reporting

April 3, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Challenge Writers Reporting
- * The Writing
- * Recommendation
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“The really frightening thing about middle age is the knowledge that you’ll grow out of it.” Doris Day

“When writing a novel a writer should create living people; people not characters.” Ernest Hemingway

Challenge Writers Reporting

For this week, the following writers wrote the indicate short stories. You can still join in the challenge at any time. There’s no cost. It’s a great way to jumpstart your writing.

Chynna Pace, “Mirrors,” Middle Grade suspense, 7600 words

Balázs Jámbor, “A warning letter,” weird fiction, 3200 words

Frank Theodat, [“Head Count,”](#) 1250 words

Christopher Ridge, “Not in My House You’re Not,” humor, 3000 words

Bill Sinclair, [“A Busy Morning,”](#) 1095 words (writing as Haarlson Phillipps)

K.C. Riggs, “Adios, Violeta,” 5000 words

Alexander Teut, “Maxime Lestat vs Forces of Evil,” 2121 words (writing as Alexander Nakul)

Alexander Teut, “Maxime Lestat, advisor of Stalin,” 2285 words (writing as Alexander Nakul)

Harvey Stanbrough, Baby Fat, 1457 words

The Writing

Gaa! I decided earlier in the week not to write my short story for the challenge until Sunday, remember? That was a little extra oomph I added to my personal challenge.

Yeah. I won’t be doing that again.

Before he left to head back to Flagstaff yesterday, my son and I decided we wanted to go ahead and finish installing the gate. Only it turned out to be a lot more than that.

Eventually it entailed cutting out two saltbushes, rerouting about forty feet of fence, and sinking two new t-posts. What we expected to be about a one-hour job tops took five or six hours in the Arizona sun.

Probably needless to say (but I’ll say it anyway) I was exhausted. I even opted to wait until today to put away the tools we used. I don’t remember ever doing that before. (One of my personal guiding mantras: “The job isn’t finished until the tools are cleaned and put away.”)

Then lunch and TV for a couple of hours, and I didn’t start my story for the challenge until around 3 p.m. on Sunday. I seriously considered recording a zero for this week and restarting my own challenge next Sunday.

But something inside me kept whispering, “Um, that’s why they call it a challenge.”

So I wrote the story, which thankfully turned out to be a short-short at well under 2000 words. I didn’t care. I was just glad I met the challenge and, by the tiniest possible mental margin, kept the streak alive.

The whole thing reminded me of another personal mantra to which I've always subscribed: "Do it now. You never know whether you'll have time later."

Talk with you again soon.

Recommendation

I very much recommend Dean Wesley Smith's online workshops, lectures, etc. There's a half-price sale going on right now, and it was extended until Wednesday.

I literally owe my career to what I learned from Dean and then practiced and expanded upon.

If there's a craft item you need to learn about, I urge you to invest in yourself and check out the half-price sale. See the first item in "Of Interest."

Of Interest

See "Sale Extended Until Wednesday Night" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/sale-extended-until-wednesday-night/>.

See "Writing Etiquette Redux" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/04/writing-etiquette-redux.html>. Yup, I left a comment. Sigh.

See "Florida man serving 400-year prison sentence walks free after being exonerated of robbery charge" at <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/sidney-holmes-exonerated-400-year-sentence-florida/>. Story ideas?

The Numbers

The Journal..... 540

Writing of "Baby Fat" (short-short story)

Day 1..... 1457 words. Total words to date..... 1457 (done)

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231

Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221

Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026

Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051

Day 5..... 1451 words. Total words to date..... 11502

Day 6..... 1886 words. Total words to date..... 13388

Day 7..... 2002 words. Total words to date..... 15390

Day 8..... 1060 words. Total words to date..... 16450

Total fiction words for April.....	1457
Total fiction words for 2023.....	67645
Total nonfiction words for April...	2720
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	64980
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	132625
Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date...	3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	220
Short story collections.....	31

Disclaimer: Because It Makes Sense, I preach trusting your characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living. See <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives-gifts-dvds/> for free stuff on writing.

Correction, and Dean Wesley Smith

April 4, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Correction
- * Dean Wesley Smith
- * The Writing
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“There is no exception to the rule that every rule has an exception.” James Thurber

“I distrust plot for two reasons: first, because our lives are largely plotless, even when you add in all our reasonable precautions and careful planning; and second, because I believe plotting and the spontaneity of real creation aren't compatible.” Stephen King

“Creative life is absurdly short. I want to cram in as much as I can.” Stephen King

Correction

Or rather an addition. One more Bradbury Challenge writer turned in his entry in plenty of time, but because I was working from two different forms, I failed to include his info in yesterday's post.

I corrected that oversight yesterday in the actual Journal (<https://hestanbrough.com>), but once a post is sent via Substack you can't correct it and send again. Here's the omitted entry:

Tony DeCastro, "Goode's Field Road," 6000 words

We have nine writers openly participating in the challenge now. I hope others are participating in the shadows without bothering to report their numbers.

Dean Wesley Smith

posted his first numbers in the Dean Challenge on his website in the sidebar of today's post (see "Of Interest"). You can read about and buy into his challenge or his half-challenge at <https://deanwesleymith.com/challenge-starts/>.

I told him in a comment a few days ago I would be shadowing him, so just for grins, for the same two days I posted 2180 (Journal) + 1457 (short-short story) = 3637. So I edged him for his first posting of 3050 words.

But I'm more interested in fiction numbers. He's posting "consumable words," meaning fiction and nonfiction (blog). I keep track of that on my productivity spreadsheet and here in the Journal, but for me that's more of a month by month comparison.

The Writing

Having rested Sunday afternoon, I took off all of Monday and rested then too. Today I'll get back to the writing. I hope to report some really good fiction numbers tomorrow and every day thereafter.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Lifetime Subscription to Everything!" at <https://deanwesleymith.com/lifetime-subscription-to-everything/>. Yes, you read that right. And the half-price sale is still running.

See "Mystery Cover Trends..." at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/04/mystery-cover-trendsthe-bold-and-the-beautiful.html>.

See "Yes, I Know How Hard It Is" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/yes-i-know-how-hard-it-is/>. See PG's apt take.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 390

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051
Day 5..... 1451 words. Total words to date..... 11502
Day 6..... 1886 words. Total words to date..... 13388
Day 7..... 2002 words. Total words to date..... 15390
Day 8..... 1060 words. Total words to date..... 16450

Total fiction words for April..... 1457
Total fiction words for 2023..... 67645
Total nonfiction words for April... 3110
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 65370
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 133015

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 220
Short story collections..... 31

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Yesterday, and On Critique Groups

April 5, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Yesterday
- * On Critique Groups
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“The most fact-oriented people are those willing to check self-proclaimed ‘fact-checkers’, the most scientifically-minded people are those willing to question every so-called ‘scientific consensus’, and the most virtue-driven people are those willing to expose ‘virtue signallers’.
Jakub Bożydar Wiśniewsk

“PG ... has seen enough virtue-signaling over the years of his adulthood to recognize the difference between saying the right things and doing the right things.” The Passive Guy on an article on his site

Yesterday

Yesterday, I felt sluggish all morning. Couldn't get going. Didn't feel like doing much of anything, including writing. I was also irritable, etc. Finally I sat down in the living room with a novel. I read about ten pages and promptly fell asleep.

That was about noon. I woke to some little repetitive noise at around 7 p.m. I got up, looked at my wife, and said, “I'm going to bed.” That was pretty much the last thing I knew until this morning at 3:45.

Yep, I slept for 16 hours, interrupted only by a 2-minute shuffle to bed after the first 7 hours. I don't remember the last time I crashed and burned like that, and I don't know that I've ever slept that long at one stretch before. I guess I was tired. (grin)

Working in the Hovel this morning for the first time in a couple of months to see how that will work.

On Critique Groups

Oh, in a Kill Zone article John Gilstrap asked our thoughts about critique groups. You can read the article in “Of Interest,” but in my response I pointed to my own article.

Yep, back in the day I actually used to facilitate a critique group. I do not recommend critique groups now, but if you feel you need one I do recommend this article:
<https://harveystanbrough.com/pro-writers/12-ways-critique-group/>.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Sale Now Ends Friday Night” at <https://deanwesleymith.com/sale-now-ends-friday-night/>.

See “Into The Breech” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/04/into-the-breech.html>.

See “London Book Fair’s Sustainability Lounge” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/london-book-fairs-sustainability-lounge/>. The article is boring and smells of fertilizer, but see PG’s wonderful take.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 350

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051
Day 5..... 1451 words. Total words to date..... 11502
Day 6..... 1886 words. Total words to date..... 13388
Day 7..... 2002 words. Total words to date..... 15390
Day 8..... 1060 words. Total words to date..... 16450

Total fiction words for April..... 1457
Total fiction words for 2023..... 67645
Total nonfiction words for April... 3460
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 65720
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 133365

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 3
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 220
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I don't care how you write, only that you do. However, I am a prolific professional writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark, adherence to Heinlein's Rules, and that following the myths of fiction writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

Fiction Doesn't Matter, and the Fun-to-Work Ratio

April 6, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Another Sort-of Challenge
- * The Uses of Challenges
- * Fiction Doesn't Matter
- * The Fun-to-Work Ratio
- * Of Interest

Quotes 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

“When an idea hits me, I do it, doesn’t matter what field it’s in [whether science fiction, fantasy, murder mystery, play, poem]. Instantly, I just go do it.” Ray Bradbury

“Drag it out in the open, kicking and screaming. You can’t think it out because thinking gets in the way of the process. Intellectualizing is dangerous to the process.” Ray Bradbury

Another Sort-of Challenge

In his post today, Dean mentioned he plans to try to finish his current novel “in the next week.”

I’m using that as a catalyst to move ahead on my own current novel. I’m setting April 15 as the target date to finish. Most of my Crowley novels come in at around 40,000 to 50,000 words so it won’t be any kind of real crunch. Just something to move me steadily forward.

The Uses of Challenges

I only mentioned the stuff above because, if your writing is dragging for any reason, sometimes setting a challenge is a good way to get things going again.

- If you’re Thinking, a challenge is a good way to set aside the conscious, critical mind and Just Write.
- If a scene or chapter is holding up your progress somehow, a challenge can be the right catalyst to set aside or even delete the problem area and move ahead.
- If you know you experience unreasoning fear, writing for no other reason than to meet a challenge can free you from those chains. (This is one major reason for the current Bradbury Challenge I’m facilitating. And sure, you can still jump in.)

For that last one, just understand that the story doesn’t matter in the slightest. It’s only a bit of fun, like building a sandcastle on the beach even though you know the next high tide will erase it. Just have fun. Just go play and have fun.

Fiction Doesn’t Matter...

My own critical mind crept in again a day or two ago. The thought was sneaky: “Why am I bothering with this stupid story-a-week challenge? I don’t care either way about writing a short story every week. I don’t even care whether I publish them.”

The thing is, all of that is true. I *don’t* care about the stories I’m writing. And I don’t care whether I publish them. Ever.

In fact, I’m all but certain I *won’t* publish them, at least individually. Well, other than maybe on my Stanbrough Writes Substack, or maybe in a separate Bradbury Challenge category over on my Stanbrough Writes website. (Hmm. There’s an idea.)

The Fun-to-Work Ratio

What all of that really means is that I'm all but certain I won't search for cover art, create a cover, write sales copy, and go through the process of uploading each individual short story to D2D and Amazon. Why? Because doing all that for a short story seems self-defeating to me in terms of time management. (You may feel differently, and that's perfectly fine.)

It takes me say 4 hours to write a short story. It takes another hour (minimum) to find cover art, create a cover, write sales copy, and upload the whole thing to D2D and Amazon. So a full 1/5th of my time is spent doing the business stuff.

For me, that is not a good fun-to-work ratio. Four hours of unbridled fun followed by an hour of forced labor? Um, no thanks.

Honestly, I don't even like doing all that business stuff for my novels, but at least the fun-to-work ratio is better. It's also better for short story collections. Writing a novel takes around 50 hours. Writing the stories for a 10-story collection (at 4 hours each) and compiling them takes around 40 hours.

Yet it still takes only around an hour to find cover art, create a cover, write sales copy, and upload to D2D and Amazon. Meaning I spend only 1/50th of the time doing business stuff for a novel and 1/40th of the time doing business stuff for a short story collection. Still not ideal, but a lot better than 1/5th.

So my critical mind was correct. To me, my individual short stories aren't worth the time and effort it takes to do all that's required to formally publish them, meaning publishing them to anywhere other than my own platforms.

But that's perfect, and it's exactly what I preach here at the Journal: WHAT I write (the story) is definitely not important. It doesn't matter. What does matter to me as a writer is that THAT I write, that I put new words on the page, and the challenge is enabling that at the moment.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Business Musings: AI, Copyright, And Writers" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/business-musings-ai-copyright-and-writers/>. The excerpt also contains links to two other Business Musings articles.

See "4 Pillars of Book Marketing, or How to Sell More Books in Less Time" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/4-pillars-of-book-marketing-or-how-to-sell-more-books-in-less-time/>.

See "Motivation" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/motivation/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 880

Writing of “Someone You Will Never Have to Be” (short story)

Day 1..... 2186 words. Total words to date..... 2186 (Done)

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231

Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221

Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026

Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051

Day 5..... 1451 words. Total words to date..... 11502

Day 6..... 1886 words. Total words to date..... 13388

Day 7..... 2002 words. Total words to date..... 15390

Day 8..... 1060 words. Total words to date..... 16450

Day 9..... 1903 words. Total words to date..... 18353

Total fiction words for April..... 5546

Total fiction words for 2023..... 71734

Total nonfiction words for April... 4340

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 66600

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 138334

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221

Short story collections..... 31

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Newsletters and Fiction

April 7, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Newsletters and Fiction
- * The Writing
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“The way to succeed is to double your failure rate.” Thomas J. Watson

“Dare to be bad.” Nina Kiriki Hoffman

“Somebody once said we never know what is enough until we know what’s more than enough.”
Billie Holiday

“I have not failed, but found 1000 ways to not make a light bulb.” Thomas Edison

“To be ignorant of situations I can do nothing about is a blessing, not a curse.” Moi

Newsletters and Fiction

I don’t watch or listen to local or national news on television, radio or computer because I want actual fact-based news (this happened), not someone’s slanted version of it (this happened because blah blah blah).

In that pursuit, at present I read two newsletters each morning, one bearing general news (*1440 Daily Digest*, no political slant) and one bearing science news, specifically Interesting Engineering’s *The Blueprint* (slanted, but not as severely as most these days).

But reading even those is depressing because the focus is so often on how we are “progressing” socially and scientifically. And I am amazed, but strictly in an “Are you freakin’ kidding me?” kind of way.

Right there in my newsletters, reported as casually as Uncle Billy finding his socks, billionaires routinely fling thousands and hundreds of thousands and millions of dollars hither and yon in their far-too-public tugs of war over space tourism and artificial intelligence. And in the sports section, grown da*n men sign contracts for 7-figure salaries to play one children’s game or another.

And yes, cliché as it sounds, all the while millions of citizens in the United States go without food, shelter, and even clean water, from our largest inner cities to the hidden valleys of Appalachia. All of that as we “advance” socially, or at least appear to. Folks, to hijack an old saying, the appearance of the thing is not the thing. But whatever we have to tell ourselves.

Now to what I set out to write about (that other stuff just kind’a tagged along)—as we “advance” our understanding of science and the world around us, we have literally sucked the magic out of practically every aspect of life.

We can't just marvel at the beauty of a rainbow; we have to have an algorithm to prove precisely which way light bends at particular angles to project those colors and then make absolutely sure everybody knows it. *See little boy? Heh heh. It isn't magic at all.*

I used to believe that no two snowflakes were alike because that was the common wisdom and because every time it snowed I raced outside to check, my palms upturned. That belief carried magic. Now, according to an article I read recently in one of the two newsletters I mentioned above, scientists have (somehow) *proven absolutely* that no two snowflakes are alike. *Hurrah! Now there's a truly important breakthrough! And while we're at it, don't eat snow off the ground or off fenceposts. It's bad for you.*

How does any of that help anyone? Seriously. Maybe you'll forgive me if I preferred the belief about snowflakes and the minuscule margin of uncertainty that accompanied it. The possibility, however small, that someday, as two snowflakes were melting on my upturned palm, I might actually see a perfectly matched pair even if nobody else ever did.

Without magic, life is nothing more than breathing-in, breathing-out, when can I go back to sleep, and okay-fine what do we do next in our plodding existence.

But there is hope. Pretty much the only real magic that remains is the product of what goes on between you and your creative subconscious. The stories that emerge from that place are nothing short of sheer, innocent magic.

They are glimpses of a world and characters who might or might not exist in any reality, but who are as real to you and your readers as the other human beings in your life.

That's because, thus far, nobody is allowed to openly, blatantly program us, at least not outside of the classroom. Still, we are bombarded every day both blatantly and subliminally from every direction and in every form of media to what others want us to believe about literally every facet of our lives and the lives of others.

Short of moving alone to a cave there is nothing you can do to stop the influx. But you can mitigate it with your very own mind.

- When you read or hear things, Think. Don't go for the low-hanging fruit. C'mon, you're not a robot. Human beings are far too complex for any situation they're involved in to be as simple and one-sided as those situations are typically presented by their enemies.
- And when you sit down to draw back the curtain on your characters in their world, do the exact opposite: Don't Think. Open your mind to the coming new adventures. Enjoy the excitement and exhilaration of the unknown.

Roll off the parapet into the trenches of the story, whip out your notepad or keyboard, and write down what happens as you and your characters race through the story together.

You have all the time in that world, so take your time. Pay attention and go deep. Weave a tapestry that will pull your readers into the story with you.

Make some magic. They will thank you for it.

The Writing

Thank Whomever for the escape of it.

I wrote probably 5000 words yesterday (stuck on a chapter so I kept recasting it and recasting it) but I only counted what I had kept when the smoke cleared, around 1100 words. Now the story should be able to move ahead smoothly.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Last Day of the Sale” at <https://deanwesleymith.com/last-day-of-the-sale-2/>. This is the main reason I bothered posting today, just in case you need it.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 980

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051
Day 5..... 1451 words. Total words to date..... 11502
Day 6..... 1886 words. Total words to date..... 13388
Day 7..... 2002 words. Total words to date..... 15390
Day 8..... 1060 words. Total words to date..... 16450
Day 9..... 1903 words. Total words to date..... 18353
Day 10... 1143 words. Total words to date..... 19496

Total fiction words for April..... 6689
Total fiction words for 2023..... 72877
Total nonfiction words for April... 5320
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 67580
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 140457

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221
Short story collections..... 31

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Fun in Writing Fiction

April 8, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Fun in Writing Fiction
- * The Writing and a Reminder
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“Never think about the final product, just the process of writing and keeping the writing fun.”
Dean Wesley Smith

“If you think something sucks in a story, leave it in the story, your creative voice put it there for a reason. Trust it.” Dean Wesley Smith

Fun in Writing Fiction

A couple days ago I wrote a bit about the “Fun-to-Work” ratio. Today, coincidentally, Dean Wesley Smith wrote “Keep the Fun.” You can see it at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/keep-the-fun/>. I quoted a couple of times from it above. Practically the entire post is quotable.

This is why I keep saying THAT you write is important. It's important that you sit down and write something every day, or on as many days as you can, because, um, you're a writer.

But WHAT you write, the individual story or novel, isn't important at all. It just doesn't matter. It's only a bit of fun for you to write (you're the first person ever to experience that story) and it's a bit of entertainment for the reader. Again, what's important is that you write something, anything.

As I wrote in response to a comment from another writer this morning, if you make a piece of writing important (if you make it “work” instead of “fun”), the critical voice will freeze you solid.

But read Dean's post. It's kind of a big deal if you want to be successful at writing fiction.

The Writing and a Reminder

I didn't write much yesterday, only a few hundred words. I was a little under the weather. Later we drove to Sierra Vista for more meds for my little girl cat. Back at the novel today.

Those of you participating in the Challenge, get your titles and totals to be today or tomorrow.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Gray Wolves and Restless Mayhem" at <https://www.suecoletta.com/gray-wolves-and-restless-mayhem/>.

See "Two People Hugging?" at <https://twitter.com/gavinthomas2015/status/1643649801022472205>. I saw a dog. I also think the pic is obviously faked.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 340

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051
Day 5..... 1451 words. Total words to date..... 11502
Day 6..... 1886 words. Total words to date..... 13388
Day 7..... 2002 words. Total words to date..... 15390
Day 8..... 1060 words. Total words to date..... 16450
Day 9..... 1903 words. Total words to date..... 18353
Day 10... 1143 words. Total words to date..... 19496
Day 11... 0323 words. Total words to date..... 19819

Total fiction words for April..... 7012
Total fiction words for 2023..... 73200
Total nonfiction words for April... 5660
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 67920
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 141120

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 4	
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	221
Short story collections.....	31

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Revisiting Fun in Challenges

April 9, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Welcome
- * Revisiting Fun in Challenges
- * The Bradbury Challenge
- * The Writing
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“People are what they do, not what they say.” James Lee Burke

“[J]ust go play. Have fun. Tell yourself stories.” Dean Wesley Smith

Welcome

Welcome to Oleg and Thomas and all other new subscribers to this Journal. If there's anything I can do to help with your writing, feel free to let me know. You can reach me directly at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

Be sure to check out the free, downloadable, searchable PDF archives and other free downloads on the Journal website at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives-gifts-dvds/>.

By the way, I urge everybody, don't miss the articles linked in “Of Interest” today, especially the first two.

Revisiting Fun in Challenges

Something in Dean's post yesterday struck me: "A challenge for some people brings up PRODUCT FOCUS. It takes the [writer's] focus from having fun telling a story and puts it on how many words did I write, have I written, and in comes critical voice."

Yep, I get that. A challenge can also shift the writer's focus from just having fun to the feeling s/he "has to" finish a story by a certain time, so still product focused.

I think that problem—the fear of "failure" if you don't write a story one week or if don't finish one by a particular time, etc.—is why some folks who are involved in the challenge freeze up and either miss or almost miss.

I'm sure it's also why some who said they wanted to be publicly involved in the challenge (reporting numbers to me each week) haven't submitted a story yet. (We're about to head into the fourth week.) They've either already given up or (more likely) they keep putting off their start date. Which is fine, but you can't enter a challenge and begin a streak without starting. (grin)

And finally, I suspect it's also why some are just following along in the shadows, taking part in the challenge on their own, without the pressure of reporting to me every week. And I want to emphasize quickly, that's also perfectly fine. I'm actually doing the same thing, following along in the shadows, with a challenge Dean started. Not because I don't want to report my numbers—I happily report numbers every day—but because I don't want to pay him for the privilege. (grin)

But that pressured feeling that either delays your start or stops you cold—I know that feeling too, and I know it extremely well. After all, I report my numbers in this Journal every time I post a new edition. I do that partly to hold myself accountable, and partly to show you what is possible if you sit down and Just Write.

I never post my numbers to show off or to dangle a carrot or to compare myself with anyone else. The only person I'm interested in comparing myself with is myself at an earlier time.

But again, what's important is that you write. If my Bradbury Challenge helps with that, whether you take part publicly or privately, that's wonderful.

So let me just say this: Fearing "failure" as a writer as the result of participating in a challenge is just silly. If you take part in any challenge at all, publicly or privately, when your streak ends you will have written more than you would have if you hadn't participated in the challenge at all. That is not a failure, my friends. That is a success.

Changing the Rules of the Challenge—To all of those who are currently involved publicly in the challenge, I'm changing the rules a little: You don't "have to" report the story title and word count to me at all. Either way, I'm canceling the Monday morning posting of Bradbury Challenge results.

However, in place of that, I'll do this: When you finish a short story for your own personal story-a-week challenge, IF YOU WANT TO SHARE, send me the title and word count and I'll

be happy to share it with everyone else in the next edition of the Journal. If you DON'T want to share it, that's perfectly fine too.

That should remove all pressure from the process. Just have fun writing at least one new short story per week. After all, that's the whole purpose of the challenge in the first place.

Because I already report my own efforts under the Numbers section, I won't report my own short stories otherwise.

More on OpenAI/ChatGPT

My friend Garry Rodgers posted about his new book, OpenAI/ChatGPT — A Fiction Writer Talks Shop with a Bot. I've linked to his post in "Of Interest."

Of course, I left a comment. In part it reads

"If by 'writing tools' we're talking about actual tools, like spell check, thesauri, etc. I'm all for it. But when that definition is expanded to include allegedly 'creating' (I use the term 'allegedly' because in actuality, it's 'constructing') any part of a fiction—so the setting or the POV character's opinion of the setting, scenes, dialogue, etc.—I consider it a cheat. I will never use it, and I include a statement to that effect in the backmatter of every publication.

"Eventually, I believe many writers will use generative AI to create 'original' fictions and then claim sole ownership. I also believe the practice will be widely accepted socially, probably with no more emotional reaction than a shrug. And if that comes to pass, then college students also should be able to use that same 'tool' to prepare essays on college exams."

Why do I feel that way? Because I learned early that much in life boils down to right or wrong no matter how strongly the individual or society rationalizes it.

A lie is a lie no matter how often or how many times it's repeated and no matter how much time has passed since it was first uttered. Even when the lie has been all but universally accepted as the truth, it is still a lie. And cheating is still cheating even when society chooses not to condemn it.

As I learned from ol' Wes Crowley awhile back, Upright is not a matter of degree. In every moment, you either are or you aren't.

The Bradbury Challenge

Yesterday, two writers in the challenge reported the following:

Tony DeCastro, "The Gods of the Eclipse," 1000 words

Christopher Ridge, "Shouldn't Play with Dead Things," 1215 words

Thanks for that, guys! Anyone else, feel free to jump in, publicly or otherwise.

The Writing

Like Dean, I've had a bit of a slow start (or re-start), but the writing is picking up again now. Thank goodness. I want so much to get back to turning out at least one novel per month, and eventually to hitting 3000 words per day of publishable fiction again. And of course I wish the same for you.

To show my own progress as I shadow Dean's 9-month challenge, I've added a few new lines to my Numbers section below. Should be fun to watch.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Slow Starts Are Perfectly Fine" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/slow-starts-are-perfectly-fine/>.

See "Atticus Experience" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/atticus-experience/>. But be sure to read the comments too. Excellent.

See "OpenAI/ChatGPT — A Fiction Writer Talks Shop with a Bot" at <http://dyingwords.net/open-ai-chatgpt-a-fiction-writer-talks-shop-with-a-bot/>.

See "The Tools And Services I Use In My Author Business" at <https://www.thecreativepenn.com/2023/04/07/the-tools-and-services-i-use-in-my-author-business/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1240

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1.....	3231 words.	Total words to date.....	3231
Day 2.....	2990 words.	Total words to date.....	6221
Day 3.....	1805 words.	Total words to date.....	8026
Day 4.....	2025 words.	Total words to date.....	10051
Day 5.....	1451 words.	Total words to date.....	11502
Day 6.....	1886 words.	Total words to date.....	13388
Day 7.....	2002 words.	Total words to date.....	15390
Day 8.....	1060 words.	Total words to date.....	16450
Day 9.....	1903 words.	Total words to date.....	18353
Day 10...	1143 words.	Total words to date.....	19496

Day 11... 0323 words. Total words to date..... 19819
Day 12... 2445 words. Total words to date..... 22264

Total fiction words for April..... 9457
Total fiction words since April 1... 9457
Total fiction words for 2023..... 75645

Total nonfiction words for April... 6900
Total nonfiction words since April 1... 6900
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 69160

Total words (fiction and this blog) since April 1..... 16357 (to shadow Dean's challenge)
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 144805

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221
Short story collections..... 31

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Taking a Book to Paper

April 10, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Taking a Book to Paper
- * The Bradbury Challenge
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“Challenges have this nasty habit of quickly uncovering issues in your motivation and your consistency in writing and other life issues you are dealing with.” Dean Wesley Smith

“I have been known to write 90,000 word novels in days, or sometimes I just putter on various things and it takes me three weeks to write a short novel while I am doing other things.” Dean Wesley Smith on his production

Taking a Book to Paper

There are choices for doing layout and design of your paper book. I’ve never cared for InDesign and their subscription model (to me it feels a little like being robbed over and over and over) even though I originally learned book design on InDesign’s predecessor, Aldus PageMaker. That was back when pterodactyls regularly blotted out the sun as they passed overhead. Anyway, if they offered the option to buy the program outright, I might try it.

Still, [Adobe InDesign](#) is one alternative. [Vellum](#) is another alternative. Vellum is still primarily for Mac but I understand, vaguely, there is a way to use it with your PC. There is also [Affinity Publisher](#), which I’ve talked about in this Journal before, and also [Atticus](#), which I bought recently and intend to try soon.

You might also take a look at “The Tools And Services I Use In My Author Business” at <https://www.thecreativepenn.com/2023/04/07/the-tools-and-services-i-use-in-my-author-business/> and any comments that arose from that post.

In comments on “Atticus Experience” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/atticus-experience/>, Peter informs me that Affinity Publisher, despite all its other benefits, was “a bear to learn” (so is InDesign, from what I’ve heard) and Publisher doesn’t output .epub format. Seriously, a dedicated design program that doesn’t output .epub. That is more than a little ridiculous.

So I’ll be trying Atticus when I finally get around to formatting my books for paper. As I wrote in a comment this morning, “If you couldn’t tell, I’ve been in no big rush to push books into paper. I always apply the WIBBOW rule (would I be better off writing) and writing pretty much always wins.”

Maybe I’ll leave publishing my books to paper to my heirs. (grin)

The Bradbury Challenge

Balázs Jámber completed The Magic Land, YA fantasy at 5200 words

Chynna Pace had a good week with two stories: Lottie’s Letter, Paranormal, 2457 words and The Trouble With Magic Cookies, Fantasy, 5976 words

My own writing continues to roll. Here’s hoping it won’t dry up again.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Challenges Are Battles Against Yourself” at <https://deanwesleymith.com/challenges-are-battles-against-yourself/>.

See “The egg, the twist and the problem with short stories” at <https://fictitious.substack.com/p/the-egg-the-twist-and-the-problem>. Thanks to Oleg for the tip. Interesting post, and great for a literary discussion.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 460

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 11... 0323 words. Total words to date..... 19819

Day 12... 2445 words. Total words to date..... 22264

Day 13... 3184 words. Total words to date..... 25448

Total fiction words for April..... 12641

Total fiction words since April 1... 12641

Total fiction words for 2023..... 78829

Total nonfiction words for April... 7360

Total nonfiction words since April 1... 7360

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 69620

Total words (fiction and this blog) since April 1..... 20001 (to shadow Dean’s challenge)

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 148449

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark, adherence to Heinlein’s Rules, and that following the myths of fiction writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

Dealing with a Situation

April 11, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Dealing with a Situation
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“Merely providing an AI tool with a prompt, without extending creative control over how the tool interprets the prompt and generates expressive material, will fail to meet the standard for copyright registration.” US Copyright Office Guidance, March 17, 2023

“The registrant must identify the “traditional elements of authorship” that were executed by a human author and explicitly disclaim the AI-generated content in the application.” US Copyright Office Guidance, March 17, 2023

All of that (and the other guidelines) said, one does not have to register a copyright for the work in question to be protected by copyright.

Dealing with a Situation

My apologies in advance. My Journal posts will be limited or absent for a short time. We’re dealing with the illness and what appears to be the impending demise of my kitten.

I have considered her my youngest daughter for the past 12 years. She blurred the line between species with her incredible patience and unconditional love.

She has been ill for a couple of months, but yesterday she refused to eat or drink and stopped grooming. She does still enjoy lying on her side, her back against my chest, her head on my left arm.

Thanks in advance for your kind thoughts and impulses, but no comments or emails of condolence are necessary. Please just love whom you have in every waking moment and hold them close in your dreams when you sleep.

Of course, no writing yesterday.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Myth Believer” at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/myth-believer/>.

See “IP rights at top of mind as U.S. Copyright Office offers guidance on AI-generated works” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/ip-rights-at-top-of-mind-as-u-s-copyright-office-offers-guidance-on-ai-generated-works/>.

See “15 Idioms About Time” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/15-idioms-about-time/>. Grammarly is an inexcusable purveyor of soup sandwiches. I detest the company, How can anyone take seriously a company that invokes the word “grammar” in their name and then state that a run-on sentence is just “a really long sentence”? They screwed up at least once in this excerpt. I posted the link only because some of you might find the excerpt and article useful otherwise.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 350

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 11... 0323 words. Total words to date..... 19819

Day 12... 2445 words. Total words to date..... 22264

Day 13... 3184 words. Total words to date..... 25448

Total fiction words for April..... 12641

Total fiction words since April 1... 12641

Total fiction words for 2023..... 78829

Total nonfiction words for April... 7710

Total nonfiction words since April 1... 7710

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 69970

Total words (fiction and this blog) since April 1..... 20351 (to shadow Dean’s challenge)

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 148799

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221

Short story collections..... 31

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Turbulence and a Reminder

April 12, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Turbulence
- * Cycling
- * A Reminder
- * My Little Baby Cat
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“There are many ways of going forward, but only one way of standing still.” Franklin D. Roosevelt

“We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be.” Kurt Vonnegut

“We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.” Albert Einstein (*Think about that before you resort to the myths to write.*)

“Brittney Griner to pen memoir about her 10-month arrest and incarceration in Russia” 1440 Digest (*Well of course she is. She'll make a ton of money off it too.*)

Turbulence

Sometimes I'm wrong.

A couple of days ago Kay DiBianca posted “Landing the Novel – The Story of the Gimli Glider” over at the Kill Zone blog. At the time, I glanced at it, read a few sentences, and went on to other things.

Then a day later a TalkWalker alert popped up for my name. When I clicked the provided link, it was Kay, in the text of that article, saying she hoped I was reading the post.

So I did read it. She talked about Heinlein's Rules 1 and 2: You must write and You must finish what you write. As part of the airplane analogy, she also talked about enduring turbulence during the journey, whether flying or writing a novel.

My comment?

“Yep, with any luck at all, there might be plenty of turbulence. It's called the unknown. You get that a lot when you trust your characters, record the story as it unfolds around you and them, and just write off into the dark.

“But see, really you're sitting in your chair at your desk in your office, so you know you can dive into the unknown and come out the other side thoroughly exhilarated but with nary a scratch. That's the fun part of writing the way I do.”

Another commenter severely misquoted Heinlein's Rule 3 as "You must publish what you write." Um, not even close.

I set him straight. If you aren't thoroughly familiar with Robert A. Heinlein's Business Habits for Writers, you can download a free annotated PDF copy at the link earlier in this paragraph.

Cycling

I plan to write an exhaustive post on "cycling," which is basically revising-as-you-go but ALWAYS in your natural voice, which is to say in the voice of your creative subconscious.

I hope to be back with that in days rather than weeks.

A Reminder

To all the Bradbury Challenge participants out there, the new week started on Monday morning and it's already Wednesday. I plan to write my story of the week today. Don't let your critical mind or circumstances rob you of continuing your streak.

My Little Baby Cat

As was her way, Little Bit passed according to her own time schedule yesterday, slightly before 10 a.m. She was outside (she loved being outside) and had called out twice, loudly.

My wife picked her up and put her in my arms. I sat down and rocked her gently, while petting her and telling her it was all right. Her head was bowed in the crook of my right elbow as she struggled to draw a few more breaths.

And that amazing, incredibly loving little creature suddenly came alert, raised her little head, and kneaded, very strongly, the crook of my right elbow. She started with her little right hand and kneaded three times, alternating right, left, right. Then she lowered her little head again, took four very short breaths, and left us.

If you don't know, kneading conveys contentment and love. My god, what a beautiful little baby she was.

Thank you for allowing me to share. I'll be back before too long. Talk with you again then.

Of Interest

See "Landing the Novel – The Story of the Gimli Glider" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/04/landing-the-novel-the-story-of-the-gimli-glider.html>. Kay DiBianca was kind enough to mention me in her post, so naturally I left a comment. (grin)

See "Kickstarter Update and New!" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/kickstarter-update-and-new/>.

See “An Interview with Narrator Steve Marvel” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/04/an-interview-with-narrator-steve-marvel.html>. I didn’t read it, but it seems interesting.

See “Why Can’t I Write Whenever I Want To?” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/why-cant-i-write-when-ever-i-want-to/>. Aside from commitments, indeed, why can’t you?

See “Games are a weapon in the war on disinformation” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/games-are-a-weapon-in-the-war-on-disinformation/>. Posted mostly for a friend whose son is in the game-design, um, game.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 730

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051
Day 5..... 1451 words. Total words to date..... 11502
Day 6..... 1886 words. Total words to date..... 13388
Day 7..... 2002 words. Total words to date..... 15390
Day 8..... 1060 words. Total words to date..... 16450
Day 9..... 1903 words. Total words to date..... 18353
Day 10... 1143 words. Total words to date..... 19496
Day 11... 0323 words. Total words to date..... 19819
Day 12... 2445 words. Total words to date..... 22264
Day 13... 3184 words. Total words to date..... 25448

Total fiction words for April..... 12641
Total fiction words since April 1... 12641
Total fiction words for 2023..... 78829

Total nonfiction words for April... 8440
Total nonfiction words since April 1... 8440
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 70700

Total words (fiction and this blog) since April 1..... 21080 (to shadow Dean’s challenge)
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 149529

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221
Short story collections..... 31

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MeWe? Other Facebook Alternatives?

April 13, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Correction
- * MeWe? Other Facebook Alternatives?
- * Bradbury Challenge Report
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“No one is discontented at not being a king except a discrowned king ... unhappiness almost invariably indicates the existence of a road not taken, a talent undeveloped, a self not recognized.” Blaise Pascal

“I always wanted to be someone better the next day than I was the day before.” Sidney Poitier

Correction

In a recent post I inadvertently omitted a link to download a [free annotated copy of Heinlein's Rules](#). You can get that by clicking the link preceding this sentence.

MeWe? Other Facebook Alternatives?

Has anyone out there participated in MeWe? Apparently it's similar to Facebook but without the controlling algorithms and constant vulnerabilities. I'm thinking about opening an account. Please share any advice or input.

To see some of the alternatives, visit “12+ Facebook Alternatives in 2023 (That Value Your Privacy)” at <https://smartblogger.com/facebook-alternatives/>.

Bradbury Challenge Report

K.C. Riggs is currently traveling abroad. She reported these stories:

“Stranger on the Stairs” SF 3327 words (last week)

“Gargoyle Party” Children’s, 2205 words (this week)

I didn’t get my story for this week or anything else written yesterday. Maybe today.

I hope everyone else who’s participating in the challenge are still keeping their own streak alive.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Texas County to Consider Shutting Down Library After Book Ban Ruling” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/texas-county-to-consider-shutting-down-library-after-book-ban-ruling/>. Because they would rather shut down than be forced to carry pornographic books.

See “Publisher Logos: 7 Amazing Examples To Inspire Your Design ” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/publisher-logos-7-amazing-examples-to-inspire-your-design/>. I saw nothing “amazing” among the examples, but in case you find it useful.

See “How Long Does It Really Take To Write a Novel?” at <https://writerunboxed.com/2023/04/12/how-long-does-it-really-take-to-write-a-novel/>. I literally laughed out loud.

See “How Do You Move Beyond the Three-Act Structure?” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-do-you-move-beyond-the-three-act-structure/>. Wow. You just write. Your creative subconscious long ago absorbed the various story structures. Trust it.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 270

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 11... 0323 words. Total words to date..... 19819

Day 12... 2445 words. Total words to date..... 22264

Day 13... 3184 words. Total words to date..... 25448

Total fiction words for April..... 12641

Total fiction words since April 1... 12641

Total fiction words for 2023..... 78829

Total nonfiction words for April... 8760

Total nonfiction words since April 1... 8760

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 71020

Total words (fiction and this blog) since April 1..... 21400 (to shadow Dean’s challenge)
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 149849

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221
Short story collections..... 31

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Cycling

April 14, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Social Media Alternatives Redux
- * Cycling
- * Of Interest

Quote of the Day

“I tell would-be writers that there are three things to forget about. First, talent. I used to worry that I had no talent, and it compelled me to work harder. Second, inspiration. Habit will serve you a lot better. And third, imagination. Don’t worry, you have it.” Octavia Butler

Social Media Alternatives Redux

Yesterday I asked for input from anyone who has been using any Facebook alternatives. (Nothing yet.)

In today’s “Of Interest” see the article about Substack’s new Twitter alternative, called Notes. Also, you can learn about Notes at <https://substack.com/notes>.

Cycling

First, a disclaimer—If you have constructed your fiction block by carefully placed block from an outline and character-sketches and situated it in a pre-planned, pre-constructed world, you might want to skip this article. Cycling, even if you were able to do it, would not help you. To be

honest, I doubt your characters (or your creative subconscious) would respond even if you did call on them. Of course, I might be wrong, as I often am.

But there is some good news. Even if you have consciously “figured out” what happens next at every step of the way and effectively written the story as a function of your conscious, critical mind, you won’t take the story much farther from your unique, original voice by revising, rewriting and polishing (whatever that is) with the conscious, critical mind as well.

And cynical as I might sound, I really am all for dancing with the one who brought you. Seriously, I really don’t care how you write. I only write this Journal to pay forward what I’ve learned over the course of writing over 70 novels, 9 novellas, and around 220 short stories.

Now, let’s get to it.

Yesterday, my TalkWalker account alerted me to a response to a comment I had left on another post. The comment regarded Heinlein’s Rule 3: “You must refrain from rewriting except to editorial order.” A while later, Harlan Ellison added, “And then only if you agree.”

(You may download, free, an annotated copy of Heinlein’s Rules by clicking <https://harveystanbrough.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Heinleins-Business-Habits-Annotated-2.pdf>.)

In her response to my comment, Kay DiBianca (a regular contributor on Kill Zone blog) wrote, “I’m glad you mentioned Heinlein’s Rule #3, Harvey. I’m planning to take a swing at the subject of revising one’s work in my next post. I hope you’ll read it and comment.”

Of course I will. And in preparation for that, here’s my promised take on “revising one’s work,” albeit with two caveats:

One, I call what I do “cycling” specifically to differentiate it from “revision.” The reason will become apparent to those who practice and compare the two methods, but to put it succinctly, “revision” is a function of the conscious, critical mind. “Cycling,” on the other hand, is strictly a function of the creative subconscious. That is a major difference.

And two, because I’ve written on this topic many times, this will not be the exhaustive article I advertised a couple of days ago. Rather, today I will mention only some necessary background and a new thought I’ve had on the subject. However, I’ve included links to some of my other articles on the topic at the end of this post.

Cycling is two processes, really. One, it renders the writer unstuck in time.

So if Aunt Marge pulls a .32 caliber revolver from the pocket of her housecoat in Chapter 18, completely surprising the writer, the writer can “cycle back” to an earlier time in the story and write a quick sentence or two to let the reader watch as Aunt Marge opens the drawer of her nightstand, picks up that revolver, and slips it into the pocket of her housecoat before going to discover the source of the suspicious noise coming from the living room.

But cycling is also something we who write into the dark do routinely as we're writing. This is the process that's more similar to revision. Dean Wesley Smith "cycles back" every 300 to 500 words. I cycle back once every writing session (so around every 1000 to 1200 words).

In my case, I write for about an hour, then take a break for a few minutes. When I come back to the writing, I read over what I wrote in the previous session.

This is important: As I read over what I wrote, I don't "look for" (conscious, critical mind) ANYthing. If you're looking for things to fix or correct, you've engaged the conscious, critical mind.

I never do that on purpose, and if I find myself "looking for" anything, I physically get up and walk away. When my critical mind has withdrawn to the corner I assigned it, I go back to the story and continue.

When I cycle back, I read strictly as a reader, having suspended my sense of disbelief and simply enjoying the story. In other words, I read with my creative subconscious engaged. My fingertips rest on the keyboard and I allow myself (my creative subconscious or my POV character) to touch the story as I read through it. When I reach the whitespace again, I continue writing. Everything is done via the creative subconscious.

This became easy for me to do once I came to understand that none of the stories I write is MY story. In my story, I'm sitting alone in a room at a keyboard, living vicariously through the characters into whose world I'm privileged to peek. So this thing I'm writing, the story I'm recording for posterity, is my CHARACTERS' story.

I'm fortunate they invited me along. Stephen King calls himself his characters' stenographer. Similarly, my role, as I race through the story with my characters, is that of Recorder. I record events as the story unfolds around us, and I record the characters' reactions.

Now for a new (to me) rationale for cycling instead of revising, or rather for employing the creative subconscious instead of the conscious, critical mind—

Sometimes, after I've finished a novel, I will cycle back over the whole thing. I'll read back over the entire story, not critically but as a reader, strictly to enjoy the story. Of course it takes at least a few sittings, but again, as I read, I let my fingers rest on the keys and I allow my characters to touch the story as they deem necessary.

Here's the thing—I absolutely could not do that with my conscious critical mind engaged.

For one thing, my conscious mind might decide something is missing, and it might choose to insert that missing information in the story. But if I allow myself to do that, eventually I'll come to the place where my creative subconscious had already inserted the information.

There was nothing missing after all. The information just wasn't where my second-guessing, conscious, critical mind thought it should be. Then, naturally, I'll try to correct my error, and the

next thing I know the story is unrecognizable and I have that sick, sinking feeling in the pit of my gut. Of course, had I simply trusted my creative subconscious in the first place, there would be no errors to correct.

Maybe interesting to note that the whole time I'm writing into the dark (or into the unknown), I never get that sick feeling in my stomach. I'm scared half to death sometimes and absolutely exhilarated most of the time, but I never get that little ill feeling from having forced a wrong turn in the story.

For another thing, if as I read I started consciously "looking for" things to "correct" I would find dozens of them, maybe hundreds over the course of a novel. Guaranteed, no problem. But they wouldn't really need to be "corrected."

I would maybe reverse a word order here and there, or replace "which" with "that" (or vice versa) or swap out "under" for "beneath" or turn a compound, complex sentence into three or four simple sentences or revise a few paragraph breaks (probably to slow or speed up the pacing) or any number of other things.

But—and this is the whole key to why I don't do this—those changes would "improve" the story for whom? In reality, I would only be making the manuscript different, not better.

Every reader (and editors and publishers and even writers are readers too) is different, with different tastes, different moods, etc. What seems "better" to one will seem "worse" to another. And there is absolutely nothing you can do to change that.

So I personally find it important to write as-is the story that unfolds as I and the characters race through it. That is the surest chance that I'll write it in my own unique, original voice. And I do not allow anyone, either my own conscious, critical mind or the critical minds of others, to alter or influence that. I defend my work

To believe that even my own conscious, logical, critical mind could possibly know better than my creative subconscious is to believe that my version of my neighbors' account of the trip they took to Ecuador is better than theirs. It just ain't so.

My own unique voice resides only in my creative subconscious. Certainly it is influenced by works I've read, sitcoms and dramas and movies I've watched and listened to, and all the other millions of bits of input my creative subconscious has absorbed over the years, even way back before I was aware an alphabet even existed.

Of course that includes the various kinds of story structure, modes of delivery, and the nuances of language whether on the live stage or in film or radio, audio or print, and whether in ebooks or on paper.

Like most writers, I used to be scared half to death of not knowing where a story was going next. Then I realized that was an unreasoning fear. It has zero basis in real consequences. As I wrote in a comment on Kay DiBianca's post a few days ago,

“[W]ith any luck at all, there might be plenty of turbulence. It’s called the unknown. You get that a lot when you trust your characters, record the story as it unfolds around you and them, and just write off into the dark.”

However, even with all that turbulence, there’s nothing to fear, because in reality, “you’re sitting in your chair at your desk in your office, so you know you can dive into the unknown and come out the other side thoroughly exhilarated but with nary a scratch.”

When you write into the dark and you finish a short story or novel, you’re like the kid standing next to the roller coaster, having just climbed down from the car, barely able to stand still and yelling, “Again! Again!”

I never want to write anything that is less-than it might have been because I second-guessed the characters who actually lived the story. That would just be wrong.

As promised, you can find more on Cycling at the following posts:

<https://hestanbrough.com/the-journal-the-difference-between-rewriting-and-cycling/>

<https://hestanbrough.com/the-journal-a-little-more-on-cycling/>

<https://hestanbrough.com/the-journal-witd-and-cycling/>

<https://hestanbrough.com/the-journal-happy-new-year-yesterday-cycling-and-heinleins-rules/>

There are several other posts on the subject too. I’ve addressed it several times over the years. To see those posts, key “cycling” into the Search box in the sidebar at <https://hestanbrough.com> and then click the Enter key.

While you’re at it, you can also visit <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives-gifts-dvds/>, then click on and download the free and fully searchable PDF Journal Archives.

Bradbury Challenge Report—This post is already long so I’ll hold off on reporting Bradbury Challenge numbers until next time.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Substack launches its Twitter-like Notes just days after Twitter throttled Substack links” at <https://www.theverge.com/2023/4/11/23677946/substack-notes-twitter-throttled-blocked-links>. Will the children ever stop playing their stupid games? That said, I’m not aware of a single time that Twitter blocked any of my Substack Journal posts.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1970

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 11... 0323 words. Total words to date..... 19819

Day 12... 2445 words. Total words to date..... 22264

Day 13... 3184 words. Total words to date..... 25448

Total fiction words for April..... 12641

Total fiction words since April 1... 12641

Total fiction words for 2023..... 78829

Total nonfiction words for April... 10730

Total nonfiction words since April 1... 10730

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 72990

Total words (fiction and this blog) since April 1..... 23370 (to shadow Dean's challenge)

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 151819

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221

Short story collections..... 31

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Welcome and Cycling Redux

April 15, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Welcome
- * Cycling Redux
- * Bradbury Challenge Report, and Going Back to Monday
- * The Writing
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“Stop worrying about your lack of sales of your five novels, take a deep breath, and go write. And remember to have fun.” Dean Wesley Smith

“The question is not what you look at but what you see.” Henry David Thoreau

“I experimented by turning off all my device notifications and staying in the groove for hours. The experience was like being deep in prayer at the altar of the keyboard.” Robert M. Thorson in a review of Thoreau’s *Axe* by Caleb Smith

Welcome to Jason and Alex and any other new subscribers to the Journal. If I can help in any way with your writing, feel free to let me know. I’m always available via email at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

In the meanwhile, I hope you will enjoy the Journal and that it will help in some way.

Cycling Redux

Cycling is an extremely important concept, second only to believing in yourself enough to write off into the dark in the first place. Therefore, if anyone didn’t quite “get” what cycling is from [yesterday’s post](#), please, please, please avail yourselves of the numerous other posts available on the topic by keying “cycling” into the search box in the sidebar.

It’s free, folks, and WITD + Cycling will advance your writing so fast that your head will swim. You’ll get tons more practice because you’ll have tons more time to practice (put new words on the page) and therefore your level of craft will rapidly improve too.

This is strictly a win-win situation for you, and again, it’s free. It costs no money and only a small investment of your time. And that’s an investment in YOURSELF, not me. All you have to do is put forth the effort to key “cycling” into the search box, and then read the posts that pop up.

If you’re serious about writing fiction—if you’d like to become a long-term profession fiction writer—then you owe it to yourself to honestly try writing into the dark and cycling. You have absolutely nothing to lose but the myths in which you’re currently mired.

If WITD works for you—and if you shove the fear down and really try it, it WILL work—you will be flatly amazed at how much better you write and at how much more you write. Both the quality and quantity of your writing will improve almost exponentially. I guarantee it.

How can I guarantee it? Because if you try WITD and it doesn’t work, you can always go back to outlining, revising, seeking critical input, rewriting and all that. No harm, no foul. You will have lost nothing but a few (possibly very scary) moments as you draw near to your own unique, original authorial voice.

Of course, only you can possibly know whether you believed in yourself enough to really try WITD, or whether you only made a stab at it for appearances. It really doesn’t matter to me. I’m

just paying forward the most freeing non-process I've ever encountered. I only wish I'd found it thirty or forty years earlier.

Bradbury Challenge Report

Current Bradbury Challenge participants include TonyDeCastro, Balázs Jám bor, Loyd Jenkins, Chynna Pace, Christopher Ridge, KC Riggs, Bill Sinclair, Frank Theodat, Alexander Teut, and Robert J. Sadler.

Yesterday, Robert reported his stories for the first four weeks of the challenge:

- “The Emerald” [1379 words] Friday 24 March 2023
- “Hard Freeze in Arroyo Seco” [758 words] Friday 31 March 2023
- “April Fools” [1334 words] Saturday 1 April 2023
- “The Pink Bikini Snapshot” [585 words] Thursday 6 April 2023

Going Back to Monday

I'm happy for Robert and the others, but I don't like this segmented way of reporting stories as they come in. It's a weekly challenge, so from now on I'll go back to reporting new stories on Monday, as I originally planned.

That said, today is Saturday. (grin) Get your stories for this week in to me before Monday morning. C'mon guys and gals. I'm pulling for you.

The Writing

I started a short story (or something, maybe much longer) yesterday, then was distracted and got busy with some other things and didn't finish it. Rather than returning to what I started yesterday (just over 400 words) I will write a completely different story today.

I have a framed watercolor I've been wanting to use as a basis for a story for some time, so maybe I'll do that. (The painting is of a stylized peasant or bandito or other weary traveler approaching a casita somewhere in the Sonoran Desert on a donkey or burro.) Either that or I'll go back to the old story-starter formula: a character with a problem (doesn't have to be 'the' problem of the story) in a setting.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Memory and Perspective” at <https://deanwesleymith.com/memory-and-perspective/>.

See “Thoreau's Axe” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/thoreaus-axe/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 820

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 11... 0323 words. Total words to date..... 19819

Day 12... 2445 words. Total words to date..... 22264

Day 13... 3184 words. Total words to date..... 25448

Total fiction words for April..... 12641

Total fiction words since April 1... 12641

Total fiction words for 2023..... 78829

Total nonfiction words for April... 11550

Total nonfiction words since April 1... 11550

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 73810

Total words (fiction and this blog) since April 1..... 24190 (to shadow Dean's challenge)

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 152639

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark, adherence to Heinlein's Rules, and that following the myths of fiction writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

Social Media, Challenges, and a Prize Opportunity

April 16, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Social Media
- * The Purpose of My Bradbury Challenge
- * Short Story Prize Opportunity
- * The Writing
- * Of Interest

Social Media

Well, I established a [MeWe](#) account. Immediately it felt a lot “cleaner” than Facebook. Not sanitized by any means, but not riddled with disease and unreasoning hatred either. And MeWe doesn’t manipulate the snot out of everything the way Facebook does.

All of that said, I honestly don’t know whether or how long I’ll stay on MeWe either. It isn’t that I’m not social at all, but I realized two things:

One, my primary purpose for wanting something like MeWe is so I can engage with readers and promote my fiction. And of course, that isn’t what the platform is for. Engagement, yes, small talk and chitchat, yes. Promoting books and stories, not so much.

Two, this Journal serves as my social media outlet. On here, I avoid hatred, strong biases and politics in any direction. I share some personal things (maybe too much?) but mostly I just talk writing.

I don’t mention my own fiction very often except as tallied in the “Numbers” section, and that’s only 1) to hold myself accountable and 2) to show you what is possible if you put your fingers on the keyboard and just write.

So even MeWe, good as it is, probably won’t hold my interest very long. I write the Journal, and I share it via Substack and Twitter and now Substack Notes (similar to Twitter). And maybe, for me, that’s all it’s supposed to be.

The Purpose of My Bradbury Challenge

First, my purpose in opening my challenge to others was not for me to challenge them. It was to help them challenge themselves. My reporting numbers for them is strictly my way of giving them a place to report, a way to help them hold themselves accountable.

I hold myself accountable in the “Numbers” section of the Journal, but not everyone is interested in starting their own website and blog or even in writing a newsletter or blog on Substack or Medium or some other external venue.

Many, many writers (incredibly, to me) don’t even keep track of how many publishable words of fiction they write in a day, week, month or year. But those who joined (or want to join) me in the challenge may, if they want, report their numbers to me each week and I’ll pass along those numbers in a Journal post every Monday.

I’m happy to help, but the numbers they report are from their personal challenge, not mine. They aren’t piggy-backing on me or, as one writer phrased it, playing “follow the leader.” They’re challenging themselves and they just happen to know a guy with a blog who doesn’t mind sharing their numbers to enable others to follow their progress. That’s all.

Typically, a writing challenge has a purpose. The main reason to set out on a challenge usually is to do something you’ve never done before—to compare yourself today with the you that

existed yesterday—and, at least in fiction writing, to enjoy the peripheral benefit of increasing your licensable inventory.

I started my own Bradbury Challenge with three purposes in mind. The first and second purposes were to help jumpstart my writing and to exercise my story-idea muscle. I want to meet characters I've never met before in worlds I've never considered before. I don't want to grow stale as a writer.

One quick, easy way to do that is to force myself to write new short stories regularly. Hence the challenge. Invariably, some of the stories will run away and become novellas or novels. Of course, I've done this before. In fact, many of my stand-alone novels and some of my novel series originally sprang from a short story.

So for me, the third purpose, which was to accomplishing something I've never done before—writing at least one story per week for 100 weeks in a row—was only the tertiary and least-important purpose of the challenge. Accomplishing that would be nice, I guess, but it's also a *yawn, stretch, so-what* kind of thing.

But if I can come up with new characters and worlds in brand-new stories, novels, and series, that's a big deal. That is literally the breath of life for a fiction writer, and for a prolific, long-term fiction writer, it's absolutely essential.

So I'm just saying, if you haven't already, figure out the purpose of your challenge. Don't challenge yourself just because I did.

But if your writing is stalled, or if you're frozen solid with the fear of failure, the Bradbury Challenge can be a great way to jumpstart your writing. And remember that what you write isn't important—it's only a bit of fun—but that you write is essential. Having a challenge can help with that.

Short Story Prize Opportunity

I don't remember whether I shared this here. It's a \$300 prize for a western short story. See the other details on the poster below. If you decide to enter, good luck.



The Writing

Most of the day yesterday I was thinking it was Sunday. I was so glad to finally realize it was Saturday instead. I started a short story, but knew I wouldn't finish it yesterday. Now I can finish it today and not break my short little streak. (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Get That To-The-Bone Feel For Your Characters" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/04/get-that-to-the-bone-feeling-for-your-characters.html>. I'm sharing this mostly because it's a slow news day. The author is a strong advocate for the myths of writing, probably because a large part of his living comes from pushing them in his nonfiction books. As always, my advice is Don't Manipulate Your Characters anymore than you would manipulate your neighbors. Just write the story. Just write what happens and what your characters say and do.

See "Are You Giving Yourself Writing Credit?" at <https://www.janefriedman.com/are-you-giving-yourself-writing-credit/>. One word: spreadsheet. Writing is putting words on paper. You'd be amazed how quickly totals build if you keep track.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 980

Writing of “The Gate” (short story)

Day 1..... 2074 words. Total words to date..... 2074

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231

Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221

Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026

Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051

Day 5..... 1451 words. Total words to date..... 11502

Day 6..... 1886 words. Total words to date..... 13388

Day 7..... 2002 words. Total words to date..... 15390

Day 8..... 1060 words. Total words to date..... 16450

Day 9..... 1903 words. Total words to date..... 18353

Day 10... 1143 words. Total words to date..... 19496

Day 11... 0323 words. Total words to date..... 19819

Day 12... 2445 words. Total words to date..... 22264

Day 13... 3184 words. Total words to date..... 25448

Total fiction words for April..... 14715

Total fiction words since April 1... 14715

Total fiction words for 2023..... 80903

Total nonfiction words for April... 12530

Total nonfiction words since April 1... 12530

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 74790

Total words (fiction and this blog) since April 1..... 27244 (to shadow Dean’s challenge)

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 155693

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221

Short story collections..... 31

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April 17, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * It's Monday!
- * Keeping Track
- * Writer friend Aldred G
- * And from Chynna P
- * The Writing
- * Of Interest

Quote of the Day

"An investment in knowledge pays the best interest." Benjamin Franklin

It's Monday!

and below are the results from the Challenge Writers for this week. You can still join in the challenge at any time, of course. There's no cost, and it's a great way to have some fun, jumpstart your writing, and let others see what is possible.

- Tony DeCastro "A Man Named Silk" 4200 words, Sword & Sorcery
- Balázs Jámor "Bullying" 4200 words, Paranormal fantasy
- Loyd Jenkins "Stopover in Kleenor" 3150 words, SF
- Chynna Pace "A Potion for Hobgoblins" 2763 words, Fantasy
- Christopher Ridge "Bad Ronald" 2200 words, Horror
- Robert J. Sadler "The Name on the Sign" 515 words
- Robert J. Sadler "John, Jane & The Sinking Ship" 973 words

Keeping Track

I always encourage writers to keep track of their work. I personally use spreadsheets: one "master" to keep track of all fiction and nonfiction, one dedicated for novels, and one specifically for short stories.

But you don't have to use a spreadsheet, or you can use a quicker, less-intense method in addition to keeping a spreadsheet.

One friend eeps track of his stories by keeping a running list in this format:

Story 1: Story Title, [xxxx words] Date finished.

Story 2: Story Title, [xxxx words] Date finished.

I like this because it's challenge-specific. It notes only stories written for this challenge, tracks how many stories he's written, and even what date he finished each one. Way cool. And notice, no pressure re submitting or publishing, just the sheer fun of writing and keeping track.

I do something similar. I keep all the stories I've written for this challenge in a folder on my desktop. When I drag the Word-document story into the folder, I precede the title with a sequential number. For example, when I finish "Gate" and drag the document into the folder, I will change the file name from "The Gate.docx" to "4 The Gate.docx".

Having the story documents all together in that folder will come in handy too when it's time to consider putting them into collections and/or posting them to my StanbroughWrites substack or whatever else.

Writer friend Aldred G. writes "Greetings from South Africa.

"This links to an article by Irish author Billy O'callaghan. So many touch points with your writing philosophy. It might be helpful to your audience?"

Please see [Billy O'Callaghan on Life as a Writer](#).

And from Chynna P

"Is it okay to report a story that goes beyond conventional short story length and ends up more like a novella or novelette, i.e. 10k words or so? I know that you always advise just letting the story be what it is and not forcing it to be a specific word count, but since this is technically a short story challenge, I just wanted to make sure it was still okay to report longer stories."

Thanks, Chynna. Yes, I think that's perfectly fine. If a story takes off and you can finish it within the allotted time, why not? And if you can't finish it in time (see "The Writing" below) nothing says you can't either wrap it as a short story AND continue it as a novella or novel, or that you can't write a different short story just for the challenge but continue also with the one that took off.

All of that said, it's YOUR challenge with yourself, so you set the rules. Remember first and foremost, What you write doesn't matter; what matters is That you write.

The Writing

Unfortunately, I have to report that I broke my short streak. I didn't finish "The Gate." I'll continue with the challenge, but having missed one week and broken my streak, I'll start over on the 100 weeks.

I hasten to add that I'm neither surprised nor dismayed. The challenge itself is just for fun and I haven't been in much of a fun mood recently. Plus, I have five stories in my inventory that I wouldn't have had without the challenge. So total win.

To participate in the challenge honestly, of course, whether or not I finish “The Gate” I’ll also have to write a new short story for my next deadline, which I haven’t set yet. I know it will be a Sunday, but I’ll wait to set it until I’ve gotten beyond recent events.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Challenges and Other Stuff” at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/challenges-and-other-stuff/>.

See “How 3D printed food can change the way we look at eating” at <https://interestingengineering.com/ie-originals/ie-explainer/season-1/ep-15-how-3d-printed-food-can-change-the-way-we-look-at-eating>. *Star Trek* food replicators, anyone?

See “...Amazon CEO letter to shareholders offers little promise for the publishing industry” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/5000-words-but-the-amazon-ceo-letter-to-shareholders-offers-little-promise-for-the-publishing-industry/>. See PG’s take.

See “How to Communicate with Your Designer to Get the Best Book Cover Design” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-to-communicate-with-your-designer-to-get-the-best-book-cover-design/>. I posted this mostly as filler. Study covers and design your own. It isn’t difficult.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 810

Writing of “The Gate” (short story)

Day 1..... 2074 words. Total words to date..... 2074

Day 2..... 0374 words. Total words to date..... 2448

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 11... 0323 words. Total words to date..... 19819

Day 12... 2445 words. Total words to date..... 22264

Day 13... 3184 words. Total words to date..... 25448

Total fiction words for April..... 15089

Total fiction words for 2023..... 81277

Total nonfiction words for April... 13340

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 75600

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 156877

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 4	
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	221
Short story collections.....	31

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Looking Into ALLI

April 18, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Looking Into ALLI
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“The secret of getting ahead is getting started. The secret of getting started is breaking your complex overwhelming tasks into small manageable tasks, and starting on the first one.” Mark Twain

“The avant-garde group ... revelled in constraint. In 1947 Raymond Queneau, the collective’s co-founder, had imagined a single short story in 99 different ways in his ‘Exercises in Style’. In 1969 Georges Perec wrote a novel that omitted the letter ‘e’. Three years later he produced a novella in which ‘e’ was the only vowel used.” Book reviewer for The Economist

Just think of all the excellent games you could play with your fiction, all the great innovations, all fun and all because of fiction and because you are a writer.

Looking Into ALLI

I might not have posted anything today, but The Passive Guy mentioned ALLI—the Alliance of Independent Authors—near the end of one of his posts, so I wandered over to take a look. I’d heard of ALLI before but hadn’t slowed down enough to check them out before now.

Their list of author member benefits is amazing. As is their overall organization. They’re no ragtag outfit. If you’ve published anything or are about to, full membership is only \$119 per year.

If I were younger or in better health I would definitely join, if for no other reason than the member benefits. I might join anyway.

But no matter what I decide, I strongly suggest you stop by and check out their member benefits at <https://www.allianceindependentauthors.org/member-benefits/>.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Paying attention to numbers can open up meaning in books” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/paying-attention-to-numbers-can-open-up-meaning-in-books/>. Extremely interesting play on writing fiction.

See “Writers Often See The Dark Side” at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/writers-often-see-the-dark-side/>.

See “You Have a New Memory” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/you-have-a-new-memory/>. Eerie. And sad.

See “Self-published authors earn more than traditionally published counterparts, according to ALLi report” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/self-published-authors-earn-more-than-traditionally-published-counterparts-according-to-alli-report/>. See PG’s take, and (if you want to view the legal opinion and order when Apple et al lost their case,

See “US v. Apple Inc. ...” at https://scholar.google.com/scholar_case?case=3005749933787253302.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 350

Writing of “The Gate” (short story)

Day 1..... 2074 words. Total words to date..... 2074

Day 2..... 0374 words. Total words to date..... 2448

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 11... 0323 words. Total words to date..... 19819

Day 12... 2445 words. Total words to date..... 22264

Day 13... 3184 words. Total words to date..... 25448

Total fiction words for April..... 15089

Total fiction words for 2023..... 81277

Total nonfiction words for April... 13690

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 75950
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 157227

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221
Short story collections..... 31

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I Keep Forgetting

April 19, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * I Keep Forgetting
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“One cannot and must not try to erase the past merely because it does not fit the present.” Golda Meir

“Prompt engineering is the imminent future. Do you have it in your arsenal of skills?” from an advertisement for classes on Skillshare—*This would be an excellent line of dialogue in an SF story.*

“Peggy Dean's ChatGPT for Creatives is a great start for anyone who wishes to learn how to integrate this AI tool seamlessly in their workflow and increase productivity.” from the same ad.

Listen, Fiction Writers, if you want to increase productivity,

1. spend more time in the chair (actually ‘be’ a writer),
2. write what happens and the characters' reactions to that as you and they race through the story together, and
3. trust that.

I Keep Forgetting

The world has gone crazy, and I keep forgetting that.

We're living in a different age now, one in which the participation trophy trumps accomplishment and the "process" of a beginning writer is just as valid as that of a veteran who has written dozens of novels and hundreds of short stories.

Whatever works for you, right? In this new participation-trophy world, the person who chooses *not* to learn or practice the craft is just as much a writer as the person who does choose to learn and practice the craft. Hey, whatever works—even if it doesn't. If what you're doing doesn't work, don't change what you're doing: change the definition of "works".

Because really, whether your process actually works or not is "totes" beside the point. All that matters is that people respect you for, um, er, what you can't do and aren't interested enough to learn because however you choose to do it is fine.

God I hate this world.

The other day I left a comment on a post over on Jane Friedman's site. Here's the comment I posted:

"One word: spreadsheet. Every evening I post fiction and nonfiction (blog or nonfiction book) numbers on my spreadsheet. Amazing how quickly even smaller numbers add up. It enables me to check progress toward my goals at any given time. I also write an almost daily blog for writers (<https://hestanbrough.com>) where I hold myself publicly accountable as I teach other writers what they can accomplish, reporting my fiction and nonfiction numbers each day. And I'm no beginner. I've written over 70 novels, 9 novellas, and around 220 short stories."

Yesterday morning I was alerted by TalkWalker to a response. Because I respect others' time I popped over there to read the comment.

Jessica A Conoley (I looked her up. She's the author of ONE fantasy novel and a bunch of books on how to write fiction) was very nice in her response and, I'm sure, exactly on script:

"Thanks for sharing what works for you, Harvey. It's always good to give other writers ideas on how they may want to experiment with celebration."

Celebration? I said nothing about celebration. I celebrate beginnings, not endings.

Sigh. They have ears, or appendages that look remarkably like ears. I can see them, right there, glued on the sides of their head. But they don't listen. And again, we're in an age now where hard-earned expertise means nothing. Why bother searching for a mentor when one person's "process" is just as valid as any other?

I'm not sure, even, why anyone would ever want to read this Journal.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Finding The Beginning” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/04/finding-the-beginning.html>.

See “What Hemingway Means in the 21st Century” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/what-hemingway-means-in-the-21st-century/>. Easy to take shots at a man who can no longer defend himself, but Ernest Hemingway was a better writer on his worst day than the author of this bit of hackneyed prose will ever be. I wonder, will anyone be writing an article titled “What David Barnes means in the 22nd century”?

See “The first transformable nano-scale electronic devices are finally here” at <https://interestingengineering.com/science/transformable-nano-scale-electronic-devices>.

See “An Air National Guardsman was arrested after allegedly applying to be a hitman online” at <https://www.npr.org/2023/04/18/1170603863/guardsman-hitman-tennesse>. Hmm. Isn’t this a little “Minority Report”ish? Arresting a person for a crime s/he hasn’t yet committed?

The Numbers

The Journal..... 700

Writing of “The Gate” (short story)

Day 1..... 2074 words. Total words to date..... 2074

Day 2..... 0374 words. Total words to date..... 2448

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231

Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221

Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026

Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051

Day 5..... 1451 words. Total words to date..... 11502

Day 6..... 1886 words. Total words to date..... 13388

Day 7..... 2002 words. Total words to date..... 15390

Day 8..... 1060 words. Total words to date..... 16450

Day 9..... 1903 words. Total words to date..... 18353

Day 10... 1143 words. Total words to date..... 19496

Day 11... 0323 words. Total words to date..... 19819

Day 12... 2445 words. Total words to date..... 22264

Day 13... 3184 words. Total words to date..... 25448

Total fiction words for April..... 15089

Total fiction words for 2023..... 81277

Total nonfiction words for April... 14390

Total nonfiction words for the year.....	76650
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	157927
Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date...	4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	221
Short story collections.....	31

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How Ernest Hemingway Wrote

April 20, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * How Ernest Hemingway Wrote
- * The Writing
- * Of Interest

How Ernest Hemingway Wrote

That’s the plainest, best title I could have given this topic. Had I seen that title at ANY time during my life, I would have shoved through crowds to be sure I was allowed to read what was below it. Yet dozens of writers will glance at the title and not bother to read the text. Oh well. That’s why God invented Jim Beam and Jameson & Sons Irish whiskey.

If you would like to learn a LOT about how Ernest Hemingway wrote fiction, and if you would like to read it directly from the man himself, I suggest you read his last novel, [The Garden of Eden](#). You can find it in paperback and hardback on Ebay and in Kindle on Amazon.

In that novel, he tells the story of a man and his wife traveling in Europe and of the exotic woman his wife met and brought into their marriage. Naturally, the whole thing dissolves (mostly because the wife, Catherine, is insane), not into a triangle but into two couples derived from only three people.

There are things in the story you might or might not like, but the main story is not the reason for a writer to read *The Garden of Eden*.

Throughout the main story, the protagonist (David Bourne, whom I have absolutely no doubt is Ernest Hemingway) also writes stories and puts down details about how he writes them even as he's writing them. Those segments are invaluable if you want to know Hemingway's process and what was going through his mind as he was writing fiction.

I found those segments of the book nothing short of fascinating. I've even thought about going through the book again and typing-in all those sections where David Bourne is writing stories and talking about writing stories. Just for my own use, of course. But there's no law saying you can't do the same thing.

It will be difficult if not impossible to glean everything you can learn from those passages with only one reading. I suspect it will take at least three readings, maybe at different times of day and on different days of the week to mine all that's available to you.

That said, I suspect you would learn something new and fresh on your tenth or eleventh reading that you hadn't seen or noticed or understood before. This novel should be required reading in any fiction writing class.

I was pleasantly surprised to see that my own process isn't much different from his, especially that when he's in the world of the story the "real" world ceases to exist for him, and that even when he was through writing for the day, sometimes the world of the story stayed with him for a bit and blurred the lines of reality.

The Writing

I started on something titled "He sat in his chair" and wrote 2187 words. I have no idea whether or what it will be, but the words are publishable words of fiction so I've added them to the total below.

I've removed "The Gate" from its place under "Numbers" below, but it is still very much alive. I'll report on it again when I've done more with it, as I will with any other writing.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Special Extra Stretch Goal" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/special-extra-stretch-goal/>.

See "Your Elusive Creative Genius" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/04/your-elusive-creative-genius.html>.

See "Business Musings: Assessing Pandemic Damage" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/business-musings-assessing-pandemic-damage/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 580

Writing of “He sat in his chair” (short story)

Day 1..... 2187 words. Total words to date..... 2187

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 11... 0323 words. Total words to date..... 19819

Day 12... 2445 words. Total words to date..... 22264

Day 13... 3184 words. Total words to date..... 25448

Total fiction words for April..... 17276

Total fiction words for 2023..... 83464

Total nonfiction words for April... 14970

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 77230

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 160694

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark, adherence to Heinlein’s Rules, and that following the myths of fiction writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

Creating Realistic Characters

April 21, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Creating Realistic Characters
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“Don’t be a character assassin with your own characters. Even your villain can be noble.” David Farland

“Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear—not absence of fear.” Mark Twain

“In marketing you must choose between boredom, shouting and seduction. Which do you want?”
Roy H. Williams

There’s my problem right there. Boredom and shouting are, well, boredom and shouting. And seduction is dishonest.

Creating Realistic Characters

I almost launched into a whole long thing on characters. For example, that any major characters should be well-rounded. Duh.

That means that any so-called “good” characters (including your protagonist and his or her allies) should have three or four “good” character traits and at least one “bad” trait, plus whatever endearing or annoying personality quirks, etc.

And of course, vice-versa for the “bad” characters. Your antagonist and his or her minions should have three or four “bad” traits and at least one “good” or “redeeming” trait, again plus whatever endearing or annoying personality quirks, etc.

Just as when you encounter someone in real life, you start with a stereotype, then learn more about the characters until you come to know them.

And secondary and tertiary or cardboard (flat) characters should be memorable and have memorable dialogue since their most-often primary purpose is to foreshadow future events. (Think Joe Pesci’s character in the *Lethal Weapon* movies.)

Then I remembered I covered all of that and more, including a comprehensive list of character traits and quirks, in my book and audio series on the topic. Both are titled *Creating Realistic Characters*.

The short, concise ebook is available at <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B004SBOBDO> and the audio lectures are available at <https://harveystanbrough.com/lecture-series/>. The audio lectures includes two handouts in pdf: “Cliché Traits Exercise” and “Partial Listing of Character Traits,” both of which are also included in the ebook.

Either version of *Creating Realistic Characters* is an awareness item. Its purpose is to make you aware of what goes into characters. Once you’ve read the information, I do NOT advocate “planning” or “character sketching” or “building” your characters. I advocate getting to know them just as you get to know human beings you encounter as their (and your) story unfolds.

After all, the title of my instruction is “*creating* realistic characters,” not “constructing” them.

Your creative subconscious knows most of what you need in order to write great characters. Reading or listening to *Creating Realistic Characters* will make your conscious, critical mind aware of those traits and quirks and give your creative subconscious permission to use them.

And your writing and your stories will be better for it.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Seductions And Promises” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/seductions-and-promises/>.

See “When Apple Comes Calling, ‘It’s the Kiss of Death’” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/when-apple-comes-calling-its-the-kiss-of-death/>. For those who believe Apple is “good” while Microsoft and Amazon are E-V-I-L. (grin)

See “Playing with a New Look” at <https://deanwesleymith.com/playing-with-a-new-look/>. Shrug.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 490

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051
Day 5..... 1451 words. Total words to date..... 11502
Day 6..... 1886 words. Total words to date..... 13388
Day 7..... 2002 words. Total words to date..... 15390
Day 8..... 1060 words. Total words to date..... 16450
Day 9..... 1903 words. Total words to date..... 18353
Day 10... 1143 words. Total words to date..... 19496
Day 11... 0323 words. Total words to date..... 19819
Day 12... 2445 words. Total words to date..... 22264
Day 13... 3184 words. Total words to date..... 25448

Total fiction words for April..... 17276

Total fiction words for 2023..... 83464

Total nonfiction words for April... 15460

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 77720

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 161184

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date...	4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	221
Short story collections.....	31

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Ray Bradbury, and Writing Fiction

April 22, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Ray Bradbury
- * If You Believe Writing Fiction Is Hard Work
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“Though it cleared the launch pad, Starship’s first orbital launch attempt ended with a dramatic explosion, or as SpaceX put it, ‘a rapid unscheduled disassembly’.” Chris Young, for Interesting Engineering. Great spin, no?

“Night is everything. The shadows come out from under the trees and shadows become night.”
Ray Bradbury

“I write entirely to find out what I’m thinking, what I’m looking at, what I see and what it means. What I want and what I fear.” Joan Didion

“Wow, so much negativity. Forearms flung across foreheads all over the place. Lighten up. Writing fiction is fun. You’re telling a story, not finding a cure for cancer.” Me, after a lot of other comments on “Reader Friday: Advice” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/04/reader-friday-advice-2.html>.

Ray Bradbury

My friend Gary V emailed with a link to an article on Ray Bradbury. Sharing it and the interview with you here, but I’ll let Gary introduce it to you as he did to me:

“Great piece about Bradbury. In the interview at the very bottom we see how visual he was, how a movie studio could take one of his stories and shoot it with almost no ‘treatment.’ It’s interesting that not showing an alien/monster made it more frightening. Naturally, the movie biz know-it-alls were obstacles.

“BTW – The clip is 11 min. long but the on-screen counter would lead you to believe it’s over an hour.”

Thanks, Gary. Here’s the link: <https://www.pulitzer.org/article/spotlight-ray-bradbury>

During the interview (at about 5:13) notice what he says about his creative subconscious: that as a result of watching films all his life, often several every week, he “came to Universal as a professional screenwriter. It was all in my psyche; it was all in my blood. I didn’t have to think about it.”

If You Believe Writing Fiction Is Hard Work

Now contrast Bradbury’s attitude with that of so many at places like Kill Zone blog. God, I get bone-weary of know-it-alls talking about how hard it is to write fiction. If you would like to see some of the most negative, horrible (yet standard and typical) writing advice to date, click the link in the last Quote of the Day.

Folks, if you find that writing fiction is hard work or something that’s almost impossible to do, if you think it isn’t a ton of outright fun, then

1. you’re overthinking it, exactly as you’ve been taught to do, and
2. you’re doing it wrong. And
3. don’t hand me that “whatever works for me” crap, because if whatever you’re doing actually “worked” for you, you would enjoy the process.

Writing fiction is an exercise in telling stories, sitting alone in a room making sh-tuff up. If you believe writing fiction is hard work, grab a shovel and a pick-axe and drop by my house. I’ll supervise while you learn what hard work actually is.

As I wrote in one of the quotes of the day above, lighten up. Writing fiction is fun. You’re an entertainer, a person telling a story that, in the overall scheme, doesn’t matter in the slightest. You’re not finding a cure for cancer.

And if you think what you’re writing is important in any way, you should probably seriously consider getting over yourself.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Anatomy of a Fake Literary Agency Scam” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/anatomy-of-a-fake-literary-agency-scam/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 570

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 11... 0323 words. Total words to date..... 19819

Day 12... 2445 words. Total words to date..... 22264

Day 13... 3184 words. Total words to date..... 25448

Total fiction words for April..... 17276

Total fiction words for 2023..... 83464

Total nonfiction words for April... 16030

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 78290

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 161754

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221

Short story collections..... 31

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Self-Published Book Awards and Best Seller Status

April 23, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Writer's Digest Self-Published Book Awards
- * Want to be a Best Seller?
- * A Reminder
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“the internet's and high tech's steep and brutal downsides—political polarization for profit, the knowing encouragement of internet addiction, the destruction of childhood, a nation that has

grown shallower and less able to think....” Peggy Noonan in “Artificial Intelligence in the Garden of Eden” in The Wall Street Journal

“Hubris is one of the great renewable resources.” P. J. O’Rourke

Writer’s Digest Self-Published Book Awards

Yesterday my wife forwarded me URL that outlines the Writer’s Digest Self-Published Book Awards. I will not be entering, but I thought I’d forward it on to you in case you’re interested.

Note: the deadline for entry is May 1, so slightly over a week away.

Note: the entry fee is \$125 for the first entry. I didn’t read beyond that.

The link with all the pertinent information is <https://www.writersdigest.com/writers-digest-competitions/self-published-book-awards>.

If you decide to enter, good luck.

Want to be a Best Seller?

If you’re a pure fiction writer—by which I mean if you can be happy enough just sitting alone in a room making shtuff up—good for you. Welcome to the club.

But if you’d like to make an actual living as a self-published author, there are two essential steps, and from what I’ve seen, there is no way around them.

- Learn marketing
- Do marketing

Consider James Patterson: He never grounds the reader in the setting, he seldom if ever invokes the five physical senses of the POV character, and tension is all but non-existent in his novels, yet he’s a bestselling author.

You, on the other hand, can write circles around Patterson and barely make coffee money. The difference? Patterson spent years working for the major advertising and marketing firm J. Walter Thompson Company in New York City. Tada!

It harms my pride too much to derive from those facts that craft doesn’t matter, but as much as I hate to say it, I’m pretty sure marketing matters more.

If I had it all to do over again, I would do exactly what I’m doing right now with regard to the actual writing:

- I would attempt to adhere to Heinlein’s Rules, especially Rule 3,
- I would write into the dark, trusting my creative subconscious and reporting the story as it unfolds and as my characters and I race through it together; and in that I would

- ground the reader at the beginning of every major scene, invoking the POV characters physical and emotional senses whenever possible,
- use pacing relevant to the scene and reader expectations for that genre, and
- end every chapter and major scene with a cliffhanger.
- Finally, I would also continue to study the works of masterful fiction writers to learn “how they did that” and then apply what I learned.

Doing those three major things—adhering to Heinlein’s Rules, WITD without doubting and double-checking myself, and learning/applying craft techniques as I go—would enable me to get hours and days and months and years of practice that writers who are mired in the myths will never get because they’re too busy hovering over one work instead of writing.

But in addition to doing what’s proven successful for me and for most major long-term professional fiction writers, I would also do my level best to develop an interest in marketing—at least enough to stay awake during even a single university class on the subject, a level of tolerance I do not currently possess—and then I would go earn at least an associate’s degree and preferably a bachelor’s or master’s degree in Marketing.

Because folks, that’s where the sales are, and that is where the bestseller status is hiding.

Now, there are Marketing programs in many university systems, and there are probably free classes (even free university classes) via the Internet, and there are many, many valid books on marketing available to you.

I suggest you get started. And good luck.

A Reminder

I will post results from the ongoing Bradbury Challenge tomorrow as promised. Those of you who are involved in the challenge, get your title, word count and genre in to be before I go live with the Journal tomorrow morning.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “This Fiction Business: A Review” at <https://franktheodat.substack.com/p/this-fiction-business-a-review>. I’ve been meaning to list this for awhile. Check it out.

See “What Really Killed Hank Williams Senior” at <http://dyingwords.net/what-really-killed-hank-williams-senior/>. A good homage to a truly great writer. I recommend a subscription to Garry’s newsletter.

See “Becoming a Brand Name” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/04/becoming-a-brand-name.html>.

See “Artificial Intelligence in the Garden of Eden” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/artificial-intelligence-in-the-garden-of-eden/>.

See “Character Type & Trope Thesaurus Entry: Hero” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/character-type-trope-thesaurus-entry-hero/>. After my note on characters a few days ago. Note: I do not endorse using any “builders” of any kind as regards your writing.

See “90% of My Skills Are Now Worth \$0” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/90-of-my-skills-are-now-worth-0/>. Whatever.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 820

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 11... 0323 words. Total words to date..... 19819

Day 12... 2445 words. Total words to date..... 22264

Day 13... 3184 words. Total words to date..... 25448

Total fiction words for April..... 17276

Total fiction words for 2023..... 83464

Total nonfiction words for April... 16850

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 79110

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 162574

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221

Short story collections..... 31

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Wes Crowley Book Sale (in Paper)

April 24, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting
- * Wes Crowley Book Sale (in Paper)
- * My Comments on a TKZ Post
- * Of Interest

Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting

As you can see, the challenge is still ongoing for some. Of course, others probably still are meeting or exceeding the challenge as well but simply aren't reporting numbers to me, which is perfectly fine.

If anyone is having trouble with the challenge, I suggest you write the story for the week on the first day of the new week. Get it out of the way so you don't have to worry about it, thereby reducing pressure on yourself. Also, that will leave room to write more than one story that week. (grin)

- Balázs Jámbor "Magic also happens" 1900 words, Spiritual fantasy
- Chynna Pace "Hotel Stinemere", 6238 words, Horror
- Christopher Ridge "Loving Her..." 4300 words, Horror
- K.C. Riggs "The Grande Dame of Reims" 2803 words, General Fiction

Congratulations to all of you for knocking it out of the park.

Wes Crowley Book Sale (in Paper)

You'll probably remember that a month or two ago I attended the first annual Tombstone Festival of books. So I would have adequate paper stock on hand (even just writing that seems SO archaic) I had ten copies of each of the first ten Wes Crowley novels printed and took them with me.

Back when I was young, I used to say of my beer-drinking prowess that I could "drink one, spill one, and give one away, and by then I was drunk off the fumes."

Well, that's about how the so-called festival went. I think I sold one, and I know I gave one away. And that was about all the movement my books experienced other than me putting them on the table and arranging them in the first place.

The festival was doomed from the beginning, really, and I should have known better. For one thing, it was held in the middle of the week instead of on a weekend. I guess the organizers had a bias against selling books to the *thousands* of tourists who flock to Tombstone each weekend.

For another, it was held in an historic but nondescript old building where the biggest concern of the organizers was that nothing be spilled on their floor. Consequently, no coffee, tea, soft drinks or even bottled water were allowed at the tables.

Okay, even I'm getting bored with this account. I won't be going back for future iterations of the "festival" unless it undergoes a LOT of common-sense changes.

But in the meantime, I'm left with a lot of stock. So although most of my paper books are \$15.99 plus shipping at Amazon, I'm offering what I have on hand for \$10 each plus shipping. (Media rate shipping for the set of 10 is \$6.50.)

So if any of you enjoy westerns and/or action-adventure and/or romance with a little psychological suspense and magic realism thrown in, and if you'd like to see whether I apply in my writing the same things I preach to you in the Journal, they're available. For any serious students out there, this would also be an opportunity to see how my own storytelling skills changed for the better over time.

The first novel I ever wrote was *Leaving Amarillo* (Book 4 in the set). That was in October-November 2014. I wrote *The Right Cut*, the last novel in this set of 10 (and my 16th novel overall), in July of 2016. By contrast, the 11th and 12th novels in the original saga, *In the Cantina at Noon* and *Wes Crowley: The Final Chapter*, were my 43rd and 62nd overall novels and were published in July 2019 and July 2021 respectively.

Anyway, if you're interested in buying some of these books, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

My Comments on a TKZ Post

I've linked to the TKZ post "Revision and Omar Khayyam" in today's "Of Interest" so you may read it if you like. However, I do not endorse anything in the article. Rather I mention it only so I can pass along the comments I left on the post:

Comment 1: "I revise as I go, though I call it 'cycling' to differentiate it from the critical-mind function that springs to mind when people hear the word "revise."

"I write for an hour, usually a thousand to twelve hundred words of so, then break for a few seconds to a few minutes. When I return to the manuscript, I read over what I wrote during the previous session, allowing myself to touch the manuscript as I go. When I get back to the white space I continue writing the story.

"I do all of this from the creative subconscious. I would never allow my conscious, critical mind to alter what actually happened in the story that my characters, not I, are living. That would just be silly. I create, I do not construct."

Comment 2: "Oh, re 'there are plenty of books and online resources with information about how to revise,' unfortunately, you are right. There are also tons of books on dozens of other subjects that support writers' unreasoning fears. Most are versions of each other.

“But there are a few books and resources out there for those who are interested in overcoming those fears and who want to explore alternatives to the self-defeating outline-[write]-revise-seek critical input-rewrite-polish construction process.

“Two of those books are my own *Quiet the Critical Voice (and Write Fiction)* (see <https://stonethreadpublishing.com/quiet-the-critical-voice-and-write-fiction/>) and *Writing the Character-Driven Story* (see <https://stonethreadpublishing.com/writing-the-character-driven-story/>). I also write an almost daily blog on writing at <https://hestanbrough.com>. Visit to get free resources.

“For those who are interested, I also recommend NY Times and USA Today bestseller Dean Wesley Smith’s *Heinlein’s Rules & Five Simple Business Rules for Writing* (see <https://wmgpublishinginc.com/project/heinleins-rules/>) and *Writing into the Dark* (see <https://wmgpublishinginc.com/project/writing-into-the-dark/>). For what it’s worth, his *Stages of a Fiction Writer* and *How to Write Fiction Sales Copy* are priceless too.”

So there you go. You might also read the other comments on the post if only to see how widespread the fear is. By and large, TKZ has become a mutual admiration society. Sigh.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Revision and Omar Khayyam” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/04/revision-and-omar-khayyam.html>. I do not recommend the advice in this article, but read my comments on it.

See “10 Working drones with amazing capabilities” at <https://interestingengineering.com/ie-originals/ie-explainer/season-1/ep-18-10-working-drones-with-amazing-capabilities>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1050

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 11... 0323 words. Total words to date..... 19819

Day 12... 2445 words. Total words to date..... 22264

Day 13... 3184 words. Total words to date..... 25448

Total fiction words for April..... 17276

Total fiction words for 2023..... 83464

Total nonfiction words for April... 17900

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 80160

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 163624

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 4	
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	221
Short story collections.....	31

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Book Sale Redux

April 25, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Book Sale Redux
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“I can see how using our critical minds to revise a manuscript could spoil the original product. And yet, I think we have to use both sides of our brains to come up with the best story. If only I knew how to do that.” Kay DiBianca, in response to my second comment on her post at TKZ

And my response:

“In every case, Kay, the ‘best’ story is the authentic story. To find that you only have to trust the story that unfolds around you and your characters as you’re running through it.

“In the ‘real world’ it’s trusting your neighbors’ account of their trip to Zambia instead of correcting them as they’re conveying it.”

Book Sale Redux

My wife told me we have only 6 full sets (of 10) of the Wes Crowley novels in trade paperback that I mentioned yesterday. I guess we have a few strays too. Anyway, here’s a low-res photo of the 10 novels stacked up:



To see all of my novels, visit <https://stonethreadpublishing.com> and click on the tab of your choice: Mystery, Action-Adventure/Thriller, Science Fiction, or Westerns and the Wes Crowley saga. Visiting that website is a little surreal for me. Hard to imagine that I actually wrote all those stories.

Well, plus 9 novellas—those are mixed in with the novels in whatever genre—and Over 200 short stories in thirty-some 5- and 10-story collections. You'll see tabs for those there too. Plus all the nonfiction books. Whew! That is a lot of writing, especially since April 2014, and especially considering I wasn't writing for around two years of that time.

I really should take the time to add-up how many millions of words of fiction and nonfiction I've written since 2014. The number of words in all the the articles, essays, poems, blog posts, etc. before that are lost to time.

I recommend that you younger writers figure out your word-count totals now, and keep track of them as you continue. Someday it might be a matter of great importance to you. Not everything we achieve in life is quantifiable. Writing is.

Anyway, if you see anything that interests you at the publisher site, let me know via email and I'll send it right out.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Get a Masters in Publishing” at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/get-a-masters-in-publishing/>. I still recommend a bachelor’s in Marketing instead.

See “Editor/Janitor” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/04/editor-janitor.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 400

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 11... 0323 words. Total words to date..... 19819

Day 12... 2445 words. Total words to date..... 22264

Day 13... 3184 words. Total words to date..... 25448

Total fiction words for April..... 17276

Total fiction words for 2023..... 83464

Total nonfiction words for April... 18300

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 80560

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 164024

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221

Short story collections..... 31

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Why I Write Into the Dark, and An Essay on Pope

April 28, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Why I Write Into the Dark
- * Just for Grins: An Essay on Pope
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“[Y]ou have to have confidence to be a champion and that is the only thing I ever wished to be.” Ernest Hemingway

“Certainly, books should be judged by those who read them—not explained by the writer.” Ernest Hemingway

“[I]t is ... important for me to write in tranquility, trying to write as well as I can, with no eye on any market, nor any thought of what the stuff will bring, or even if it can be published...” Ernest Hemingway

Why I Write Into the Dark

1. Life is not logical. It is unscripted. It happens, unfolds, as you live it.
2. For fiction to seem “real,” to approximate life and therefore be thought interesting, it must be as unscripted as life.
3. Logic, the basis of sensible, block by block construction, allows no spontaneity. Therefore,
4. Logic, whether it originates in the conscious, critical mind of a human being or in some AI algorithm, has no place in the act of creation. It has no place in fiction.

My creative subconscious can spontaneously create logic in a fiction, but logic cannot create spontaneity.

As a writer, I write the story that unfolds around my characters and me as we race through it together. Whatever happens happens. Whatever the characters say and do, the characters say and do. What I write on the screen and publish in the story or novel is what actually happened.

I would no more deign to “correct” my characters in the telling of their story than I would to correct my neighbors as they relate the story of what happened to them on the way to the grocery or during the plane ride back from Ireland or during a safari on the plains of Africa.

When a reader buys one of my stories or novels, s/he can rest assured what s/he’s reading in the pages is what happened in the story. It’s as much reportage as fiction.

As a reader, I make it a point never to read stories that were constructed block by block after being preplanned. I want the author’s best effort.

A writer can find that personal best only by trusting the creative subconscious and writing what actually happens in the story, not what happens in the writer’s second-guessing of what happened in the story. If the writer is unable to trust him/herself and unwilling to put forth that effort, the writing is not worthy of my time.

Are there writers who write into the dark and don’t do a good job of conveying the story?

Yes, of course. But in every case that I've seen, those writers are committing the sin of omission. Most of them write the skeleton of the story. They write thin. They need to learn to slow down, take their time, ground the reader in the setting and and flesh-out the story.

They need to learn to put on the page what the POV character sees, hears, smells, tastes and feels, both physically and emotionally, in the story that's unfolding as they run through it with their characters. Cycling will help with a lot of this.

The point is, a writer who trusts his creative subconscious but writes poorly needs only to continue learning and practicing the craft.

But a writer who plots everything in advance, then constructs the story bit by bit, then revises, then seeks critical input, then rewrites will never surprise the reader (anything you can "figure out," the reader can figure out too) and the writing/storytelling will never improve because s/he will never learn to trust the creative subconscious.

That one step—learning to trust yourself—is both tiny and huge: you put your butt in the chair, shove your critical mind aside, mop the sweat off your cheeks and brow, and literally just type whatever comes. But if you can bring yourself to do that, it will change your life as a writer forever.

Of course, your critical mind won't believe you're really over the fear. It will test you. And you will have to write five stories, ten, fifteen into the dark. But sooner than you might believe, the critical voice will grow weaker. It will be easier and easier to relegate to its corner. At the same time, the quality of your stories will improve and you will gain confidence.

You will write more stories and better stories, and they will be true, authentic creations, not something you forced (a false construct) with your critical mind.

And because you are no longer bowing to the unreasoning fears—because you are DEFENDING your work instead of inviting criticism, and because you are trusting yourself and looking and moving FORWARD instead of hovering in place rewriting ad nauseam—you will continue writing, moving from story to story to story (it's called Practice) and your craft will improve more quickly than you would have dreamed possible.

But I'm not asking you to believe me. I'm only asking you to do yourself a favor and try it—but I mean REALLY try it, so you know within yourself once and for all whether it works. You won't regret it.

Just for Grins: An Essay on Pope

You probably know Alexander Pope was a great poet and essayist during the late 17th and early 18th century. He was a contemporary of Jonathan Swift, John Dryden, and many other literary notables, and his wit scalded many of them, some repeatedly.

Having been given an assignment in university to write an essay “concerning Dryden, Pope or both” and being practically allergic to such assignments, I sought to make it fun. In a glancing-blow parody of Pope’s “An Essay on Man,” I wrote “An Essay on Pope.” During the exercise I also had Jonathan Swift’s “A Modest Proposal” firmly in mind.

It’s written in the style employed by Pope et al, with explanatory introductions to each section, certain capitalized Nouns and so on. I mentioned that I was in college, but I should also say I was in my early 40s at the time. In the final lines of the essay, I even alluded to my future job as an adjunct instructor teaching English, Creative Writing, and Literature classes and expressed hoped that I would have a few students exactly like me. (grin)

The essay is chock full of allusions to other people, organizations, etc. I’ve been told it can be fun to read and fun to “figure out.” If you’d like a copy, free and just for grins, click <https://harveystanbrough.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/An-Essay-on-Pope.pdf>.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Living In The Past” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/living-in-the-past/>.

See “What Will the Bookstore of the Future Look Like?” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/what-will-the-bookstore-of-the-future-look-like/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1130

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 11... 0323 words. Total words to date..... 19819

Day 12... 2445 words. Total words to date..... 22264

Day 13... 3184 words. Total words to date..... 25448

Total fiction words for April..... 17276

Total fiction words for 2023..... 83464

Total nonfiction words for April... 19430

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 81690

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 165154

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark, adherence to Heinlein's Rules, and that following the myths of fiction writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting

May 1, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting
- * Adios April
- * Of Interest

Quote of the Day

"I don't plot. I don't sit down and plot a book. It sort of unreels as I write." Nora Roberts

Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting

Congratulations to the Challenge participants for another week of success moving forward, not hovering or looking back. You can still join in the challenge at any time. There's no cost of course, and it's a great way to both have some fun and jumpstart your writing.

- Tony DeCastro "Verlaine Shot Rimbaud" 3500 words Crime
- Chynna Pace "Teatime Sorcery" 4983 words Magical Realism
- Christopher Ridge "Neighborhood Wife Swap" 4000 words Horror
- KC Riggs "On the Island of Now" 1590 words General Fiction

Adios April

I can't say I'm sorry to see April pass into the history books after the personal tragedy that befell us on April 11. Thanks for your continued support during this raw emotional time. I'll post in the Journal as I have something to say or something to pass along.

And of course I hope to get back to writing fiction and telling stories soon. Unfortunately, like telling an authentic story, healing is not a matter of simple plotting or of thinking your way through it.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “In The Air Around Us” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/04/in-the-air-around-us.html>.

See “Home Safe” at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/home-safe/>.

See “Some Publishing History” at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/some-publishing-history/>.

See “5 Tips to Improve Newsletters – Part I” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/05/5-tips-to-improve-newsletters-part-i.html>.

See “Outlines, AI and Stormy Daniels” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/outlines-ai-and-stormy-daniels/>. I didn’t click through to the original post because I don’t care what anyone else has to say about “Stormy Daniels.” But this excerpt of the article and the comments are pretty good.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 280

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 11... 0323 words. Total words to date..... 19819

Day 12... 2445 words. Total words to date..... 22264

Day 13... 3184 words. Total words to date..... 25448

Total fiction words for May..... xxxx

Total fiction words for 2023..... 83464

Total nonfiction words for May... 280

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 81690

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 165454

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark, adherence to Heinlein’s Rules, and that following the myths of fiction writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

Another Challenge: I Dare You

May 2, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * From Distributor StreetLib
- * Using Smashwords Coupons Through Draft2Digital
- * Another Challenge: I Dare You
- * Of Interest

Quote of the Day

“Today I want to talk about ebooks. I want to show how their real popularity is often not fully reflected in the publishing industry reports we draw upon to assess our target book markets.”
Giacomo D’Angelo, StreetLib CEO

From Distributor StreetLib

Although I do not distribute or aggregate through StreetLib, I do receive their newsletter, and I recommend it. Below is an excerpt from a recent newsletter from their US office. I reparagraphed it to make it easier to read:

“At StreetLib, we love digging into book publishing market statistics, and one thing that we’re noticing is that the appetite for Global digital books, including ebooks, digital audiobooks, and print-on-demand (POD) is larger than most people think.

“In his terrific article, [The Quiet Ebooks Revolution](#) on Medium.com, our CEO Giacomo D’Angelo writes that although conventional wisdom is that ebooks make up just 20% of the U.S. market, recent reports show that while print books sold 403 million units last year (down 1.3%), the unit sales of audiobooks accounted for 188 million units (up 23%!).

“Ebooks sold 526 million units (up 8%), making ebooks by far the most popular reading format. Combine ebooks and digital audiobooks, and you have a market that outsells print by 311 million units and is growing rapidly.”

Most of the time, when you see a report saying ebook and/or digital audiobook sales are flagging, that report is false and was published by someone in the traditional publishing industry.

Like the dinosaurs they are, instead of embracing the new technology and beginning to treat authors with the deserved respect, traditional publishing continues to attempt to shove others away from the feed trough. Problem is, there are fewer and fewer others to shove away. Most have left to take part in the ebook revolution.

Using Smashwords Coupons Through Draft2Digital

I’m about a week late reporting this, and thanks to KC for the tip.

As most of you probably know, Draft2Digital acquired Smashwords some time ago. That enabled writers like me to continue publishing books to the Smashwords store and to Smashwords markets without using the extremely clunky Smashwords interface. We could do it all with the streamlined D2D interface.

Now we can also use Smashwords coupons to set up special limited or unlimited sales through D2D. Read all about it in the first item in today's "Of Interest." And if you'd like to check the D2D blog regularly, you may do so at <https://www.draft2digital.com/blog/>.

Another Challenge: I Dare You

As I commented to a like-minded writer this morning, trying to teach others the incredible freedom of writing into the dark is a conundrum. A writer has to defy his or her own unreasoning fear—by that I mean fear that has absolutely NO basis in reality and NO real consequences—and step away from his or her comfort zone in order to greatly expand that comfort zone.

Unfortunately, most will never even try, despite the fact that there is no penalty at all for trying. There are zero harmful consequences and only two possible outcomes:

1. you will enjoy the freedom, wonder, and exhilaration of writing into the dark, not to mention the newfound authenticity of it, and continue "testing" it, or
2. you will be overcome by the unreasoning fear and return to your old way of doing things: outline, revise, seek critical input, rewrite, etc. So no harm, no foul.

In other words, the result of trying WITD is not a foregone conclusion. If you really try it you WILL experience everything I mentioned in #1 above, but the fear will still be there, lurking in the shadows on the edge of your creative subconscious.

If you want to continue enjoying the astounding benefits of WITD you will have to be vigilant, shut down the critical voice each time it tries to horn-in, and continue, no matter what, to Just Write The Next Sentence. It really is that simple. This is you training yourself to trust your creative subconscious and your characters.

The sole purpose of the critical voice, a function of your conscious mind, is to protect you. In fiction writing its purpose is to delay or stop you from embarrassing yourself by slowing or stopping your writing. And it has tricks on tricks for doing so.

But if you really try WITD, over time—a few to several days—the critical voice will come around less and less often and attack you less stringently. And you will begin to feel a joy in writing that you've never known.

Still, the biggest, most major obstacle, as I mentioned at the outset, is the fear that traps you inside your comfort zone. If you can't overcome that, then you'll just have to be satisfied living with unreasoning fear. I personally don't understand that mindset. But I suppose we're all addicted to something.

If you CAN overcome that fear, or if you're willing to just ATTEMPT to overcome it, then you have at least a chance to test WITD for yourself and enjoy its freedom and benefits.

Frankly, I'm not sure why I care how others write, except that I was a member of the frozen-solid other camp for years and now I'm not. Being free of that paralyzing fear is an incredible feeling, and I'd like very much for everyone to experience it just once.

I tell people all the time, please DON'T believe me about WITD, just try it for yourself. But they won't. The fear's just too great. So I'm doing something unprecedented. For anyone who wants to really try WITD, I'm conducting

A Free Limited-Time Intensive,

all via email. But it IS an intensive. You will learn WITD and you will learn cycling. You will write a lot, and there won't be time for planning or plotting. (Then again, if you'd rather plan and plot and see whether you can sneak it past me, please don't bother. I'm trying to help you here.) Of course we'll discuss your personal circumstances and adjust the challenge accordingly, but it will require a commitment of time on your part.

If you want to take a shot at breaking the cycle of garbage-in, garbage-out, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Smashwords Coupons Available Through Draft2Digital" at <https://www.draft2digital.com/blog/smashwords-coupons-let-you-promote-any-or-all-of-your-ebooks-on-your-own-terms/>.

See "First Page Critique: Point Of View Is A Powerful Tool" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/05/first-page-critique-pointof-view-is-a-powerful-tool.html>.

See "How To Become An Audiobook Narrator: 5 Vital Skills" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-to-become-an-audiobook-narrator-5-vital-skills/>.

See "Process for Fantasy World Building" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/process-for-fantasy-world-building/>. Or you (and your readers) could just, I dunno, learn about the world like you do in real life as you experience it alongside your characters?

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1120

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 11... 0323 words. Total words to date..... 19819
Day 12... 2445 words. Total words to date..... 22264
Day 13... 3184 words. Total words to date..... 25448

Total fiction words for May..... xxxx
Total fiction words for 2023..... 83464
Total nonfiction words for May... 1400
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 83090
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 166554

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark, adherence to Heinlein's Rules, and that following the myths of fiction writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

Stop Hitting Yourself

May 3, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Process for (Genre) World Building
- * Stop Hitting Yourself
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“To be a champ, you have to believe in yourself when nobody else will.” Sugar Ray Robinson

“Remember: Plot is no more than footprints left in the snow *after your characters have run by* on their way to incredible destinations.” [emphasis added] Ray Bradbury

Process for (Genre) World Building

Yesterday I linked to the post “Process for Fantasy World Building” over at The Passive Voice. The article advocated ridiculous levels of control. Naturally, I left a comment:

“Or you (and your readers) could just, I dunno, learn about the world like you do in real life as you experience it alongside your characters?”

Simple, right? Well, it should be. Among the easiest tasks any human can commit is to open the clenched fist and let go. Unfortunately, among the more difficult tasks is to imbue one’s self with the self-confidence to make letting go an option.

Another commenter, Felix Torres, chose to correct me and therefore save the world for those who break out in a cold sweat at the very thought of letting go control:

“That would work. If you have internalized the logic of the cultures and magic systems. And if you have the discipline to stay consistent throughout. I expect Piers Anthony could do that in his sleep after his 20th XANTH volume.”

And in response, I wrote something I thought would be appropriate, maybe even necessary, to share here. But listen—I can only say this so many times and in only so many different ways, folks. In the end, I suppose you either get it or you don’t. And if you don’t, well, I can only say you have no idea what you’re missing and I really wish I could have gotten through. Here’s my response to Felix’ comment:

“As for ‘internalizing’ the writing craft, we (all of us) have been absorbing story since before we were aware there was an alphabet. Where most writers fall short is failing to trust that.

“Of course, hucksters selling nonfiction how-to books on writing (many of whom haven’t written much fiction, if any at all) don’t want us to believe in ourselves or trust what we’ve internalized. They want us to believe we are incapable so they can sell us more how-to books on writing.

“Several years ago I chose to let go of all that nonsense, trust myself and my creative subconscious, and Just Write. I would no more correct with my conscious, critical mind what happens as I and my characters race through a story that is unfolding all around us than I would correct you as you’re telling me about something that happened to you during one of your adventures. It isn’t my place.

“‘Logic’ has no more place in fiction than it has in how real life unfolds. My expertise comes from having written and published over 80 novels and novellas and over 200 short stories across several genres.

“As for plotting, I wrote my first novel in 29 writing days. The longest (at around 106,000 words) took 32 days. That’s what can happen when you trust the process and when you trust the characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living.

“But sure, if you’re insecure enough in your own abilities that you have to wrench the story away from your characters and construct it block by block and step by step instead of just letting the creative process flow, by all means do so. When others succumb to unreasoning fears that has absolutely no impact on my bottom line.”

This rather conveniently ties-in with an email I received yesterday and with today's advice:

Stop Hitting Yourself

Just yesterday, not long after I offered an absolutely free limited-time writing intensive to anyone who wanted it, I heard from one writer. And the critical voice and the unreasoning fear established immediately by that writer's critical voice was strong.

In the first line of the email, s/he wrote that s/he "might be interested in the limited-time intensive."

"Might be interested." Seriously? That told me up front s/he probably wouldn't partake, and if s/he did, s/he probably wouldn't be able to overcome the unreasoning fear. The fear was so strong in this writer that s/he couldn't even commit to being INTERESTED in the intensive, much less commit to actually taking part.

But why? Just for yourself, in your own mind, answer this: What's to fear? What bad thing will befall you if you take part in this intensive? Or if you try writing into the dark on your own?

The only halfway reasonable response I've ever heard to that question was "I might ruin my career as a writer." To which I responded, "What career?"

But seriously, what bad things might happen if you choose to try writing into the dark? Think about it. I'll wait.

In the second sentence of the email, my respondent doubled down:

"I have to say upfront though that I'm not sure I'm a good fit for this."

Yes, I got that from the first sentence. The rest of the email continued in a negative vein:

"I've fought with my own head for 20 years and my head keeps on winning. You always say to 'trust yourself' against the critical voice, but I've not ever succeeded."

Actually, that is inaccurate. I DO say to trust yourself and your creative subconscious and the characters who are actually living the story.

But with regard to the critical voice, I say be rudely, crassly, even violently proactive. Shut it down. Send it to a dark corner of your brain and tell it, point-blank, it has no place in your fiction, that what you're writing is none of its business.

The critical voice's job is to protect you. In fiction writing, it's trying to protect you from the embarrassment of creating something that isn't "perfect." But that's all bat excrement because what's perfect for one reader (even you) is far from perfect for another. Your job is to write. The reader's job is to like or dislike what you've written.

In short, whether what you've written is any good is none of your business.

If the critical voice persists, get up and physically walk away from the writing until it falls quiet. Then go back and write the story as it unfolds around you and your characters. And if the critical voice comes surging back, shut it down again. Do that enough times and it will get the point.

If you're suffering with this problem and if you haven't read my book [*Quiet the Critical Voice \(and Write Fiction\)*](#), I strongly recommend it. If you can't afford to buy it, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com and I'll send you a copy free. Yes, seriously. It's only 9 bucks. I won't go to the poorhouse.

My respondent continues:

“This is the reason I didn't take you up on mentorship when you offered it last year. I didn't have any writing-in-progress to work with, and even right now I'm not sure I'll be able to produce any.

“I don't mean to sound that negative and pessimistic, but that's the headspace I'm working with. I don't want to set any unrealistic expectations.”

Okay, first, Thank You to this writer for being up front and honest. Frankly, I'm surprised his or her critical voice allowed him or her to even go that far. But let's continue:

Hmm. “Set any unrealistic expectations....” For whom?

Whether any of you who are reading this ever realize the freedom of writing into the dark has no practical personal effect on me at all, so my expectations certainly don't enter into the mix.

And it can't be readers' expectations. Readers only expect to be entertained, and the more authentic the story the better. Of course, they can figure out anything you can figure out, so again WITD is the better approach. No surprise for the writer, no surprise for the reader.

That only leaves the writer's own expectations. Is it unrealistic to expect yourself to be able to relate a story without thinking it all through first with your conscious, critical mind? If so, when you drive to the grocery and some jerk narrowly avoids clipping the fender of your car as he cuts you off in traffic, do you go over and over and over that story on paper before you convey what happened to your loved ones or other interested parties? Or do you just walk in, flustered and still half-angry, and tell them?

My friend, only you can whip this problem. You don't even have to report to me or anyone else. You can run your own intensive.

Every day, pick a character with a problem (doesn't have to be “the” problem of the story), drop him or her into a setting, and just write whatever comes. The result doesn't have to be “good,” and you don't have to publish it. Just write it for yourself, just for the hell of it. Just to write. Do that every day for a week. Two weeks. Three. Whatever.

Because if you're a writer, THAT you write is vitally important, but WHAT you write, the individual story or novel, doesn't matter in the slightest. It's just another story in a world drowning in them.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "The Other Side of Newsletters" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/05/the-other-side-of-newsletters.html>.

See "Deep learning pioneer warns against rapid AI development as he quits Google" at <https://interestingengineering.com/innovation/deep-learning-pioneer-geoffrey-hinton-warns-against-rapid-ai-development-as-he-quits-google>.

See "Hollywood writers go on strike after contract negotiations fail" at <https://www.nbcnews.com/pop-culture/pop-culture-news/writers-strike-2023-wga-pay-negotiations-rcna82236>. Frankly, from what I've seen from Hollywood writers in series, shutting down might be better. I've switched almost exclusively to watching British comedies and dramas.

See "Fun Pictures" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/fun-pictures/>.

See "Amazon Publishing Statistics" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/amazon-publishing-statistics/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1630

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 11... 0323 words. Total words to date..... 19819

Day 12... 2445 words. Total words to date..... 22264

Day 13... 3184 words. Total words to date..... 25448

Total fiction words for May..... xxxx

Total fiction words for 2023..... 83464

Total nonfiction words for May... 3030

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 84720

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 168184

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	221
Short story collections.....	31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark, adherence to Heinlein’s Rules, and that following the myths of fiction writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

Instructions for the Recommended Intensive

May 4, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Instructions for the Recommended Intensive
- * Bradbury Challenge Reminder
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“”You can tell more about a person by what he says about others than you can by what others say about him.” Audrey Hepburn

“I think Story 7 might be a breakthrough for me on Critical Voice. It flowed very easily. I know I’ll have setbacks but feel like I’m learning to deal with it. The title popped into my head a bit after reading the Reavis Wortham link (“[In the Air Around Us](#)”) in your journal of a few days ago. I didn’t know what the story would be until I started writing it but there was no doubt about the title. I also didn’t know that it would be humorous.” KC Riggs

Folks, this is what practice—i.e., putting new words on the page, in this case writing a new short story every week in the Bradbury Challenge—will do for you. If you aren’t trying it and if you want to be a productive writer, you really should.

Instructions for the Recommended Intensive

Thanks to Peggy K for helping me think-through this intensive. I’ve added considerably to it since we talked. Just in case anyone else would like to take part in the writing intensive—even on your own, without reporting anything to me or to anyone else—here’s what I recommend:

First, determine realistically how many hours per day you can devote to writing. If necessary, decide also on which days of the week you can write.

But—and this is important—if you can devote a certain period of time to writing, be sure you don't let anything else get in the way of that. Critical voice excels at stopping you from writing in the first place, and if you don't start, you can't finish.

The following is for a participant who can write up to two hours per day on weekdays and up to twice that on weekend days. Feel free to adjust the numbers according to your schedule. The whole purpose is to do something that's fun and enjoy the freedom of the process:

The Instructions

For your first assignment, write a short story of around 2000 – 2500 words. On weekend days, maybe extend that to 3000 to 5000 words. (You should be writing around 1000 words per hour or more. 1000 words per hour is only 17 words per minute.)

Put the desired length into your subconscious so it will know the length you're looking for. Then forget it. Don't think about length as you write. A certain length is neither necessary nor a requirement.

We're going to use the proven, fool-proof story starter: a character with a problem in a setting. This isn't a story "idea," but it really is an excellent story starter, and that is literally all you need.

Each day, spend a few seconds coming up with a character, including his or her name. You should be able to picture him or her at least vaguely: tall, short, slim, overweight, hair, clothing, etc. and what he or she is wearing and/or carrying, if anything. Whatever pops into your head is fine.

The character will also have a problem of some sort. This doesn't have to be "the" problem/conflict of the story. Just something to get you started. It can be literally anything.

Maybe it's a locked door that shouldn't be locked. Maybe it's an untied shoelace or a stone or something inside the shoe. Maybe it's a forgotten cell phone, a suddenly remembered birthday, etc. In the opening, the character will deal with that problem to some degree and then continue into the story.

Now drop that character with that problem into a setting and write whatever happens. Again, the setting can be anywhere, inside or outside, home or office or under a clothesline, etc.

An example—In one story I started this way, a young man (character) opened the front door of his home, briefcase in hand, stepped out onto the stoop and noticed his left wingtip was untied (problem). Just as he crouched to set his briefcase on the stoop and tie his shoe, there was an explosion and the wooden doorframe above his head splintered where a bullet plowed into it.

Go ahead. Given that beginning, tell me you couldn't write the next sentence and the next and the next. (grin)

That's all there is to writing into the dark. Just keep writing the next sentence until the character leads you through to the end of the story. Don't second-guess, and don't make anything up. Just write the next sentence and the next and the next as the story unfolds around you.

In the scenario above, is there another person inside the house? S/he would have heard the gunshot too, yes? Is there a child inside? What action does the main character on the stoop take next? Roll off the stoop to one side or the other? Scramble back inside through the door? Something else?

What about the shooter? Does s/he fire again? Abandon his or her location? What is that location? Where did the shot come from? Are there neighbors? If so, what's their reaction? If not, why not? Is this on a farm or ranch?

I'm not saying you should think about all those things (or any of them) while you're writing. Just that you should keep writing and go deep. So there you go. Keep it going.

I recommend taking a break about every hour. If you do take a break, when you return to the story I suggest you read over what you've written (as a reader, not "looking for" anything) and allow yourself to touch the story as you go. When you get to the white space again, continue writing.

The critical voice shouldn't intrude because this is not serious at all. It's only a game and it's only a bit of fun. If critical voice does flare up, tell it (maybe even aloud) to leave you alone, that it has no place in your fiction. Shove it aside. Show it you're the boss.

If you need help, my recommendation (and offer) re [Quiet the Critical Voice \(and Write Fiction\)](#) remains.

Notes—

1. If the story wraps in however many sessions you give it, that's wonderful. You can publish it if you want, or put it into a collection, or do nothing at all with it. Doesn't matter.
2. If the story doesn't wrap but wants to continue (hey, it happens) that's fine too. Run with it. You can either set it aside and start something new the next day OR you can continue the same story the next day, etc. (I'd rather see you write a series of short stories, though. Doing that is a better, more thorough way to develop trusting WITD, getting story ideas, and cycling.) But whichever way works better for you is fine. I won't urge you to completely abandon a longer work if the story wants you to continue.
3. If the story doesn't take off within the first few hundred words and you don't want to continue, that's fine. But don't save it. Toss it out and start something new. Same guidelines, though not necessarily with the same character.

Okay, I think that's it. This really is all up to you, and it really is as simple as starting with a character with a problem in a setting. Just remember that this doesn't matter. It's all only an exercise. It's only for fun.

Bradbury Challenge Reminder

This seemed an appropriate time to remind everyone we have an ongoing Bradbury Challenge. The challenge is to write at least one new short story each week. The point of the challenge is to create a streak. The purpose of a streak is to drive you to the computer when you might not otherwise go.

Sometimes, it's easier to take part in a challenge if you hold yourself accountable to someone. If you want, you can report to me each week on Sunday (or anytime before the Journal goes live on Monday morning) and I'll tell our limited little part of the world what you accomplished.

To participate, send your results to me via email in this format: Author Name "Title of Short Story" XXXX words Genre

Of course, you can jump in at any time. If you break your streak, you can restart it. I'm not keeping track, I promise. And this is a win-win. No matter how many or how few stories you write, you will definitely have more at the end of your personal challenge than you had when you started.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "37 Years" at <https://deanwesleymith.com/37-years/>. Mona and I have also been married for 37 years. In June it will be 38.

See "Romans, Horse Asses, US Railroads, Space Shuttles, and Common Writing Paper" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/05/romans-horse-asses-us-railroads-space-shuttles-and-common-writing-paper.html>.

See "Most Banned Authors of All Time" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/most-banned-authors-of-all-time/>.

See "Writer's Block? Maybe You're Writing in the Wrong Format" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/writers-block-maybe-youre-writing-in-the-wrong-format/>. I included this link only to give you a visceral taste of what it must be like to live in Hell. If you want to see what the myths can do for you, read the excerpt. If that isn't enough, read the article. (Hint: so-called "writer's block" comes from trying to "figure out" what should be in a story.)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1560

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 11... 0323 words. Total words to date..... 19819

Day 12... 2445 words. Total words to date..... 22264

Day 13... 3184 words. Total words to date..... 25448

Total fiction words for May.....	xxxx
Total fiction words for 2023.....	83464
Total nonfiction words for May...	4590
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	86280
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	169744
Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date...	4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	221
Short story collections.....	31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark, adherence to Heinlein’s Rules, and that following the myths of fiction writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

Defend Your Work

May 6, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Defend Your Work
- * Cycling
- * Writers’ Resources
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“The only person with whom you have to compare yourself is you in the past.” Sigmund Freud

“When I came in contracts were basically licensing contracts and you could get your IP back at a certain point. Now the contracts are all rights for the life of the copyright and you never see your book again.” Dean Wesley Smith

Defend Your Work

As I probably have said before, if I could teach fiction writers only one overall concept, it would be to defend your work, and I mean zealously, against all comers. It’s simple—be true to your creative subconscious, your characters and the story that they, not you, are living. It isn’t *your* story. It isn’t happening to you. It’s happening to your characters.

Both Dean Wesley Smith and I advocate depth in setting and in the POV character's opinion of that setting. One hallmark of my own fiction is that the reader feels s/he is actually in the story, in the setting, with the characters. That, in my opinion, should be your goal with every story.

But—and this is of maximum importance—that level of depth can be delivered accurately and authentically only by the POV character. It is not your place as the author to go back and add details that you, the writer, “think” should have been included.

You are the writer, the reporter. You are external to your characters' story. Yes, even if you're running through it with them. You can observe and record what you see and what the characters say and do in their reaction, but if you influence the story in any way, it ceases being authentic.

Someone out there right now is thinking, “Well, what about typos, Mr. Writing Instructor Person?”

Simple—if You made the typo or misspelling, by all means, correct it. But if you have a dyslexic (for example) character who occasionally makes an error, leave it alone. Understand? That's the difference. The story isn't Yours, it's your characters'.

In *your* story, you're sitting alone in a room with your fingers on a computer keyboard. With any luck at all you're typing, recording your characters' story as you (the observer and recorder) and they race through the trenches of that story.

Whatever comes as you Just Write The Next Sentence and the next and the next is the authentic story. As you cycle and your characters add or subtract details or dialogue or emotion or whatever else, those aspects are also authentic. But if you, the writer, the outsider, engage your conscious, critical mind and “look for” details or dialogue or emotion or whatever to add or subtract, those “fixes” are not part of the authentic story.

Which is to say, it is not the place of the critical voice—yours or anyone else's—to second-guess what the POV character sees, hears, smells, tastes or feels, physically or emotionally, in describing or delivering an opinion of the setting.

What's the difference?

Well, for just one example, you personally might abhor the smell of pipe tobacco smoke. But you can be certain others don't mind it or even like it, right? Because people are different. They enjoy and dislike different things, and they have different opinions of those things. As it should be.

But within the story, whether you like, don't mind, or abhor the smell (or taste or feel or sound or emotion) of anything at all simply doesn't matter. All that matters is how the POV *character* feels about those things.

This is precisely why I preach so strongly against critique groups and critique partners. Critique, every single time, is a function of the conscious, critical mind. And trust me, if I won't allow

even my own critical voice to “correct” my creative subconscious, I certainly won’t invite anyone else to do so. And neither should you.

Others defend being mired in the myths by saying “whatever works” for them is “right,” even if it doesn’t actually result in new words put on the page, stories or novels finished and published, etc. In other words, “whatever works” even if it doesn’t actually work.

I respond to “do whatever works” with “write whatever comes.” That is the only path to writing an authentic story.

Now, all of that said, if you can’t escape the fear or if for any other reason you personally want to engage your conscious, critical mind to “correct” or change things in what was once your characters’ story, that’s completely up to you. You already know my advice: don’t do it. My advice is trust yourself and defend your work from all comers, whether internal or external to your own mind.

But again, you do you. Whatever works, whether or not it actually works . Please just don’t tell me about it. I’ve written far too long and put far too many words on the page to believe author intrusion is ever a good idea.

Cycling

As I’ve said many times before, cycling (a function of the creative subconscious) is perfectly fine. To cycle, simply read over what you’ve written, but don’t read critically, “looking for” errors or omissions. Read strictly as a reader, strictly to enjoy the story.

As you read, allow your fingers to rest on the keyboard and allow your creative subconscious (the POV character) to touch the story as you go. The POV character might add more depth, more details about the setting, and s/he might not. But don’t second guess.

Don’t read critically. If you find yourself consciously thinking anything at all about the setting—shouldn’t it be darker? lighter? warmer? cooler? louder? quieter? maybe I need more of this? less of that? etc. —ignore it. Don’t allow your critical voice to second-guess your POV character,

For a great deal more on cycling, key-in “cycling” into the Search block in the sidebar at <https://hestanbrough.com>. For a great example of a secondary use of cycling, key in “Aunt Marge” and read the example.

Writers’ Resources

In today’s “Of Interest,” the first link is to a must-read article by Dean Wesley Smith. The post is so good I added it to my list of Writers’ Resources over at <https://HarveyStanbrough.com/writer-resources/>.

And that reminded me those resources are there. Stop over there and browse sometime. Like most of what I offer, my links to those resources are free, and there are dozens of them. I can only wish I'd had such resources available to me when I started writing fiction in earnest.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "I Feel Bad For New Writers" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/i-feel-bad-for-new-writers/>. If you read nothing else today, read this.

See "Go Wide or Run Away or Amazon Fail" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/go-wide-or-run-away-or-amazon-fail/>. See PG's take too.

See "The history of Cinco de Mayo" at <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2023/05/04/cinco-de-mayo-meaning/70179987007/>.

See "Six Word Stories: How to Write the Shortest Story You'll Never Forget" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/six-word-stories-how-to-write-the-shortest-story-youll-never-forget/>. Disappointing. I had high hopes for this article, but I knew it was BS the instant I read "you're not going to be able to tell an entire life story in six words" (great negativity, yes?) and "Six word stories are a great way to practice your writing without actually having to write much." More negativity. What real writer doesn't want to write much? And none of the author's examples approach the professional level of Hemingway's (attributed) "For sale: baby shoes, never worn."

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1240

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 11... 0323 words. Total words to date..... 19819

Day 12... 2445 words. Total words to date..... 22264

Day 13... 3184 words. Total words to date..... 25448

Total fiction words for May..... xxxx

Total fiction words for 2023..... 83464

Total nonfiction words for May... 5380

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 87520

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 170984

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	221
Short story collections.....	31

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Reimagining the Hovel

May 7, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Reimagining the Hovel
- * The Writing
- * Note From a Bradbury Challenge Participant
- * Of Interest

Quotes 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

“In quickness is truth. 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 or tiger-trapping.” Ray Bradbury

Reimagining the Hovel

With my wife's help, I rearranged my office in the Hovel a couple of days ago. It's how we spent our Cinco de Mayo.

The adobe room that contains my office is only 8 feet wide but it's 20 feet long. It has two south-facing windows, each around 4 feet wide and about that tall. The front (west) part of the room, where the concrete floor is mostly still rough instead of smoothly finished, is part nursery for plants that don't like being outside, and part storage.

The nursery is mostly along the south wall beneath one of the wide windows. The storage area is primarily along the north wall on two shelving units. That's in the westernmost 10 feet of the room.

In the eastern half of that room, my newly rearranged office is now located. My main desk used to face the south wall, and my writing desk used to face the north wall. Both abutted the east wall in the back of the building.

I turned my desk, which is five feet wide, to face west and divide the room in two. Everything to the west from my desk (on the other side of a 22" monitor) is nursery and storage. Everything from my desk back to the east is now an almost-square office space.

The Hovel is now also strictly for writing fiction. My business computer is located in the house. I enjoy my mornig coffee and write and post the Journal from here. Later, if I have nothing pressing to do at the house or away somewhere, I make the 150-foot commute out to the Hovel.

When I open the door, enter, and latch the door behind me, my creative subconscious knows it's time to play and have fun. That trigger to write is the result of having a separate space and machine dedicated to writing fiction.

The Writing

Barring anymore mind-jarring life rolls like the death of my little girl, I expect to finish my second novel of the year by late next week or thereabouts. I'm not in a rush to finish, but I am in a hurry to get back to normalcy, and for me that means writing most days for a few hours per day.

I also anticipate beginning my next novel the same day or the day after I finish the current one. I think it will probably a Stern Talbot, PI crime/mystery, probably based on the recently published short story "The Strange Case of Marlene Stratford."

I read it when it came out on Friday. It was obvious to me that for some stupid reason I forced a premature ending on it. I'm not sure why I did that, and I'm not so worried about "fixing it" as I am about wanting to see where the story actually goes when left to its own devices.

Anyway, for the first time in what seems like a very long time, I'm excited about writing and looking forward to it again.

Note From a Bradbury Challenge Participant

The following is most of an email I received from a Bradbury Challenge participant, Chynna Pace. Her thoughts were too good to keep to myself. If I ever decide to step back from the Journal, I hope someone like Chynna will consider filling that space. I reparagraphed her note a bit. Otherwise these are her original thoughts:

"I have been enjoying [the challenge] extremely! It's truly been a game changer for me. Not only has it been incredibly fun (each story feels like a roller coaster—I have no idea what's going to happen, but it's a blast all the way through), I also feel like I am growing as a writer faster than I ever have. It's amazing to me how it's only been a few weeks, but my current stories, compared to the very first story I wrote for week one, are showing so much growth.

“Not that I perceive the recent ones as ‘good’, or my first story as ‘bad’—I’m trying not to think about good or bad at all, just focusing on how much fun I’m having (grin)—but I can clearly see the growth because I know how much I struggled in the past to write short fiction.

“I guess it’s brought up a certain amount of confidence, because now that I’ve done it a few times, I don’t doubt anymore that I can do it at all. My faith in myself, as far as short fiction goes, used to be horrible. I would literally tell myself: ‘I’m going to try writing a short story...but I know it won’t work out because I’m terrible at writing short stories.’ It’s crazy how bad critical voice can get.

“Like I said, I haven’t been paying any mind to whether or not the story is good or bad, because I know my opinion doesn’t matter, which has been so freeing, and instead I’ve just been focusing on having fun with the story at the moment, then moving onto the next one. I’ve also noticed that this lightness and carefree excitement has carried over into my novels too, which is awesome.

“Another cool thing I’ve noticed: I’ve always heard Dean say that he won’t even remember stories he’s written, and sometimes he’ll stumble on a few he’d completely forgotten about, because when you write into the dark, no single story is important, and once one story is complete, you’re immediately excited about starting the next one. I never could fathom being in such a blaze of writing, that you could write stories and not even remember them.

“But now it’s happening to me (grin). The other day, I was trying to remember the story I’d written for a certain week, and it wouldn’t come to me. I had to really sit there and think about it. I thought that was cool, going from constantly heaping so much unnecessary importance on stories, to writing so much that I genuinely cannot remember what I wrote!

“I have been fearful (critical voice again) that I was growing stale as a writer. These past few weeks have absolutely upended that fear. I feel like I am learning and growing more than I ever have. All thanks to this challenge.”

Folks, this is what can happen when you hold yourself accountable for your writing and are determined to just have fun with it. Remember, THAT you write is important, but WHAT you write, the individual story, doesn’t matter at all.

One way to focus your attention on THAT you write vs. WHAT you write is to set a daily word count goal and make that your focus. Whether you meet, exceed, or miss the goal, it resets to zero every day. But simply striving to reach it will move both the amount and quality of your writing forward faster than you could have imagined. The amount because you’re writing. The quality because your putting new words on the page, practicing.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “One Way To Go” at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/one-way-to-go/>. An extremely important post.

See “Cutting the DULL from Your Scenes” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/05/cutting-the-dull-from-your-scenes.html>. Read this if you want, but there’s no reason. Why? Because if you trust your creative voice and write what the characters give you, there won’t be any “dull” to cut.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 860

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 11... 0323 words. Total words to date..... 19819

Day 12... 2445 words. Total words to date..... 22264

Day 13... 3184 words. Total words to date..... 25448

Total fiction words for May..... xxxx

Total fiction words for 2023..... 83464

Total nonfiction words for May... 6690

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 88380

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 171844

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221

Short story collections..... 31

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An Invitation

May 8, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting
- * An Invitation
- * The Writing
- * Of Interest

Quote of the Day

“A pessimist is one who makes difficulties of his opportunities and an optimist is one who makes opportunities of his difficulties.” Harry Truman

Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting

You can still join in the challenge at any time. There’s no cost of course, and it’s a great way to both have some fun and jumpstart your writing. To see a great testimonial of how much participating in the challenge helped one writer, visit <https://hestanbrough.com/reimagining-the-novel/>.

- Tony DeCastro “The Two Benjamins” 2000 words Magical Realism
- Alexander Nakul “The Mystery of Apothecary Garden” 841 words, Magical Realism
- Chynna Pace “I’m Not Geraldine” 3081 words Horror
- Christopher Ridge “The Baby” 2000 words Horror
- KC Riggs “Heaven, Hell, or One More Go” 3936 words Humor

Congratulations to all participants.

An Invitation

Yesterday I shared the testimony of one writer and how participating in the Bradbury Challenge has helped her writing. Soon I will share a guest post on characters by my friend Dan Baldwin.

I like to share these things with you because sometimes what is said is more easily understood because of how it is said. I can talk about the benefits of challenges and streaks all day, but Chynna probably got through to someone I failed to convince.

Likewise, I can talk all day about getting to know your characters as you spend time with them (just like “real” people) and as their story unfolds (just like “real” life), yet in his upcoming guest post, what Dan says and how he says it will make more sense to some of you than I do.

And the inevitable bottom line—the purpose of this instructive almost-daily Journal is to impart instruction, to pass along valid and valuable information with the goal of easing and improving your experience as a fiction writer, and even to help make your journey fun.

Every one of you has something to share about fiction writing, and chances are it will be valuable to someone. If you’d like to write a guest post or even a regularly scheduled series of guest posts or “column” for the Journal, either query me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com or simply send the post. You may send it in the body of an email or as a .doc, .docx or .rtf attachment.

Include the URL of your website (if any) and a brief bio if you want, and feel free to include promo information on your own stories and/or novels. Naturally, you retain all rights to your work.

Notes

- This offer does not guarantee acceptance and publication of your post.
- Don't be negative, and don't offer anything intended to cause writers to doubt themselves.
- Do be positive and encouraging. More specifically,
 - I will not accept any post that recommends outlining, character sketches, world building, or any other function of the conscious, critical mind *as an integral part of the actual writing process*. (Planning and learning and familiarization activities, such as diagramming your lunar colony or generation ship or desert hacienda for yourself separate of the actual writing process is perfectly fine.)
 - I will not accept any post that supports, defends, or recommends any of the other myths of fiction writing, all of which are based on self-doubt and require invoking the critical mind.
 - I will not accept any post that advocates seeking the approval of a literary agent or a 20-something slush-pile reader at any traditional publisher. If you need that kind of validation, you don't need to be teaching others anything about writing.
- Hit the enter key now and then to start a new paragraph. (grin)
- I reserve the right to reparagraph posts to improve readability, to omit information I find objectionable, and to correct spelling, wrong-word, and agreement and consistency errors.

The Writing

As you can see from the numbers below, the novel is back on track. It's been so long since I wrote any fiction that I struggled a little getting started.

I read over the whole thing first. I actually tore out one chapter completely and recast it because it didn't "feel" right (creative voice). As soon as I did that, everything started flowing again. I started writing at about 9 a.m. and wrapped up at about 12. Not a bad re-start.

Note—Words are not golden. They are not in charge. *You* are in charge. Words to a writer are like nails to a carpenter. If a carpenter gets a box of bent nails, he pitches them out and opens a new box. Never be afraid to tear something out and throw it away. If something isn't working, toss it. If you take another shot at it from scratch, chances are it will work fine.

The way the present story is currently bending, this might be a short novel. Of course, I'm just letting it be what it wants to be, but I do hope the characters throw me another curveball or two.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Writing the Character-Driven Story" at <https://harveystanbrough.com/writing-the-character-driven-story/>. The whole book in raw form in posts. Enjoy.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 850

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 11... 0323 words. Total words to date..... 19819
Day 12... 2445 words. Total words to date..... 22264
Day 13... 3184 words. Total words to date..... 25448
Day 14... 3509 words. Total words to date..... 28957

Total fiction words for May..... 3509
Total fiction words for 2023..... 86973
Total nonfiction words for May... 7540
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 89230
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 176203

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221
Short story collections..... 31

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What a Character!

May 9, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Welcome
- * What a Character! (Guest Post)
- * From B&N
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“Indie publishing favors prolific writers, just as the pulp era did. ... Readers are the gatekeepers. Writers do not need opinionated editors two years out of Vassar to tell them what to do.” Dean Wesley Smith

“Needing beta readers is one of the most damaging and funny myths that have come about in Indie publishing. Grow a spine and trust your own writing. ... If you think you need a bunch of people to read over your book, you have a fear and confidence issue that you need to either get past or get therapy on.” Dean Wesley Smith

“Characters make their own plot. The dimensions of the characters determine the action of the novel.” Harper Lee (via Dan Baldwin)

“Her incorrect statement was one reason I decided to end the quest for traditional publication and self-publish instead. I didn’t need to fight another uphill battle in the face of arrogant ignorance.”
Debbie Burke

“Why would they have book covers if we aren’t supposed to judge the book by them? It makes no sense.” Ingrid Weir

Welcome

to Adam K, a fictionist and writer of traditional poetry, Philip S, “a working man by day and a short fiction writer by night,” and to any other new subscribers or readers of the Journal. I hope you will find something here that will help you.

Be sure to check out the free downloads at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives-gifts-dvds/> and at <https://harveystanbrough.com/downloads/>.

What a Character!

This is a reposting, with his permission, of Dan Baldwin’s Writing Tip of the Week. To sign up for his tips, email baldco@msn.com.

I had a discussion recently with a couple of novelists who are not only plotters, but who also invest considerable time and energy into developing in-depth biographies of all their major characters. Some authors extend this exercise to some of their more prominent minor characters. One of my fellow conversationalists said, “That way I know exactly what my characters are going to do in every situation.”

How omnipotent.

And, as my good friend Jim Reed used to say, “Why is this a good idea?”

In my experience, you never know what anybody is going to do until they do it. Often what they do is one hell of a surprise. That’s why I don’t create character sketches. The characters reveal themselves throughout the writing of their adventures.

Even the closest members of a family or the best of friends never fully reveal everything to each other. Why should the relationship between writer and character be any different?

I enjoy discovering bits and pieces of my characters as I get to know them by transcribing their adventures. I believe my readers experience the same thrill.

Another benefit of the slow reveal is the surprises characters deliver – surprises that can radically alter and improve the work in progress. I’ve often thought to myself, “Wow! I didn’t see that

coming” about some sudden change in direction due to an unexpected act or statement from one of the characters. That, folks, is a thrilling feeling you can’t get if you already know what’s coming.

Fairly early in my [Gabby Durango](#) mainstream work one of the major characters gets murdered. I don’t plot, but early in the work it seemed in my mind that he was headed for quite an adventure. Out of the blue a very minor character killed him in a fit of rage.

I did not see that coming. Beyond that, the killing brought out an unexpected character trait in the young man’s partner. What he did based on that trait changed the course of the remaining book. The effect was dramatic and significantly improved the action and character building in the rest of the work.

While writing another mainstream work, [The Ad Club: Quest for the Phoenix Award](#), I assumed throughout that a certain character was the villain of the piece. Again, the book wasn’t plotted that way; that’s just the way it was developing. When I tapped out the words of the last chapter, another character reached up through my keypad, slapped me in the face, and shouted, “I’m the villain, dummy!”

She was right. As I thought back through the novel, I had unconsciously set her up all the way as the villain of the piece – that is, throughout the piece she had unconsciously let me set up the surprise ending. Had I plotted the piece using character sketches, that plot twist may not have developed and it certainly would not have been such a dramatic revelation.

My Western novel [Slott Canyon](#) features a murderous villain—the worst I’ve ever written. He slaughters men, women and children across half the Old West. At one point he was about to shoot a young girl. He stopped, looked at her closely, picked her up and took her to the nearest settlement.

I didn’t see that coming, but it set him off on an unexpected journey for a number of chapters and helped make the ending of the piece more powerful than I had hoped. Had I developed character sketches up front, I am certain that the dramatic change in plot would have been telegraphed in earlier chapters with a subsequent loss of emotional impact. As they say, no surprise for the author, no surprise for the reader.

I like the surprise and joy of discovering my characters right along with the readers. I don’t criticize authors who write up character sketches. I’m just offering a different perspective. For me, the process of writing character sketches would leave my novels a bit... well, sketchy.

From B&N

I just received an enticing email from Barnes & Noble Press. It’s titled “Meet Our Trusted 3rd Party Partners and Unlock Your Self-Publishing Potential!”

Under “Meet the Experts” the first item is something called Inkubate, which “analyzes your writing style with AI-based technology to (1) identify the bestselling author whose readers you

should target; (2) evaluate the language these readers use when they search for the next book to read; and (3) discuss how to use this language in your marketing efforts to connect with your targeted readers.”

You can even register for a free webinar concerning Inkubate to see how it works. (Even if you don’t actually use Inkubate, the webinar might provide a story or novel idea.)

To read the entire announcement [Click Here](#).

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “A Second Way to Go” at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/a-second-way-to-go/>. (Erin, PLEASE read this. He says it much better than I did.)

See “How the brain changes when we grieve” at <https://www.axios.com/2023/05/07/neuroscience-grief>.

See “Tips on Hiring and Working with a Book Cover Designer” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/tips-on-hiring-and-working-with-a-book-cover-designer/>.
Note: I posted this primarily for Erin, a young writer who emailed me. I still recommend doing it yourself. And if you don’t, I also recommend not spending more than a few hundred dollars.

See “This beer is made from recycled shower water. Is it the taste of the future?” at <https://www.theguardian.com/food/2023/may/02/recycled-wastewater-beer-epic-cleantec-san-francisco-drought-california>. Only in California....

See “Forget ChatGPT. These Are the Best AI-Powered Apps” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/forget-chatgpt-these-are-the-best-ai-powered-apps/>. Note: I do NOT endorse creating with anything more than the human mind, but those of you who do should read this. Note 2: As for Grammarly, nobody should use or endorse a self-styled grammar program that defines a run-on sentence as “a really long sentence.” That would be like hiring a carpenter who refers to nails as “you know, those skinny round steely things?”

The Numbers

The Journal..... 550

***Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2* (WCG9SF4)**

Day 11... 0323 words. Total words to date..... 19819
Day 12... 2445 words. Total words to date..... 22264
Day 13... 3184 words. Total words to date..... 25448
Day 14... 3509 words. Total words to date..... 28957
Day 15... 1595 words. Total words to date..... 30552

Total fiction words for May.....	5104
Total fiction words for 2023.....	88568
Total nonfiction words for May...	8090
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	89780
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	178348
Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date.....	1
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date...	4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	72
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	221
Short story collections.....	31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark, adherence to Heinlein’s Rules, and that following the myths of fiction writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

A Special Free Offer, and About that “W” Word

May 10, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * A Special Free Offer
- * About that “W” Word
- * Of Interest

A Special Free Offer

When I first sat down here this morning, I thought I had nothing to talk about today. I was going to make a short Journal entry with a special free offer. Even that was only because I received an email in which, in part, the author reminded me of what I call “Prep Delays.”

I meant to mention “Prep Delays” to him in my response, especially since (I believe) he’s read the Journal posts that became *Quiet the Critical Voice (and Write Fiction)*. But I didn’t, so here’s that special (and free) offer.

You can read the posts that became *Quiet the Critical Voice (and Write Fiction)* by visiting “Quieting the Critical Voice” at <https://hestanbrough.com/quieting-the-critical-voice/> (2019). I have zero expectations. Whether you actually read them is completely up to you.

If you haven’t read these posts or the book or haven’t read them recently, and if you find your writing has slowed or you find yourself unable to write at all (including the “writer’s block” myth), I suggest you take a few minutes and read these posts.

And just in case you missed it from a day or two ago, you can also now read the posts that became *Writing the Character-Driven Story* by visiting “Writing the Character-Driven Story” at <https://harveystanbrough.com/writing-the-character-driven-story/> (2016). Again, free.

If you’d like to try (or retry) writing into the dark and haven’t quite been able to pull the trigger, or if you haven’t quite grasped the concept of cycling, I strongly recommend you read it. Again, I have zero expectations.

Cross my palm with silver and I’ll even send you a printable PDF version of either book, or the .epub or .mobi version if you want. Neither book is available in paper at the moment. (Of course, you can also simply copy/paste each Journal entry into Word, delete the extra stuff, then print it yourself. As long as it’s for your personal use, it’s an excellent way to get a free education, and here I am, telling you it’s perfectly all right.)

I wonder how many will simply shrug-off this offer from a guy with over 80 novels and novellas and over 220 short stories in 30-some collections in favor of advice from some self-styled writing guru who’s never written a novel except, maybe, to mark it off his bucket list?

Probably 90%, I suspect, and that’s of writers who read the Journal. Among those who simply glance and go on, seeking someone who will tell them what they want to hear, the figure will be much closer to 100%. Yawn. Whatever.

About that “W” Word

Yeah. Writing. Well, fiction writing to be specific, but I could hardly write “about that FW word” could I?

Anyway, my own writing is still going well enough. It also seems to be going well for the one writer who took advantage of my free fiction-writing intensive and for those participating in the ongoing Bradbury Challenge.

By the way, the intensive is now closed for everyone other than that one writer.

Then again, in the Journal and in my books (including the two freebies above) I’ve already handed out a great deal more instruction than I got from Dean when I first tried WITD. So it’s easy enough to fashion your own intensive if you want to. Just sayin’. You are capable. You can do it.

Remember, you first learned all those stupid, inane, ridiculous “rules” of writing (the myths, which make absolutely NO logical sense) from a person who either doesn’t write fiction at all and has definitely never written a novel or who writes a blazing-fast one or two novels per year, or maybe even one novel every two or three years. Pah-thetic.

And thanks to a constant bombardment from all sides your entire life, all of that crap is deeply imbedded in your psyche. That’s a lot of to dig out of. Manure shovels, anyone?

But again, you ARE capable. You CAN beat it. If you want to enjoy the freedom of stepping away from all those inane rules and myths, and if you want to experience the unbounded exhilaration of writing into the dark, then pull up your big-person pants and do it.

My recent email correspondent also mentioned the Journal is “almost a crusade for ... posts on Heinlein’s Rules, WITD and related matters.” Yes, he’s right. That’s exactly what the Journal is. It’s my way of paying forward a blessing I received. I don’t talk about the myths in any sort of positive way because they’re all negative. They’re all about what you can’t do. And you can find TONS of information on that sort of bat guano literally everywhere else.

But my “crusade” is also why I painstakingly saved the archives and offer them and other free stuff at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives-gifts-dvds/>. It’s why there’s a lot more free stuff over at <https://harveystanbrough.com/downloads/>, and it’s why the disclaimer at the end of this post reads as it does. But I won’t be here forever, and the Journal will go away before I do.

Look, I don’t benefit in the slightest if you discover WITD and Heinlein’s Rules and spend the rest of your life believing in yourself instead of believing all the negative BS about all the things you CAN’T do.

I’m not even asking you to believe my line of schtick. I’m just saying, try it for yourself.

If nothing else, do exactly what I did: put your head down and your behind in the air and plow straight ahead. Be stubborn. Give WITD an honest try so you can prove to yourself, once and for all, that it doesn’t work. I predict that you will be as pleasantly surprised as I was.

It won’t be easy at first, and it won’t be easy later on. You can’t overcome a lifetime of being programmed in a matter of days or weeks. But you CAN overcome it. Witness Dean Wesley Smith, Kristine Kathryn Rusch, James Lee Burke, Jack Higgins, Nora Roberts, Lee Child, Stephen King and countless others. It won’t be easy, but it will always be exciting, exhilarating, and FUN.

Now then—with all of that said, I know most of you won’t try WITD at all, or that you’ll give it a token try and then a pass. And that’s fine. Hey, it’s your life.

With or without all the hand-holding, eventually you will either avoid the water altogether, remain in the shallow end with floatation devices (outlines, revisions, critiques, rewrites, etc.) strapped all over your body, or you will come to believe in yourself, drop into the deep end, and seek freedom. And there, you will either swim or flounder. On your own. All based on what you truly believe you can do. Nothing else.

Anyway, I mentioned the ongoing Bradbury Challenge earlier. You can still jump into the Challenge if you want (of course) either on your own or with me as your host. To participate on your own, you have to write at least one short story per week for a year. Bradbury set up the challenge based on the premise that nobody could write 52 bad short stories in a row. That’s it.

There's no real benefit to using me as your host (your place to report) except that doing so will hold you accountable for your writing. If you want that, you're welcome to jump in. I will report the title, word count, and genre of your story in the Journal every Monday morning. And if you don't want that, as I said earlier, that's fine too. You do you.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Last Day of Cattitude Bundle" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/last-day-of-cattitude-bundle/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1290

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 11... 0323 words. Total words to date..... 19819

Day 12... 2445 words. Total words to date..... 22264

Day 13... 3184 words. Total words to date..... 25448

Day 14... 3509 words. Total words to date..... 28957

Day 15... 1595 words. Total words to date..... 30552

Day 16... 1875 words. Total words to date..... 32427

Total fiction words for May..... 6979

Total fiction words for 2023..... 90443

Total nonfiction words for May... 9380

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 91070

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 181513

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark, adherence to Heinlein's Rules, and that following the myths of fiction writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

The Purpose of the Journal

May 11, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * The Purpose of the Journal
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“In fiction writing, the only time you fail is if you stop writing fiction. ... There is no other marker. You stop writing, you fail. It really is that simple.” Dean Wesley Smith

“Smell is a potent wizard that transports you across thousands of miles and all the years you have lived.” Helen Keller

“Don't be afraid of perfection. You will never attain it!” Salvador Dalí

The Purpose of the Journal

Hey, sorry I'm a little late. Thanks for hanging around. I'm still considering a thought another writer expressed a few days ago in an email, that the Journal is “almost a crusade for ... posts on Heinlein's Rules, WITD and related matters.” I like that.

My offerings in the Journal haven't always been so limited. I've talked a lot about characters, scene, setting, point of view, pacing, using the five senses, and so on. I even address those topics in my nonfiction books, and some of my books are dedicated to those topics.

Of course, you can also find roughly a billion other craft books on character, scene, setting, etc. And most of them, including mine, are very similar to, if not exactly like, the others.

But even if I haven't addressed specific craft topics in books, I've written about them in one iteration of the Journal or another. To test that, visit the Search block at <https://hestanbrough.com> or use the little search icon in the upper right corner at <https://harveystanbrough.com> and type in your search term: setting, for example, or character, or scene, or five senses. Most of the time, a lot of posts will pop up on either site.

Everybody who's been writing for a serious length of time or who has put more than a million or so new words of fiction on the page know the same things about craft. If you write fiction long enough, these are understandings or realizations that would come to you eventually whether or not you ever read a nonfiction book about them.

That said, one nonfiction book on characters is pretty much like another. (You don't have to do “character sketches” just because an author says you have to. It's enough to learn that all major characters should be a stereotype at first, and that layers of personality should emerge as we get to know the character. So just like real life.)

Nor do you have to memorize or consciously apply your selections from the list of traits and quirks included in *Creating Realistic Characters*. It's more than enough to be aware of them, and to be aware than even the most noble hero has a few dark aspects to his or her personality and even the worst human ever to live has at least something good about him or her. (Yes, the horrible things s/he does probably will overshadow any good facet, but it's still there.)

So the point is, you can look up craft items, read about them, learn them with your conscious, critical mind. That's fine. Learning is the only valid function of the critical mind in fiction. Learn with the conscious, critical mind, then shut it off and apply what you've learned (create) with the creative subconscious.

Be your characters' fingers on the keyboard. Come down out of the authorial ivory tower, drop the robes and slip into sneakers, a t-shirt and jeans, and roll off the parapet into the trenches of the story. After all, your characters have invited you.

Then, as you race through the story alongside your characters, try to keep up and record what happens and what the characters say and do in reaction. When they stop at the end of a scene to let you catch up, you can cycle back over what you've written and allow them to add anything you missed.

That is your job as a writer: to write your characters' story. And the most authentic way to do that is to experience it as it unfolds around you.

You know, just like real life.

So why do I talk so much about WITD and Heinlein's Rules? Because if you want to learn about the myths, you can go literally anywhere else and hear that you must outline, revise, seek critical input, rewrite, polish, etc. etc. etc. ad nauseam.

We're inundated with that crap 24/7/365 both formally in writing classes and blogs and informally via ANY depiction of a novelist in ANY television show ever. Yet we literally never hear the alternative view, that it's all right NOT to do all that. We never hear that it's perfectly acceptable, even better, to Just Write the Next Sentence and the next and the next until the characters lead us through to the end of the story.

You never hear anyplace else that it's all right to trust yourself and your creative subconscious.

You never hear anyplace else that you are capable, that yes, YOU can write a story, from a double-digit flash fiction to a novel to a novel series, without anyone else advising you on content.

You never hear anywhere else that in fact, your unaided, uncrutched, uncritiqued story will actually be better, more entertaining and more authentic specifically because you DIDN'T bend it to anyone else's taste or will. And if you say that on pretty much any "writers' boards" or how-to-write websites, you'll be shouted down. (That by people who say publicly "whatever works for you" is fine.)

So the purpose of this Journal is to tell you it's all right to trust yourself. That it's all right to trust your characters and your creative subconscious. That it's all right not to be a control freak and to have fun enjoying what you do.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "I Feel Bad For New Writers... Part 4" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/i-feel-bad-for-new-writers-part-4/>. Again, Dean knocks it out of the park.

See "Toward a better media system" at <https://on.substack.com/p/reliable>. This post contains a couple of links that are potentially valuable.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1010

Writing of Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2 (WCG9SF4)

Day 11... 0323 words. Total words to date..... 19819

Day 12... 2445 words. Total words to date..... 22264

Day 13... 3184 words. Total words to date..... 25448

Day 14... 3509 words. Total words to date..... 28957

Day 15... 1595 words. Total words to date..... 30552

Day 16... 1875 words. Total words to date..... 32427

Day 17... 2016 words. Total words to date..... 34443

Total fiction words for May..... 8995

Total fiction words for 2023..... 92459

Total nonfiction words for May... 10390

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 92080

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 184539

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221

Short story collections..... 31

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Auditions Are Open

May 12, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Auditions Are Open
- * Slightly Slow Going
- * Of Interest

Quote of the Day

“If you always do what interests you, at least one person is pleased.” Katharine Hepburn

Auditions Are Open

Back when I first started the Journal in early 2014, I hadn't written a novel. I'd successfully written a ton of poetry (previous life) and articles and essays and even a couple of nonfiction books on grammar and dialogue and the language. But I'd written only a handful of short stories.

In fact, when I started the Journal, my first selfish priority was to hold myself accountable by reporting my numbers publicly. A very close second priority was to illustrate for others what they could accomplish if only they would sit down, shove aside all the negative critical-mind crap, and just write what came.

In the Journal I explored writing fiction. I explored (and greatly expanded, if I do say so myself) “writing into the dark,” and I became a practicing adherent of Heinlein's Rules, especially Rule 3.

In order to not revise or rewrite (both functions of the conscious, critical mind) I learned the value of cycling (a function of the creative subconscious) and focused on shutting off the critical mind any time I was seated at my writing 'puter.

I experimented, tried, failed, succeeded, and shared all of that, honestly and openly, warts and all, in the almost-daily diary that is the Journal. Facts are the result of honest, straightforward experiments, not scattered, random shots in the dark or faux attempts for the sake of appearances.

Lying to yourself and making a half-hearted attempt at anything is a waste of energy and effort. That's why I had to push down my own unreasoning fears and honestly try WITD, to prove once and for all to myself that it either did or didn't work. I will be forever grateful it did and does.

And that's why I'm always up front and honest in my Journal posts. It's my way of being your advocate. It's my way of helping shore-up your nerve when you finally decide to really, honestly try WITD for yourself.

Writers can get lies, insincerity, and sales pitches all over the internet. The writers who are the source of those sales pitches might or might not outline or revise or invite criticism of their work or rewrite. But they will blatantly tell you in blog posts that you “have” to do those things.

Why? Because if you believe them (and most writers and would-be writers do) then you’ll buy their how-to books on the topics. It has nothing to do with your betterment as a writer. It has to do with increasing their bank account. Nothing else.

So at the risk of sounding haughty, this Journal is an important voice, an important but minuscule beacon in a landscape that’s chock full of flashing neon Look At Me advertisements for the writing myths.

Sometime in the future, my time with the Journal will come to a close. Because I do consider it an important, honest touchstone in a sea of garbage, I would like very much to see it continue. To be clear, I have no intention of quitting. I’m just trying to set up a contingency plan by which the Journal will continue.

Not that you need anything more from me personally anyway. As I’ve said here before, I’ve given my very small subscriber base a lot more than I had when I started, and almost all of it completely free of charge. And I’ve been happy to do so.

But all of that was in my voice and from my point of view. For the Journal to continue and remain an important if very small voice in the void, it needs new blood.

For just one random example, yesterday a writer commented,

“That’s how I view outlining: it’s homework. You have some fun outlining a whole plot and now you’ve turned the actual prose writing into a damned homework assignment. Specifically, your homework is now to slog through dramatizing a story you already told yourself.”

No matter how many different ways I come up with to say outlining is a horrible way to start, I never would have come up with that analogy. Thanks to Philip S. for sharing it with me.

I would like for the Journal to remain a place where writers and would-be writers can hear about and have the opportunity to learn

- writing into the dark and
- trusting themselves and all they’ve absorbed about story and
- trusting the characters to tell the story that they, not the writer, are living and
- grounding the reader and
- the five senses and
- pacing and
- Heinlein’s Rules and other related matters.

But it will be written from the point of view and experience of another fiction writer or writers.

So the upshot.

A few days ago, I invited guest posts. Today I'm going to put a more precise point on that:

Auditions are now open. I'm searching for someone (or a few to several someones) to enter into a sort of apprenticeship with me and eventually take over the Journal.

I am aware that most writers would not be interested in posting every day to the Journal even if they owned it. If they were, that would be fine. But I would like to see the Journal continue as at least a weekly publication.

For the time being, I'll continue posting to the Journal, but I do consider this is a transition time. And if nobody steps forward (completely up to you) then one day the Journal will stop.

If you would like to write a guest post once a week for publication in the Journal, with the possible intention of one day taking over as the voice of the Journal (or as one of the voices of the Journal, it could become a community effort), please email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com. I can easily think of five or six writers right now who probably would be perfect for this, alone or as part of a rotating team.

You don't have to have a lot of publications. Remember, when I started I had very few, and no novels.

All you need is a good grounding in grammar and punctuation, a strong belief in yourself, a devotion to writing fiction into the dark and Heinlein's Rules, and a willingness to share your successes and failures. You would be growing in public and enabling others to grow too.

For your guest post(s), you can write a column on a particular craft topic, or you can simply share your thoughts on writing or your experiences as a writer or anything in between.

The Journal is all about sharing and paying forward what you've learned from others. You could even get a jumpstart by posting text from an older blog post or, I dunno, say a podcast you'd written? (grin, private joke with CP) Up to you.

Then as long as I keep going, you'll have a home for your column or guest posts. And when I step back, you'll take over.

Note: I can't believe I actually feel a need to write this, but here goes: I will reject out of hand anything that advocates or promotes the myths of fiction writing, so please don't waste your time or mine. There are plenty of other venues out there where you can peddle those particular feel-good drugs and safety nets. Around here, we're all about promoting personal achievement. Writing fiction does not take a village and it does not require a community effort.

Slightly Slow Going

For various reasons, my own writing is going a little slow right now. It has nothing to do with critical voice and a lot to do with time management. I've been writing the last few days up at the

house. Tomorrow I'll either go back to the Hovel or close the guest room (home office) door and pretend I'm on Mars or somewhere. I still anticipate finishing the novel in the next few days.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "I Feel Bad For New Writers... Part Five... The Upside" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/i-feel-bad-for-new-writers-part-five-the-upside/>.

See "Deep Fakes Lead to Deep Trouble" at <https://www.suecoletta.com/deep-fakes-lead-to-deep-trouble/>.

See "Biphasic Sleep and "The Watch" Syndrome" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/05/biphasic-sleep-and-the-watch-syndrome.html>.

See "BBC to tackle high proportion of women prosecuted for licence fee evasion" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/bbc-to-tackle-high-proportion-of-women-prosecuted-for-licence-fee-evasion/>. So THIS is why we don't get to see the latest seasons "live." That's fine. The quality is superior, so I don't mind waiting.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1420

Writing of The Road to Amarillo (formerly *Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal 2, WCG9SF4*)

Day 11... 0323 words. Total words to date..... 19819

Day 12... 2445 words. Total words to date..... 22264

Day 13... 3184 words. Total words to date..... 25448

Day 14... 3509 words. Total words to date..... 28957

Day 15... 1595 words. Total words to date..... 30552

Day 16... 1875 words. Total words to date..... 32427

Day 17... 2016 words. Total words to date..... 34443

Day 18... 1454 words. Total words to date..... 35897

Total fiction words for May..... 10449

Total fiction words for 2023..... 93913

Total nonfiction words for May... 11810

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 93500

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 187413

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	221
Short story collections.....	31

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More Short Stories

May 13, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * More Short Stories
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“The use of the wearable computer changes with each person. When this device is your way of seeing, or a seeing aid, it's how you see the world. When you use it as a memory aid, it is your brain.” Steve Mann

SF story ideas, anyone?

“Good writing is supposed to evoke sensation in the reader – not the fact that it is raining, but the feeling of being rained upon.” E. L. Doctorow

“They hear nearly every sound, notice every movement, and process the expression on every person's face. And that means that simply walking through a public space can be an assault on their senses.” Andre Sóló

A good description of POV characters.

More Short Stories

A rare, very short post today....

I keep forgetting to mention it but I'm still publishing a new, unpublished short story every week to my Stanbrough Writes website and from there on my Stanbrough Writes substack every week on Friday.

The latest offering is “This One Thing.” You can read it at <https://harveystanbroughwrites.com/this-one-thing/>.

To see all of the recent stories of the week, click <https://harveystanbroughwrites.com/category/short-story-of-the-week/> and scroll down.

You can also read the current and previous stories and subscribe at <https://stanbroughwrites.substack.com/>.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “I Feel Bad For New Writers... Part Six... Things Change” at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/i-feel-bad-for-new-writers-part-six-things-change/>.

See “iPhone killer? New AI-wearable Humane hopes to make smartphones obsolete” at <https://interestingengineering.com/innovation/humane-ai-wearable-potential-iphone-killer>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 250

Writing of The Road to Amarillo (WCG9SF4)

Day 11... 0323 words. Total words to date..... 19819

Day 12... 2445 words. Total words to date..... 22264

Day 13... 3184 words. Total words to date..... 25448

Day 14... 3509 words. Total words to date..... 28957

Day 15... 1595 words. Total words to date..... 30552

Day 16... 1875 words. Total words to date..... 32427

Day 17... 2016 words. Total words to date..... 34443

Day 18... 1454 words. Total words to date..... 35897

Day 19... 2692 words. Total words to date..... 38589

Total fiction words for May..... 13141

Total fiction words for 2023..... 96605

Total nonfiction words for May... 12060

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 93750

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 190355

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 1

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 72

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark, adherence to Heinlein's Rules, and that following the myths of fiction writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

A Milestone of Sorts

May 14, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Welcome
- * Yes. The Answer is Yes.
- * A Milestone of Sorts
- * Of Interest

Welcome to Sarah S, George K and any other new subscribers or readers of the Journal. I hope you will find something here that will help you.

Be sure to check out the free downloads at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives-gifts-dvds/> and at <https://harveystanbrough.com/downloads/>.

Yes. The Answer is Yes.

I get questions. Am I still looking for or considering guest posts? Yes, absolutely. A few have responded since I put out the first call. Trust me, I'm not being overwhelmed with offers.

Am I still looking for regular contributors to the Journal (a regular column or post once a week or thereabouts)? Again, yes, absolutely.

Can either one become the other at will? Yes, absolutely. Completely up to you.

As I was telling a friend yesterday, at the moment I have only two committed contributors. One wants to contribute a post every Thursday. Another one, an excellent fiction writer who used to contribute to Pro Writers Writing before it blew apart thanks to ruinous abdications, wants to contribute a post every two weeks.

And I have one tentative contributor who is starting a new story-a-week challenge on June 1 and wants to document his progress once a week on the Journal through (at least) December 31 of this year. He hasn't said yet on which day he would like to post.

All of those are valid contributions, by which I mean contributions from which others can learn.

And of course I'll keep my hand in as long as it's practical to do so. It's looking more and more like if the Journal survives me, it will survive me as a PWW-like roundtable. Which is fine.

For the time being, I'll edit (lightly and only as necessary) and publish "guest posts" on behalf of contributors. As the new form of the Journal begins to solidify (if it does), I'll get pics and bios from all regular contributors and create pages for them. I'll also create accounts for them so they can post their articles themselves on their assigned day or days.

Oh, and just so you know, I'm not stepping back from the Journal because I'm ill or anything like that. I've just been at it for a long time. I'd like to include some new voices and eventually hand it off.

Any other questions, feel free to email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

A Milestone of Sorts

As I was telling my friend Robert J. Sadler yesterday, the current novel wrapped. (Well, I was telling him I thought it might, but then it did.) It was a light day of writing, and I took the rest of the day to write all this and then do nothing.

The Road to Amarillo, which was the 9th novel in the Wes Crowley Gap series and the 4th in the Santa Fe subseries, will also be the last, I believe, in the overall Wes Crowley saga, topping out the series at 21 novels. It even retitled itself *The Road to Amarillo*, which will tie-in nicely with the original Book 3 (*Wes Crowley, Texas Ranger*) and Book 4 (*Leaving Amarillo*).

It's kind of fitting, somehow, that this one wrapped in 20 writing days with 20 chapters.

As an aside, if I may use this as a lesson for those who think I wrote the novel "fast"—

The novel wrapped at just just 40,000 words in 20 writing days. That's 2000 words per day. Because I write about 1000 words per hour (a blazing fast snail's pace of 17 words per minute) that's only two hours of "work" per day. Not a bad gig. This is what you can do when you trust your characters and just write off into the dark. Just sayin'.

Of course, I also believed Wes' overall story was done after the third novel (*South to Mexico*), but it wasn't, and I thought it was over once and for all after the 12th novel, appropriately titled *Wes Crowley: The Final Chapter*. Again, um, no. It wasn't.

Because Wes wasn't finished. He (not I) realized there was what amounted to a 16-year gap in the tale between Book 2 (*Comanche Fire*) and Book 3 (*Wes Crowley, Texas Ranger*). In the former, he's still a rookie Ranger. In the latter, we first meet Wes as a corporal.

When I say "Wes wasn't finished," that's exactly what I mean. It wasn't that I, the writer, wasn't finished telling Wes Crowley stories; it was that Wes wasn't finished getting his stories out. The Gap series, stories to fill parts of the 16-year gap, were all Wes' idea, just as each of the 12 novels in the original saga was Wes' idea.

If these stories were my idea instead of Wes' idea, I could probably go on writing "Wes Crowley, Deputy US Marshal" stories for a long time to come. After all, he could travel

practically anywhere, work with other law enforcement officers on various assignments and so on.

But according to Wes, he's done, and as I said, they are his stories, not mine. Maybe he'll change his mind and share more in the future, but frankly, I wouldn't hold my breath waiting for that to happen.

Only those who know the freedom and exhilaration of writing into the dark understand what I mean. Others might pretend, but they have no real idea.

Of course, practically any of the other characters in the overall saga might toss me an easy curve ball and lead me off in a kind-of spinoff (fingers crossed).

I've often thought specifically one or more members of the mostly-outlaw Talbot family might have more stories to tell from their POV. Or maybe the ramrod of the Wiljohn Ranch, John McLean, might want to tell stories of his mysterious younger days. Or the outlaw-turned-Ranger Mason Philby might have more stories to tell. Just for a few examples.

And there were several other characters whom I thought might leap to the fore to tell their own stories, BUT—none of them did, at least so far, and I really don't think that is going to happen. And as I've already said, I'm pretty sure Wes has told all the stories he wanted to tell.

I'm just SO grateful Wes chose me to be his fingers on the keyboard and allowed me to saddle up and ride along. After all those hours on horseback I'll never walk quite the same way again, but it was well worth it.

If you're interested, here's the chronological reading sequence for the novels in the Wes Crowley saga. The number and date in parentheses to the right indicates the number of that particular novel and the completion (c) and-or publication (p) date (yymmdd):

- Rise of a Warrior (5, p150417)
- Comanche Fire (6, p150525)
- Assignment Brownsville (63, c210619, p 2120830)
- The Comancheros (64, c210706, p210915)
- In the New Mexico Territory (65, c210715, p210930)
- Return to the New Mexico Territory (66, c210802, p211015)
- Carmen Morales (68, c220103, p221127)
- Santa Fe: A New Era (70, c221207, p221216)
- The Road to Santa Fe (71, c221228, p221229)
- Wes Crowley: Deputy US Marshal (72, c230118, p230125)
- The Road to Amarillo (73, c230513, p230601)
- Wes Crowley: Texas Ranger (7, p150715)
- Leaving Amarillo (1, p141111)
- Longing for Mexico (2, p141207)
- South to Mexico (3, p141227)
- The Marshal of Agua Perlado (8, p150801)
- The Battle of Tres Caballos (9, p150901)
- The Scent of Acacias (11, p151209)

- The Right Cut (16, p160720)
- In the Cantina at Noon (43, c190613, p190701)
- Wes Crowley: The Final Chapter (62, c210522, p210730)

You can also see this reading order anytime at <https://harveystanbroughwrites.com/reading-order-for-novels/>.

If you wondered, the 21-volume story that began with an innocuous 6155-word short story titled “Adobe Walls” now comprises 1,119,806 words of published fiction, not including any of the other short stories. See why I encourage you to write short fiction and if it runs to go with it? (grin)

And of course, those numbers also don’t include the other 52 novels, 9 novellas, and 221 short stories. (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Non-Artificial Intelligence” at <http://dyingwords.net/non-artificial-intelligence/>.

See “Manifesto fiction” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/manifesto-fiction/>. Not a big fan of Nathan Bransford, but even a broken clock is right twice a day. That said, this is a post that shouldn’t have needed to be written.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1350

Writing of The Road to Amarillo (WCG9SF4)

Day 1..... 3231 words. Total words to date..... 3231
 Day 2..... 2990 words. Total words to date..... 6221
 Day 3..... 1805 words. Total words to date..... 8026
 Day 4..... 2025 words. Total words to date..... 10051
 Day 5..... 1451 words. Total words to date..... 11502
 Day 6..... 1886 words. Total words to date..... 13388
 Day 7..... 2002 words. Total words to date..... 15390
 Day 8..... 1060 words. Total words to date..... 16450
 Day 9..... 1903 words. Total words to date..... 18353
 Day 10... 1143 words. Total words to date..... 19496
 Day 11... 0323 words. Total words to date..... 19819
 Day 12... 2445 words. Total words to date..... 22264
 Day 13... 3184 words. Total words to date..... 25448
 Day 14... 3509 words. Total words to date..... 28957
 Day 15... 1595 words. Total words to date..... 30552
 Day 16... 1875 words. Total words to date..... 32427

Day 17... 2016 words. Total words to date..... 34443
Day 18... 1454 words. Total words to date..... 35897
Day 19... 2692 words. Total words to date..... 38589
Day 20... 1263 words. Total words to date..... 39852 (done)

Total fiction words for May..... 14404
Total fiction words for 2023..... 97868
Total nonfiction words for May... 134100
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 95100
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 192968

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark, adherence to Heinlein's Rules, and that following the myths of fiction writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

Bradbury Challenge, an Email, and RJ Sadler on Writing

May 15, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting
- * I Get Emails
- * Some Thoughts on Writing Fiction (guest post)
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“A serious writer draws from the well of his own soul, his own beliefs, and his own experience. The invitation for others to enter, mix, affect, alter and modify his work poisons the well.” Dan Baldwin

“I'm never really alone writing fiction. My characters take over. The push, pull, cajole, entreat, beg and bully in a cacophony reminiscent of a third-grade classroom when the teacher had to step out for a minute.” Dan Baldwin

Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting

You can still join in the challenge at any time. There's no cost of course, and it's a great way to both have some fun and jumpstart your writing.

- Loyd Jenkins, "On The Trail", 1470 words, Weird West
- George Kordonis "Free with Ads" 4254 words science fiction
- Chynna Pace "The Dayfall Hour" 6591 words Fantasy
- Christopher Ridge "Surf 'n Turf" 3200 words Creature horror
- KC Riggs "Phantom Pain" 6023 words Humor

It's been a strange few days. I hope I didn't omit anyone who sent results to me.

Tip for the challenge: It's a good idea to write your story early (Monday/Tuesday) rather than later.

I Get Emails

I had to share this one with you. Balázs J, a young Hungarian man for whom English is a second language, sent me an email about beginning his journey as a writer in English. He said he wants to start a blog that " follows [his] career from the very beginning."

For the record, I think that's a great idea, and why wouldn't I? After all, I started this Journal in early 2014 as a brand new short story writer and novelist. The Journal has followed my career (thus far) from the very beginning through 73 novels and a ton of other fiction writing.

As I've said before, I started the Journal partly to hold my own feet to the fire and partly (paying it forward) to show my readers what they could do if they wanted to. So do I think it's a good idea to hold yourself accountable in public? Yes, absolutely.

But if you believe in yourself strongly enough to let your readers and subscribers witness every advance and every setback, every failure and every success, you will succeed.

As Balázs wrote, "As an apprentice of the WITD method I think I will have something to tell others. I ... think there is a good chance as I write more with WITD, I would have more to say about this. It would be a great benefit for me, and for other writers, too."

I couldn't begin to agree more. Again, when I started the Journal, it was to document my own apprenticeship with WITD.

I asked Balázs to please share his blog with me when it's up and running, and I'll share it with you. Who knows? He might be the one who finally says just the right thing in just the right way to get you to try WITD for yourself.

Some Thoughts on Writing Fiction

a guest post by [Robert J. Sadler](#)

I believe most writers understand the difference between a biography (a recitation or summary of one individual's life written by another individual) and an autobiography (a recitation or summary of one individual's life written by that individual).

The Character Sketch

To my mind a 'Character Sketch' is an author's forecasted biography of a story character's life as opposed to an organic autobiography written by the character, as it is lived by the character.

Written character sketches can cover mere notes on a character to full-blown historical think-throughs of a character's genealogy, likes, dislikes, proclivities, means, motives, opportunities, tendencies, quirks, speech, manner of dress, favorite preferences, previous responses to situations, projected responses to situations and whatever else the author can conjure up.

The depth to which the author's critical mind projects or imbues their characters with such detail—before plopping or plotting them into a story—that 'sketch' can literally become a full blown stand alone short story about a character.

I prefer that my writing time is spent letting my characters reveal themselves as the story they are telling or living reveals them. Said another way, I am in that camp that believes the characters write their own 'autobiography', line by line, page by page, as the story they are living allows or requires it.

The Setting

As the number of novels in the Michael Grant series increased (26 going on 27), it became more and more difficult to keep in creative mind the characters' previous events/actions vs. their current place in story history, given there are now thousands of characters who have appeared over the life of the series.

I have found continuity, when writing a series, to be of high value. To aid with continuity I have from time to time created, retrospectively, a character file with text clips of previous written events/actions from various novels of a major character's life as thus far lived/revealed in the series. Then adding clips of 'new' history to that file when necessary.

I do the same for various settings, that have become ubiquitous from novel to novel. This enables me to refer, when necessary, to previous settings, and to note, for example, if there are changes to the setting as the novel and the character's life progresses that might have gone unnoticed or unexplained.

Here's a made up an example: Say the character sits behind a desk on an antique oak spindle back swivel chair fitted with iron wheel casters. Then in some future paragraph, page or book he switches to a modern ergonomic mesh-covered swivel chair with round ball casters.

In such a case the character might report buying a new desk chair, describing it and sitting it, or another character may say, "I don't remember seeing that chair before," or ask, "When did you

get the new chair?" etc. Thus the characters are making sure the reader is aware of the changes in their lives.

While I believe it is important to many readers that such setting details be accurate, some readers may not notice, question why, nor care that the character is using a different chair.

The Story Bible

To keep track of character names, traits and other such detail, I find it helpful to have a series 'story bible'.

My idea of a 'story bible' is putting the complete text (after it is written) of each novel, back to back, in a single searchable file.

* * *

[Ed. Note: For more on ways to ensure continuity and consistency, enter "reverse outline" in the search box at <https://hestanbrough.com>. You can also search for "series bible" at that same place. For those of you who have downloaded the Journal archives, search them for the same terms.]

[Robert J. Sadler](#) is a long-time friend, the author of almost 30 novels in the Michael Grant Black Book Investigations series, and a blogger in his own right. He was also a contributor of the now defunct Pro Writers Writing endeavor some of us undertook awhile back.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "I Feel Bad for New Writers... Part 7... More terminology" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/i-feel-bad-for-new-writers-part-7-more-terminology/>.

See "Tips to Improve Newsletters Part II: Design" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/05/tips-to-improve-newsletters-part-ii-design.html>.

See "So why are algorithms still so bad at recommending books?" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/so-why-are-algorithms-still-so-bad-at-recommending-books/>.
See PG's enjoyable and entertaining take.

See "New study finds lab-grown meat produces up to 25 times more CO2" at <https://interestingengineering.com/science/lab-grown-meat-25-times-co2>. I'm shocked (not).
Won't matter. They'll press ahead anyway. Money will pave the way.

See "One in five articles published in journals may contain faked data" at <https://interestingengineering.com/science/one-in-five-articles-contain-faked-data>. Then again, 99% of all statistics are made up on the spot.

The Numbers

The Journal.....	1280
Total fiction words for May.....	14404
Total fiction words for 2023.....	97868
Total nonfiction words for May...	14690
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	96380
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	194248
Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date.....	2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date...	4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	221
Short story collections.....	31

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Writing for the Journal

May 16, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Sorry This One's Late
- * Writing for the Journal
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“In quickness is truth. 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 or tiger-trapping.” Ray Bradbury

“Writing a lot (quantity) and practicing writing is extremely important. Detaching yourself from the result of the story is also important. (What's important is THAT you write, not WHAT you write). But serious prolific fiction writers write a lot and write often and detach ourselves from the end result *as a means* of writing authentic, better quality stories, not *in preparation* for writing better quality stories.” Me to a writing friend

Sorry This One's Late

I usually get the Journal out a lot earlier than this. I wasn't going to post at all, but then a topic presented itself.

Writing for the Journal

Writing for the Journal isn't easy, and that's completely my fault. It's relatively easy for me (now) but that's at least partly because as a writer I grew up writing the Journal even as I was writing fiction.

So if I made any mistakes or slipped and made any myth-based or myth-supportive statements, I did so either before I started the Journal or in the early days of writing it.

For just one horrible but accurate example, I used to tell other writers that "when you're first starting out," it was not only acceptable but preferable to submit your short stories to magazines that paid only in author copies.

Why? Well, it was a great way to get clippings of course (credits), albeit for a bunch of disreputable or obscure magazines nobody read or cared about.

Or it was a great way to build your audience. Well, if your audience was too cheap to subscribe to any of the dozens of quality magazines who actually paid authors for their work.

But the dependent clause "when you're first starting out" implies that later you'll be good enough to submit your work to paying markets. In other words, that you aren't good enough right now. That's just silly. See the second quote of the day above.

What makes your work suitable (or not) for a paying market is the editor of that market, his or her current mood (and his or her opinion of your story as formed by that mood). That opinion might also depend on whatever life rolls the editor is going through at the time, etc. etc. ad nauseam.

The decision has little or nothing to do with your story. The editor either likes it or s/he doesn't. And if s/he does like it, s/he either likes it enough to pay you for it or s/he doesn't. And if one editor doesn't, another editor might. And if none of the editors you send it to likes it enough to license it, then you self-publish and let the readers who buy it decide.

Doesn't matter to you. You're already onto writing the next story. Better luck next time.

Your job is to write (read, study, learn) and write some more. No part of your job description includes judging your own work. That is the reader's job, whether the reader is an editor or "just" a reader. And the reason for their opinion of your work is none of your business. Get over yourself and write the next story. Do your job.

I've told the story here before of "Old Suits," a short story I wrote. I personally thought it was one of the worst efforts I'd ever made at writing a short story. But I had recently learned that my opinion as a reader is no more important than the opinion of any other reader, so I published it anyway.

A few weeks later, I received a nice email from a lady I'd never met. She said it reminded her of Hemingway and was one of the better short stories she'd ever read.

Go figure. What do I know?

Recently I asked for guest posts, ideas for regular columns and contributions, etc. I received two articles in one day. Unfortunately, both were wide of the mark. A myth seeped unseen by the author into one, and the other was stiff to the point it didn't sound like the voice of the writer, one I'd asked to contribute primarily because of her voice.

And that's when I realized writing for the Journal isn't easy, at least for anyone other than me. I do sincerely apologize for that.

Because the Journal is an instructional platform—and one that actively shuns and renounces the fashionable but false and harmful myths of fiction writing—I can't publish any posts that support any of those myths.

So if you want to write for the Journal, here are a couple of guidelines:

First, if you want to submit posts or articles to the Journal, you **MUST** be a practitioner of writing into the dark and a practicing adherent to Heinlein's Rules. I won't publish any opposing viewpoints, etc. You can find those in millions of other venues all over the internet. You can find active blogging about WITD only here, and occasionally over at Dean Wesley Smith's website.

Second, please, be easy on yourself. Don't knead your post and work it over so many times that when it comes out of the oven it's difficult to chew. As RJ Sadler put it in an email this morning about his guest posts, they "spring up from time to time as reminders or ways to explain things to myself."

That is an excellent way to write a guest post for the Journal. In fact, it's exactly what I've been doing all these years. Nothing stiff or formal, just chatting informally with like-minded friends.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Protagonists Who Come Out Of Nowhere" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/05/protagonists-who-comeout-of-nowhere.html>. It's good to learn things like this with the conscious mind. That's what it's for. Then forget about it and apply what you learned (write) with the creative subconscious.

The Numbers

The Journal.....	1030
Total fiction words for May.....	14404
Total fiction words for 2023.....	97868
Total nonfiction words for May...	15720
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	97410
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	195278
Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date.....	2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date...	4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	221
Short story collections.....	31

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Focus on Quantity, Yes

May 17, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Focus on Quantity, Yes
- * The Writing
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“In quickness is truth. 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 or tiger-trapping.” Ray Bradbury

“Writing a lot (quantity) and practicing writing is extremely important. Detaching yourself from the result of the story is also important. (What's important is THAT you write, not WHAT you write). But serious prolific fiction writers write a lot and write often and detach ourselves from the end result AS A MEANS of writing authentic, better quality stories, not IN PREPARATION for writing better quality stories.” Me to a writing friend

“Success is attaining your dream while helping others to benefit from that dream materializing.”
Sugar Ray Leonard

“It is a paradox that in our time of drastic rapid change, when the future is in our midst devouring the present before our eyes, we have never been less certain about what is ahead of us.” Eric Hoffer

Focus on Quantity, Yes

Very short post today. I wouldn't be here at all if it weren't for a substack that landed in my inbox this morning. Great post.

While I have your attention, take a look at Frank Theodat's "Focus on Quantity" at [https://franktheodat.substack\[dot\]com/p/focus-on-quantity](https://franktheodat.substack[dot]com/p/focus-on-quantity). Frank sent a version of that post to me first as a potential guest post. I rejected it. Shows you what I know.

He since revised it a little, and I highly recommend reading it. (Thanks, Frank. Much clearer now.)

Also see the first two quotes of the day above, repeated from yesterday.

The Writing

I've been taking a few days off as I continue to deal with my grief. However, I expect to be back writing fiction soon, maybe even today.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Why Authors Should Ditch Mailchimp and Move to Substack" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/why-authors-should-ditch-mailchimp-and-move-to-substack/>.

See "OpenAI CEO warns Senate about AI interfering with elections" at <https://interestingengineering.com/innovation/openai-ceo-warns-senate-about-ai-interfering-with-elections>. Warns or affirms? Did the senate utter a collective sigh and "amen"? Story idea.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 350
Total fiction words for May..... 14404
Total fiction words for 2023..... 97868
Total nonfiction words for May... 16070
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 97760
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 195628

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date.....	2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date...	4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	221
Short story collections.....	31

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The Most Effective Goal

May 18, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * The Road to Amarillo
- * The Most Effective Goal
- * Of Interest

The Road to Amarillo

Well, The Road to Amarillo is published at Draft2Digital and at Amazon. To see the cover, and to read about the book and a little about the Wes Crowley Gap series itself, please visit <https://stonethreadpublishing.com/the-road-to-amarillo/>.

Also, the Wes Crowley covers on the page at <https://stonethreadpublishing.com/the-wes-crowley-series/> are actually in chronological sequence, so the correct reading order.

For a limited time, I'm giving away Book 1 of the series, *The Rise of a Warrior*. To take advantage of this giveaway, either visit <https://books2read.com/u/3RoK2n> or simply email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com and let me know which eformat you would like. (It might take a day or two for all the vendors to update the price to Free.)

The Most Effective Goal

I've talked on here several times about the value of setting goals. Various pundits say a weekly goal is best, others a monthly or (incredibly) an annual goal.

Those are all fine. I've used them all, mostly simultaneously, or cumulatively. But the only one I really found effective was the daily word-count goal.

The effectiveness of the daily word-count goal is based on the same reasoning that led my paternal grandfather to tell me, re gasoline tanks on vehicles, “Keep the top half full and the bottom half will take care of itself.” Truedat.

Likewise, no matter what your annual, semiannual, quarterly, monthly or weekly word-count goal is, it will come a great deal easier if you set a daily word count goal and strive to meet or surpass it.

You don't have to write every day to make use of a daily goal, but some basic common sense applies. Write on the days when you're able to write, and during your writing time, um, WRITE. Strive to reach your goal on days you have scheduled to actually write.

Basic to everything else is establishing how many words of publishable fiction you can write in an hour. To do that, simply set a timer and then write fiction for an hour. The average is about 1000 words per hour.

Note 1. That's not very fast. It's only 17 words per minute. Many typists in high school can easily hit three times that speed, and 60 or 70 words per minute is not unusual.

Note 2. If you can type with all your fingers and if you're writing fewer than say 800 words per hour, and-or if you're being very careful with individual words and sentences instead of just telling a story, check in with yourself. You have some critical voice issues. (Dean Wesley Smith hunts and pecks with two fingers and he hits around 1000 words per hour.)

Once you know how many publishable words of fiction you can reasonably write in an hour, multiply that times the number of hours you can write on a given day. I recommend adding another 500 words or so to that number to make yourself stretch a litte. That number should be your daily word count goal.

You can also establish your daily word count goal by going the other direction. Set a longer-range goal first. This is what I do.

Of course, if there's a real deadline in play, this becomes super easy. Say a publisher or ghostwriting client wants you to write a 60,000 word novel, but delivery is required in thirty days.

Easy peasy. Your daily word count goal depends only on how many days per week you want to work. If you work only on weekdays, your daily goal has to be 3,000 words per day or thereabouts (three hours per day). If you can work all 30 days, your daily word count goal falls to 2000 words per day (so two hours per day). Sign the contract, collect the cash, deposit it, and go sit down at your writing 'puter. You got stuff to do.

But if you're like most of us, you have to set deadlines for yourself. To do that, decide how many words you want to write in a year or whatever division of a year makes you happiest.

For example, I would love personally to write 1,000,000 words of publishable fiction in one calendar year. (Note that most fiction writers turn out 200,000 to 300,000 words per year. I know one who writes only two 60,000 word novels in a year and is thought by her peers to be “prolific.”)

Anyway, a million words probably seems like a lot, until you do the math. My one million words per year would require a semiannual goal of 500,000 words, a quarterly goal of 250,000 words, or a monthly goal of 83,334 words. And then things go a little off the tracks because not all months are the same length. It’s also 19,231 words per week if you want to work all 52 weeks of the year.

As an aside, I was on track to surpass 1,000,000 words easily in 2021 before I screwed up and stopped smoking cigars, thereby fouling my neural pathways. That is easily among my greatest regrets in life, and I don’t have very many.

EVERYBODY is addicted to something, folks. Everybody self-medicates in one way or another. If you need it in order to function, by all means, partake. It’s absolutely nobody else’s business.

To continue with the example, I am able to write every day. So if I want to write 1,000,000 words in a calendar year, my daily word count goal for a period of 360 days (five days off because life happens) would have to AVERAGE 2,778 words per day. Less than three hours per day. And that’s an AVERAGE.

If you wanted to write only five days per week and take weekends off, that would be 260 writing days per year. You would have to write at least 3846 words per day on each of those 260 days to reach your 1,000,000 words on the year. My point is, that’s still only 4 hours “work” per day, five days per week. Not a bad gig.

So if I set my daily word count goal to 3,000 words per day, and if I write most days, my million words is pretty much assured, right?

Wrong. To this day I’ve never written 1,000,000 words of publishable fiction in a calendar year. Most of the time, I end up averaging around 2500 words per day. (Remember, this includes days off, sick days, etc.) I remain hopeful, if my own writing every gets fully back on track.

But I digress. I’m me. You, on the other hand, are you.

Figure out what you want for an annual goal. Divide that by 12 to set a monthly goal.

If you stop there, though, with only a monthly goal, you’ll soon find the end of the month fast approaching without you having written very much. Human nature.

Same with a weekly goal, as some of our current Bradbury Challenge participants are learning. If you set a weekly goal, life happens, and all of a sudden it’s Sunday morning and you HAVE to pound out a short story TODAY. And then there’s all that pressure. And of course, the more

pressure there is, the louder critical voice gets and the more difficult it is to Just Write The Story. (grin)

But if you set a daily word count goal, you will establish a writing habit, and the thing about words is, they don't care where they go. That's why I keep saying, THAT you write is important, but WHAT you write doesn't matter at all.

Say you write novels, but you're also involved in the Bradbury Challenge. If you write 3000 words per day, 2300 words might go into your Bradbury Challenge short story. The other 700 words from that day's writing can go into your novel, or another short story.

Or maybe you'll surpass your word count goal one day because your challenge short story didn't wrap until it hit 4200 words. Good for you. Pat yourself on the back. Now brace yourself, because tomorrow morning your daily word count goal resets to zero.

Or say your short story wrapped at 2300 words and you decided to take the rest of the day off instead of going to your novel or starting something new. Again, that's fine because your word count goal resets to zero tomorrow morning.

It's truly a win-win. If you meet or exceed your goal, it resets and you get to go again. If you fall short, you fail to success because you STILL have far more words than you would have without a daily goal, and the goal still resets. Every day you have the opportunity to meet or exceed your daily goal.

Also, each day that you meet or exceed your daily goal, think of how great it will make you feel. And if you meet or exceed your daily goal EVERY day or even MOST days, you will blow your weekly, monthly, quarterly, semiannual or annual goals out of the water. And think how good THAT will feel.

Nothing will more quickly speed your ascent along the learning curve of craft and enable you to increase your inventory of fiction than setting and striving to meet or exceed a daily word count goal.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "I Feel Bad For New Writers... Part 8... Myths" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/i-feel-bad-for-new-writers-part-8-myths/>.

See "Mindset, Motivation, and Tchotchkes" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/05/mindset-motivation-and-tchotchkes.html>.

See "Lessons From The WGA Writers Strike" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/lessons-from-the-wga-writers-strike/>.

The Numbers

The Journal.....	1540
Total fiction words for May.....	14404
Total fiction words for 2023.....	97868
Total nonfiction words for May...	17610
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	99300
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	197168
Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date.....	2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date...	4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	73
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A Penny Per Word

May 19, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * A Penny Per Word
- * A few notes on pulp writers
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

"I realize that I wrote it, but it's hard to take credit for the writing because it came from out of the blue. It came through me," Townes Van Zandt on writing the song "Pancho and Lefty"

"I read an essay by sci-fi author Robert Silverberg discussing his pseudonymous smut writing career back in the day. He was paid handsomely per finished novel, so he wrote one 50,000 word novel per week. He worked Monday through Friday and would put in a normal 9-5 day with a lunch break. His goal was 5,000 words before lunch, then another 5,000 words before quitting time. With 52 lucrative novels per year, he said he was able to buy an actual mansion." Philip Easton in a comment on yesterday's post

A Penny Per Word (Guest Post)

This is a guest post by Peggy Kurilla. Thanks, Peggy.

We live in a time when most people won't bend over to pick up a penny, even for the benefit of the exercise, so when we hear that pulp writers earned a penny a word, we think that wasn't much.

Recently (2019), the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers Association has recently (2019) raised the professional payment rate for short fiction to a whopping eight pennies per word.

Thanks to recency bias, we look at eight cents per word today and think of how little that actually is (earning \$480 for a 6,000-word short story won't even cover a month's groceries in some parts of the USA, let alone the rent/mortgage or the car payment), and transpose that perception on the past so we think that pulp writers earning a penny a word were, well, broke. Maybe to the point of starving.

Unfortunately, recency bias obscures context, and context is king. Let's have a little context, shall we?

Just for reference, the pulp era of science fiction ran from the 1920s to the early 1950s – anywhere from 70 to 100 years ago. Let's use 1940 as a reference year, since it's about the middle of the range, and see what a penny a word actually bought back then.

1940—

We'll use 6,000 words as a reasonable length for a short story (Lester Dent referenced that length in his essay on his plot/writing method).

A pulp writer could expect payment of around \$60 per short story (6,000 words x .01 per word). What would that have bought him?

A month's worth of groceries cost \$10 (see prices below; I multiplied the total for those items x 4.33 to get a baseline, and then nearly doubled that to be generous.)

Rent was \$27 per month (median cost).

So, right there, one short story a month covered the basics of life (I didn't include clothing and toiletries in this example, but add another \$20 per month for those).

If our hypothetical author wanted to buy a house, the median value of a home was \$30,000 with a 2.5% mortgage. Our author would have to save for a while to make the down payment, but it was still within reach.

Add a second short story sale per month, and our author would have a 20% down payment (\$6,000) saved up in about 8 years. A third short story sale would cut that in half, of course, to 4 years and change.

A new car averaged \$850, for which, with a second sale each month, our author could save up to pay cash in a little over a year, and gas was about \$.18/gallon.

If our author started out writing as a hobby job and was living off the income from a typical job, of course then would live much higher off the hog, so to speak.

To look at the big picture, selling a 6,000 word short story every week (52 stories a year) yielded our author a gross income of \$3,120 per year.

With a base income tax rate of 4% on the first \$4,000 of annual income (8% up to \$6,000 per year), our author could save for a house, a car, and still have spending money left over, even after paying taxes.

For reference, \$3,120 per year in 1940 equals \$65,220 in 2022. We'll come back to that, after we look at today's professional rate.

2022—

Here's what today's "professional rate" of 8 cents per word will buy our hypothetical author (2022 pricing).

Our author would earn \$480 for selling a 6,000-word short story in 2022.

The median rent in the United States for a 2-bedroom apartment is around \$1,300, so our author would have to sell 3 short stories just to cover the rent.

A fourth story (i.e., another \$480) might cover the groceries, but wouldn't allow our author to save for a new car (average cost \$49,000) or a home (average price \$348,000) on any reasonable timescale.

In sum, selling a 6,000 word story every week earns our author \$480/sale x 52 sales = \$24,960. (Oddly, just about the exact poverty line for a family of three.)

If the 1940 rate had really kept up with inflation

A penny in 1940 would be worth \$0.21 in 2022.

Our author's \$3,120 per year in 1940 would be \$65,220 in 2022 —certainly a better than average income (\$54,132).

A 6,000-word short story would sell for \$1,260, which is closer to the lifestyle of the 1940 author, except selling two short stories a month would be mandatory, rather than the single sale our 1940 author needed.

Concluding Thoughts

It would be all too easy to look at these numbers and get depressed—and not just a little Monday morning blues depressed; I'm talking full-on black dog latched onto your arm and never letting go—but that's not the point.

The point is to look at the numbers and ask yourself, "How can I reach the same standard of living as our 1940 author?" Assuming, of course, that your goal is to make a living from your writing.

If that's not your goal, then I hope this little trip through pulp time has provided a moment's amusement.

(Note: all prices found by typing "how much did X cost in 1940" or "average income/cost of X in 2022" into various search engines.)

* * *

To piggyback on Peggy's very interesting article, here are

A few notes on pulp writers—

Most successful pulp writers were writing far more than 6,000 words per week and were doing so under a slew of pen names. Erle Stanley Gardner (Perry Mason and a ton more) was known to write 10,000 words in a day. (He dictated. His secretary put it on paper.)

Of course, they were doing all that on manual typewriters. Any major errors required retyping the entire page.

For the pulp writers, time was money. If they could type 6000 words in a day, that might earn them \$60. So they wrote clean copy, the best they could at their current skill level, then inserted a new sheet of paper and kept typing. Revising and rewriting would cost time, and it was time they weren't being paid for.

Rewriting hadn't even yet been invented. At all. The "need to rewrite," a myth born of the pursuit and expectation of "perfection," arose as mass-market paperback publishing arose in the 1950s. Once non-writers began to teach writing (the audacity!), revising and rewriting and hovering over one work were born.

Pulp writers looked at writing fiction as their day job. They wrote, mailed their submission, then wrote some more. Time was money. Pulp writers were paid to put words on the page. Nobody paid them to revise, seek critical input, rewrite and resubmit.

Pulp writing isn't dead yet. If you ignore the myths and spend as much time as you can just telling stories on the screen, you are a pulp writer too. Worrying about quality will choke it out. Not worrying about it and allowing the characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living will allow the quality to shine through.

By the way, currently Brazilian author Ryoki Inoue holds the Guinness World Record for being the most prolific author, with 1,075 books published under many pseudonyms (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ryoki_Inoue).

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “The True Story Behind the Song ‘Pancho and Lefty’” at <https://texashillcountry.com/true-story-behind-pancho-and-lefty/>.

See “University lecturer fails entire class for using ChatGPT” at <https://interestingengineering.com/culture/students-diplomas-accused-used-chatgpt>. And so it begins. Story ideas abound. Is using generative AI to write or finish college exams different than using a calculator to finish a math exam? Would you want your plumber to have earned his certification via AI? What about your lawyer? What about your surgeon? What about your child's surgeon?

The Numbers

The Journal.....	1340
Total fiction words for May.....	14404
Total fiction words for 2023.....	97868
Total nonfiction words for May...	18950
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	100640
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	198508
Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date.....	2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date...	4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	73
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May 20, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Story Starters
- * The Writing
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“Until you’re ready to look foolish, you’ll never have the possibility of being great.” Cherilyn “Cher” Sarkisian

“Successful negotiation is not about getting to ‘yes’; it’s about mastering ‘no’ and understanding what the path to an agreement is.” Christopher Voss

I suspect it's a lot easier to say No to a six-figure deal when saying Yes wouldn't change your life dramatically.

Story Starters

Two days ago Garry Rodgers posted “Mindset, Motivation, and Tchotchkes” on the Kill Zone blog. In case you missed it, I linked to it again in “Of Interest” below. The following is an expansion of my original comment on that post:

I have dozens of tchotchkes, defined here simply as small decorative items, having surrounded myself in both my little adobe “Hovel” and in my home office with things I enjoy when I catch a casual glimpse of them. Each, at any given time, might represent or spur or provoke a story idea.

My tchotchkes range from rocks to feathers to odd but natural wood configurations, a little stuffed burlap donkey, turtles, frogs, a lead musket ball, a fused meteorite (two small meteorites fused together), books, gourds, stone fetishes, etc. etc. etc.

I also buy art that interests me, primarily oil paintings but some watercolor or pen-and-ink or prints. I always buy them second-hand in antique stores or junk shops or at estate sales.

I know nothing about art. What matters and what determines whether I buy a painting is how many story starters I recognize in it when I first look at it. Some paintings can hold dozens. Any I buy hold at least a few.

But the start—a character with a problem in a setting—is all I get from them, and it’s all I want. From there my characters take over and I leave it to them.

As the writer, I don't want to exert the control that all the writing gurus say I should exert. I never do character sketches or world-building or outlines. The very thought of it practically puts me to sleep.

How frightened must you be to want to know every tiny intimate thing about every character in your stories? How insecure are you that you want to know every twist and turn of everything that WILL (future) happen in a story before you even sit down to write it? And how immune to boredom are you to slog your way through writing a story you've already written in an outline, a story for which you already know all the major turning points and even the ending?

I wonder, do you also only watch films and read books after someone has told you the plot and how they end? Or do you take a chance that you MIGHT enjoy them and even get a sense of exhilaration from not knowing in advance what will happen?

If you do, then why can't you give your readers a chance at that same experience? In your writing, if you "figure out" what happens point by point and know what's coming next, so can the reader. See, the reader has a conscious, critical mind too.

Me? I don't go there. I'm telling my characters' stories specifically so I can find out what happened. But then, when I'm writing I'm neither frightened nor insecure nor bored. And I have zero need to control my characters' world or their story.

So I never don the authorial robes, accompanied by an angelic chorus in the background. I never see the word author capitalized in my mind, as if it's an elevated calling of some sort. Nor do I ever ascend into the authorial ivory tower, whence I might control every event of the story, every physical reaction of every character, and every word of dialogue.

Instead, in my jeans and t-shirt, sneakers and a ball cap, I roll off the parapet into the trenches of the story. I'm thrilled my characters have invited me along at all. To repay them for that kindness, I race through the story with them, doing my best to keep up and recording whatever actually happens and whatever the characters actually say and do in response.

I would no more force my will on the characters or change any of what they say or do in response to the events of the story than I would force my neighbors to change the facts of their account of their recent trip to Tibet.

Because it isn't my story. It's their story. If you believe the story you're shoving out through your fingertips is your story, you really need to check in with yourself.

The Writing

Writing for the Journal has slipped into my psyche and taken priority. I spend a couple of hours each day writing something for the Journal, which is perfectly fine. After all, the Journal is what enabled me to still call myself a legitimate writer even through all the months I was unable to write a word of fiction. I kept my hand in by writing the Journal.

When I started writing short stories and novels back in 2014, I wrote fiction almost every day. Today and for almost the past two years I still write almost every day, but most of what I write is nonfiction in the form of the Journal. That's good for you, I hope, but it's horrible for me as a fiction writer. I need to get back to what I love to do.

I used to write for the Journal *in addition to* writing fiction. But recently (right up through now) I'm writing for the Journal *instead of* writing fiction. That is vastly different.

Consider, as of May 19, 2021, I had written 58,223 words of fiction for that month and 429,502 words of fiction for the year up to that point. (Nonfiction words for May 2021 were 14,180, and for the year up to that point were 99,040.) I had also written 8 novels, 1 novella and 3 short stories on the year as of that date.

A year later on May 19, 2022, I wasn't reporting numbers at all. I had no numbers to report. When I finally did report numbers again, it was May 28. At that point I had written only 3,676 words of fiction for May, and only 9,469 words of fiction for the whole year to that point. (By contrast, nonfiction words for May 2022 were 17,760, and for the year were 77,410.) By December 31, 2022 somehow I had written 5 novels, no novellas and no short stories.

A couple of days ago I talked about setting goals. My big goal is to get back to my pre-August 2021 writing levels. To do that, I'm going to have to re-establish my daily word count goal, which I will set, modestly, at 3000 words again.

I'll be a day or two looking around (maybe) for a new novel to write. It might be a continuation of the Stern Talbot PI short story I published on my substack a couple weeks ago, or it might be another western or SF or Blackwell Ops thriller. Or it might be something completely new.

Or maybe I'll start pumping out a short story every day until one of them wants to run into a novel, at which point I'll just run with it.

I don't know. Stay tuned. Place your bets if you're interested. But take my word for it, at the moment the odds are only even.

Along these lines too, and because I and a few others have been talking about pulp writers and about the modern "speed" myth (if you write "fast" you must be turning out garbage), tomorrow I'll repost a bit I wrote awhile back about pulp writer Anthony Trollope.

It might give some of you ideas how you can respond (or not) to some of the "beginners who somehow magically know everything about writing" that you encounter online. Great fun.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "I Feel Bad For New Writers... Part 9... More Myths" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/i-feel-bad-for-new-writers-part-9-more-myths/>.

See “Meet ‘DarkBERT:’ South Korea’s Dark Web AI could combat cybercrime” at <https://interestingengineering.com/innovation/researchers-train-ai-dark-web>. Story ideas.

See “Mindset, Motivation, and Tchotchkes” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/05/mindset-motivation-and-tchotchkes.html>.

See “What recent publishing controversies say about the industry” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/what-recent-publishing-controversies-say-about-the-industry/>.

The Numbers

The Journal.....	1370
Total fiction words for May.....	14404
Total fiction words for 2023.....	97868
Total nonfiction words for May...	20320
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	102010
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	199878
Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date.....	2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date...	4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
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About Anthony Trollope

May 21, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * About Anthony Trollope
- * Of Interest

About Anthony Trollope

This is a bit I originally wrote and posted in the Journal way back in mid-2021. I came across it a few days ago. Yesterday, I inadvertently wrote that Trollope was a pulp writer. He wasn’t. Born in 1817, he lived roughly 100 years before the pulp era.

We've recently discussed the tendency of all those self-thought brilliant amateur writers and would-be writers out there to believe that writing "fast"—which actually means having a work ethic and believing in yourself—equals writing garbage. It doesn't.

But then, that's no real surprise, is it? Writers just starting out and those who are still hoping to be writers someday know as much about writing as the typical infant up through young teenager knows about anything at all: they "know" what they've heard, not what they've actually experienced and has proven successful. In other words, they're speaking from a place of utter and arrogant ignorance. Read on:

Around four years ago I posted a link to a video about Anthony Trollope. The title of the video is "How to Be Prolific." I posted the link in today's "Of Interest" again.

The video left me feeling surprised the presenter thought Trollope was "prolific." Measured against truly prolific writers who came along in the pulp era (say 1920 to 1950), he wasn't.

My comment was in that vein:

"I had to laugh. Many of the old pulp writers (many of whose works are still in publication or were made into films) produced hundreds of novels in the same time frame. I write on average 3 hours per day and turned out 32 novels (plus 7 novellas and around 150 short stories) in 4 years. So 8 novels per year, average. At that rate of productivity, if I were able to write for 38 years total, I would have turned out 304 novels. And frankly, I consider myself a slacker. Just sayin'."

Some two years later, someone else came along and replied to my comment: "Yeah, but Trollope was using pen & paper for all of it. That'd slow you down!"

Okay, he obviously missed what I was saying, that the old pulp writers, many of whom wrote on pen and paper or typewriters, were much faster than I.

So I replied, in part, "Nope. Many of the old pulp writers wrote far more than I and [they] did so with pen and paper or typewriters. But the point is, whether using pen and paper, typewriter or computer, what slows one down is 'constructing' a story rather than just listening to (and recording) the story the characters themselves are living."

Another commenter (this one, hiding behind the handle "sliver tain," a year later) wrote, "It's surprisingly easy to write shit."

Yes, some commenters are just that gracious and gifted with the nuances of the language.

But there was that old myth again, that anything written "fast" must be bad. So again I responded: "What an incredibly juvenile statement. I'll let my work speak for itself. How about you? Where can I find your books and stories?"

That's what I wrote, and of course "sliver tain" never responded. Know why? I don't. But I suspect s/he didn't respond because s/he HAS no books or stories.

Anyway, I have to admit, what I really wanted to write is the following:

“Forgive me. I admit, I don’t deal well with stupid people and those who believe the best use of their day is to spout garbage in the hope of running someone else down. But as long as you’ve gotten my attention, allow me to correct you as gently as possible. I’ll retain your colorful representation of ‘poor writing’ so I can be sure you’ll understand. Okay? Is your tiny brain ready? Here goes:

“No, it isn’t easy at all to write ‘shit.’ In fact, it’s incredibly difficult. Instead of simply letting the story happen, to create ‘shit’ you have to plot and plan and edit and devise and scheme and trade atta-boys and other ‘critiques’ until your story is scrubbed and polished and Just Simply Peachy Perfect—and as far from an authentic story as it could possibly be. Hence, ‘shit,’ as you call it.

“You know, just like all the other finely polished stones in the publisher’s inbox. And oh, Heaven knows, as finely polished and perfect as You Yourself are, and you know that’s true ’cause your mommy said so.

“Good luck with that. Me? I trust my characters to convey to me the story that they, not I, are living. Like King says, I’m only their stenographer.

“Then again, what do I know? I’ve only written 73 novels, 9 novellas, over 220 short stories (and around 35 collections) and 15 or so nonfiction books, all of which are selling well. None of them will ever be purged from a drainage pipe by a plumber.

“But more to the point, what did the pulp writers know? Most of them, maybe all of them, wrote far more than I, and many of them were millionaires at a penny per word. Of course, all of that must compare very poorly with your own achievements. Which are?

“But I’m being unfair. You’re probably still making your way through the ‘talking about writing’ and ‘thinking about writing’ and ‘taking classes about writing’ stages, all while you somehow manage to teach others about writing rather than actually, you know, Writing.

“So you get yourself on into the plotting and planning and devising and critiquing and polishing stage just as quick as you can, you superbly precious creature, because sure as shootin’ the world is Just Waiting With Bated Breath to read your singular masterpiece.”

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “How to be Prolific – Anthony Trollope” at <https://youtu.be/TdbuA6lByBE>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 950

Total fiction words for May.....	14404
Total fiction words for 2023.....	97868
Total nonfiction words for May...	21270
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	102960
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	200828
Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date.....	2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date...	4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	221
Short story collections.....	31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark, adherence to Heinlein’s Rules, and that following the myths of fiction writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting

May 22, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Memorial Day
- * Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting
- * New Schedule for the Journal
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“About the last of April, the attention is drawn to other things besides writing and by now (end of May) writing has mostly been forgotten, or something to be done later.” Dean Wesley Smith

Umm, taking part in the Bradbury Challenge can help alleviate this. If you want to be a writer, you have to write. Just sayin’.

“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.” George Bernard Shaw

“Censorship is telling a man he can’t have a steak just because a baby can’t chew it.” Mark Twain

Memorial Day

Wishing you and yours a thoughtful and considerate day of remembrance on this Memorial Day.

Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting

You can still join in the challenge at any time. There's no cost, and it's a great way to both have some fun and jump start your writing.

- Balázs Jám bor “Game over” 3700 words SF
- Balázs Jám bor “Something has happened” 2400 words, Urban Fantasy
- Loyd Jenkins, “Book Delivery” 1780 words Weird Western
- George Kordonis “Missing Moonlight” 3452 words Horror
- Chynna Pace “The Witch Chaser” 3919 words Fantasy
- Christopher Ridge “Johnny has a Gun” 2100 words Dark crime
- Karen Riggs “Iron Bones” 1414 words Magical Realism
- Bill Sinclair [“Dog One”](#) 2973 words General Fiction

New Schedule for the Journal

I'm going to try something. Beginning today, I intend to drop the publication schedule of the Journal back to Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Those will be “my days” to post.

I will post articles from regular contributors (if any) on whatever other day of the week or weekend they choose (so Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, or Sunday).

I will post any guest articles in place of my own if I choose to do so, or on a different day, or “co-post” with the guest as I did with Peggy Kurilla and her article “A Penny Per Word” a few days ago.

Knowing me, from time to time I will probably miss posting on my days completely because I seldom know (or care) specifically what day it is. Except Monday. I remember Monday because I committed to posting info about the Bradbury Challenge on Mondays.

Otherwise, all days are pretty much the same to me—the sun comes up, the sun goes down—especially when I'm writing fiction. That's one reason for this schedule change: to get back to writing fiction.

As I mentioned a couple of days ago, writing for the Journal (along with a couple of other things) has all but taken over my life. And frankly, despite what I've accomplished in the past, continuing to teach writing when I'm not writing fiction at least most days myself feels a little hypocritical.

Also, I've been aware for awhile that very few readers actually read the Journal every day. Of those who don't, some won't see this announcement until they catch up with it later while binging on a week or so of Journal entries.

Others, like the one former-student and excellent writer who casually mentioned she only drops in to read the Journal now and then, probably won't see it at all. And that's fine. I've always said the Journal is only worth what you pay for it.

Anyway, I actually enjoy the 'sound' of my own written voice (if I didn't, I wouldn't be a writer), but I feel more than a little foolish talking to an empty room.

And finally, since most of my posts speak to refusing to bow to unreasoning fear by

- writing into the dark,
- adhering to Heinlein's Rules,
- letting the characters convey the story that they, not the writer, are living,
- writing the story that's actually unfolding around you and your characters instead of consciously constructing something and forcing it into some preconceived mold,
- and other matters that really are only common sense,

I doubt that I'll lose any effectiveness by posting only three times per week instead of every day.

Of course, this might or might not work out. For those of you who are fairly new to the Journal and still excited (if that's the right term) about seeing it almost every day, you can always download the free archives and search them for topics that interest you. And I encourage you to do so. No other archive like mine exists anywhere on Earth.

Also, I'm still open at any time to any questions anyone may have about writing fiction. I love writing fiction, and I love sharing what I know about writing fiction. If you don't take advantage of that and my experience, that's on you.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "May is Screaming Past" at <https://deanwesleymith.com/may-is-screaming-past/>.

See "Free Engineering Careers Webinar" at <https://interestingengineering.com/webinar/engineering-talks/engineering-careers>. If I had it to do over again I would have studied a field of engineering in college.

See "Miscommunication" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/05/miscommunication.html>.

See "Keep Writing Until They Are Forced to Say Yes" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/keep-writing-until-they-are-forced-to-say-yes/>. Actually you can skip the article but see PG's take. If you do read the article, notice that the author had "never ... taken a writing class" yet somehow plowed through all the myths. That's how deeply embedded they are in our society.

The Numbers

The Journal.....	870
Total fiction words for May.....	14404
Total fiction words for 2023.....	97868
Total nonfiction words for May...	22140
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	103830
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	201698
Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date.....	2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date...	4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	221
Short story collections.....	31

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“We’ll Fix It in Post(-Production)”

May 24, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * “We’ll Fix It in Post(-Production)”
- * Trust the Story to Unfold as it Should
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“As a somewhat bemused, non-writer outside observer ... it occurs to me that there must be quite a number of misguided, myth-believing individuals for whom it’s more important to be able to say ‘Oh, how I’ve suffered for my art!’ than actually to have produced any. Go figure.” Russ Jones

“The best way to improve your craft is to trust the characters and record their story as they live it. I can help with that, but only you can cross your arms over your chest, tell the critical mind to shut up, and actually get on with it.” Me to a writer a few months ago when he asked whether I had mentorship spots open

“We’ll Fix It in Post(-Production)”

This is a reposting, with his permission, of Dan Baldwin's Writing Tip of the Week. I edited it a bit for clarity. To sign up for Dan's tips, email balcco@msn.com.

Back in my film/video/radio days a common phrase heard at production was, "We'll fix it in post." The reference is to some error or problem that the producer/director/writer team (me) would have to fix in editing and post-production. Those of us with any experience at all knew the fallacy of that pipe dream.

A case in point, I was shooting a film commercial in Nashville which involved the spokesman standing up, making a turn and walking toward the camera. As always, we planned on shooting the scene three times from one angle and then repeating from another angle and then cutting the two together in editing for a nice, smooth transition.

Because this production was considered a big deal at the agency I worked for, the boss came along to watch. Unfortunately, he was watching his personal schedule and plans for the evening more than he was the production. We did one take, and as I was setting up for the second shot of the same thing from the same angle, he took over and told me and the crew to set up for the shot from another angle.

I objected—I always shot a scene two or three times from each angle to have material "in the can" should we need it in editing—but the boss overruled me. "If there's a problem, we'll fix it in post," he said and we broke down the equipment and set up for the next shot.

When the film was developed (this is old school) and we began editing, I discovered a serious problem. In the first take our spokesmen stepped out on his left foot. In the second setup he stepped out on his right foot. There was no way to cut the two shots together and have the shots match. We had to do it anyway because those were the only takes available. In other words, there was no way in hell to "fix it in post." I listened and took bad advice and the product suffered for it.

Writers often get the equivalent treatment: you'll fix it in the rewrite. I've read advice from so-called experts who seriously advise writers to write a sloppy first draft. Just slug out anything and you can clean it up later.

I don't do later. My advice to any writer is to do the same.

I write from the heart, from the subconscious mind, and I write fast. I do not write sloppy and I certainly don't write sloppy on purpose. I write a chapter (or chapters) and review it for any clean up before starting the next chapter. I "rewrite" only to editorial comment and then only if I agree with my editor and first readers. There is very little if any need to fix it in the rewrite.

Look at it this way. A professional will write to the best of his ability in everything he does, including any first draft. He always gives it his best shot.

If it's your best shot, how can you improve on that? How can you recreate the emotion felt in your heart from a dispassionate reading the next day? How can you relight the "muse of fire" once the flame in your heart is cold?

If you've given it your best shot, just check for any necessary clean up. (I once had my cowhand hero get on a horse and get off from a mule. Sigh.) Do your tidying up and move on to the next chapter and give that your best shot.

Having to "fix it in post" just means you didn't get it right in the first place.

Trust the Story to Unfold as it Should

The above guest post and an email from a writer converged at the right time. In her email, the writer said the current story she's working on "is requiring a LOT of cycling."

That wording set off alarm bells in my mind. If she is actually cycling through the story, meaning reading for pleasure and allowing her characters to touch it if necessary as she does so, good, and more power to her.

But "requires a lot of cycling" is negative—it sounds as if something in the story is wrong and needs to be fixed—and negativity is ALWAYS a product of the conscious, critical mind, never the creative subconscious. Hence the alarm bells.

So I gave her some unsolicited advice, just in case, and I thought I'd pass it along to you too, again, just in case you need it:

If your goal is to let go of all the critical voice stuff and just write into the dark, be careful you are cycling, not editing. Don't allow your critical mind to be, well, critical. If you do, at one point or another you'll feel that little sinking feeling in your gut, like you messed up and can't go back to the original.

When the urge to "cycle a lot" (edit) overcomes you, either get up and walk away or at least save the file with a different filename before you start "correcting" things. It's easy to do. Hit Save-As and simply add a letter or numeral to the end of the file name. That way the original will be untouched. (I recommend this from hard experience.)

Remember, when you cycle, you're reading only as a reader, simply enjoying the story. NOT thinking about anything writing- or craft-related, and not looking-for anything. Just reading, but allowing your characters to touch it here and there (or not) as you read.

Trust your characters. Trust the story to unfold as it should. The story will turn out as it should only if you trust that it will.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Substack for Writers: Is It Worth Joining?” at <https://makealivingwriting.com/substack-for-writers/>. Not all about fiction writing, but important for some of you.

See “Special Guest Shares a Short Story” at <https://www.suecoletta.com/the-neighbourhood-watch-by-sgc58/>.

The Numbers

The Journal.....	1140
Total fiction words for May.....	14404
Total fiction words for 2023.....	97868
Total nonfiction words for May...	23280
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	104970
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	202838
Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date.....	2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date...	4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	221
Short story collections.....	31

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On the Value of the Bradbury Challenge

May 25, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * On the Value of the Bradbury Challenge (guest post)
- * Of Interest

On the Value of the Bradbury Challenge

This is a guest post by [Chynna Pace](#). See Chynna’s bio below.

Up until about four years ago, when I first heard about indie publishing and realized I could put my stories out there and begin the writing career I always dreamed of, I always wrote freely, without any fear or anxiety.

I wrote the stories I wanted, when I wanted, how I wanted, and I didn't care one iota how the stories turned out, or whether or not they were "good" or "written well." All I cared about was how much fun they were to write.

That was the way I'd started writing, as a five-year-old typing up crazy tales on her mom's clunky computer, and it was the way I continued to write, until, as I said, I discovered indie publishing.

And that's when a horrible myth entered my head. The myth that my stories were important.

Writing continued to be a source of joy for me—it always has been, even when I've been persistent about beating myself up and doing everything I can to make writing drudgery for whatever stupid reason—but it wasn't what it used to be.

Instead of writing from a place of devil-may-care excitement, I was scared and worried all the time. I worried about where the story was going, about how it would turn out. I worried about whether or not my characters were realistic, whether the dialogue was believable, and whether the magic system made sense. I worried about whether I'd used the right word, whether the prose was dull or too wordy, and so on. And that was just during the process of writing.

Then, once the book was done, I worried about a million things regarding its publication and potential audience. I worried about whether readers would like the book. I worried that they'd think I was a bad writer. I worried that I really was a bad writer and didn't realize it.

And then, amidst all that worrying, I wondered why I suddenly had to drag myself to my manuscript instead of jumping for joy to get back to the story. I wondered why the writing was dragging on, why it would take me forever to finish a book, and why I felt like I wasn't making any progress as a writer.

Of course, it never occurred to me that it was my own doing (grin). My problem was, I was making the writing important. And writing should never be important.

Then Harvey brought up the Bradbury Challenge and invited participants to report their weekly stories in the Journal.

I plunged into the Challenge on a whim. But I came in with a history. I'd always found it easier to write novels than short fiction, and over time, that became an insecurity. I had a habit of heaping importance on short stories, because I desperately wanted to be good at writing them. I was convinced that there was a certain magic secret to writing short fiction that I was just cursed to never have.

I started and finished a few short stories, but they always took a long time to finish, and the whole time I wrote them, I was stressed that they weren't going to be any good. And usually they weren't, at least in my opinion, because I was so uptight while writing them. I believe the best writing comes from a place of carefree lightness and childlike wonder.

Around the time the Bradbury Challenge came about, I was looking for ways to rekindle a lost joy for writing. I hadn't been writing as much as I'd wanted to, and when I did write, it felt like I was just writing to meet a goal. I was missing that thrill, that rush of adventure and newness, where the story is just flowing and it feels like I'm right there with the characters.

I didn't have an ounce of confidence in my abilities to have any sort of success doing a short story challenge, but I'd done similar challenges before, like in October when I challenged myself to write a novel in 10 days and ended up having so much fun that I wrote two more right after that and finished a whole trilogy before the month was over. That had been a great experience, so I thought I'd try the Bradbury Challenge.

I had zero expectations, but I was determined to try it. I was tired of feeling like I'd grown stale as a writer. I wanted to prove to myself that I could get past my own self-inflicted hang-ups and actually churn out some short stories and enjoy doing so.

And the crazy thing is, that's what ended up happening. Not only have I been finishing short stories, I've also been enjoying the heck out of writing them. Lately, almost as soon as I start one short story, another one pops into my head at the same time.

My imagination feels like a never-ending wellspring of cool ideas, each one more exciting than the last. I've even been writing things I've never written before, stories like *Hotel Stinemere*, a horror story set in a creepy hotel, and *The Dayfall Hour*, a weird piece about eleven-year-old brothers, one sunny, the other dark and moody, who are personifications of day and night.

I've proven to myself week after week that I can write short stories. But at this point, I don't even care about proving that I can continue a streak. I am just genuinely having so much fun with this. And amazingly, that pure joy has carried over into my novels as well. I've noticed myself going into writing sessions with the same exhilaration I have when I read books. I don't know where the story is going and I don't care. I'm just here for the adventure.

I've quit stopping every few seconds to doubt myself and worry if the writing is any good. I've stopped thinking of my writing in terms of "good" and "bad" at all. I'm writing more than ever, having more fun than ever, and I also feel like I'm growing and learning faster than I ever have as a writer.

When I think about what brought all this on, the answer is simple. I've let go of making my writing important. I hardly ever think of my stories that way now, and when I do, I catch myself quickly. Critical voice hasn't fully gone away, and I don't think it ever will, but I am so much better about fighting it off and stubbornly protecting my joy for writing.

I understand now that no single short story or novel is important. Like others say, it's only a few minutes' or hours' entertainment. There's no need for pressure or perfectionism. There's no need to worry about how it will be perceived. There's no need to do anything, except relax and have fun going on various adventures with my characters.

And remembering that has been the biggest reason behind my rekindled joy for writing.

* * *

Chynna Pace is a writer of middle grade and young adult novels and short stories spanning many genres, but you can usually always find mystery, magic, and a little something spooky in everything she writes. She enjoys telling stories about clever, funny kids and their wild, sometimes dangerous, adventures. But when she's not writing, she can be found either baking cookies, reading a book, or strumming her guitar. Visit her website at <https://chynnapace.com/>.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "June Workshops Now Available" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/june-workshops-now-available/>.

The Numbers

The Journal.....	0 (Guest Post)
Total fiction words for May.....	14404
Total fiction words for 2023.....	97868
Total nonfiction words for May...	23280
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	104970
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	202838
Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date.....	2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date...	4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	221
Short story collections.....	31

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Different Strokes

May 26, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Different Strokes
- * Memorial Day Weekend
- * Of Interest

Different Strokes

If you'd like to see how pervasive the myths can be, you might want to read the comments at <https://hestanbrough.com/well-fix-it-in-post-production/#comments>.

Folks, if you have a different process for writing fiction than I do, that's fine. If you believe "thinking" your way through a story is the best way to write it, knock yourself out. It seriously doesn't matter to me.

You may even choose to edit (a critical-mind process) and then call it "cycling." That's fine too. Different strokes and all that. But please make your claim somewhere else. Don't bring it to me here at the Journal. The Journal is a myth-free zone and a place where I do not allow others to reassign definitions to specifically defined terms and words.

For example, writing into the dark and cycling, by definition, are functions of the creative subconscious. There is no grey area. Likewise, revising and editing, by definition, are functions of the conscious, critical mind. Again, there is no grey area.

How you prefer to write fiction and which part of your mind you prefer to engage in the practice of that endeavor is strictly up to you. If you choose to redefine what you do for whatever reason, that's also fine pretty much anywhere around the Internet world. But not here at the Journal.

The creative subconscious does not think. It doesn't devise or construct or determine or decide or figure-out or work-out any facet of a story. It simply observes, reacts, feels, and senses.

Trusting the creative subconscious is what enables the writer to record the story as it unfolds in real time without intruding on that story or on the characters who are actually living it. That is called writing into the dark.

You certainly are not required to trust yourself or believe in yourself and write into the dark. But if you write fiction, you must do so either

- authentically (conveying the actual story as it unfolds around you in real time) from the creative subconscious or
- inauthentically, in a construction from the conscious, critical mind: you "make stuff up."

In other words, any story is either a creation (authentic) or a construction (inauthentic). A hybrid isn't possible because any application of the conscious, critical mind to the story changes everything that comes after it and robs the story of the power to simply unfold on its own. So any application of the critical mind to the story renders it inauthentic.

Please don't get misunderstand. I'm not saying that whether a story is authentic should matter to you. That isn't my place. As I wrote at the outset, different strokes. If you would rather plan

everything out and force events, reactions, dialogue and whatever else on your characters, that's strictly up to you.

I'm only saying if authenticity DOES matter to you, there's only one way to achieve it, and that is to trust your creative subconscious and trust that the story will unfold as it should as you and your characters race through it.

Oh, and if you're one who chooses to believe that your pre-planned, critical-mind constructs also are "authentic" stories, that's fine too. Just not here at the Journal.

Memorial Day

Mea culpa. As I've explained before, one day for me is pretty much like every other day. The sun comes up, I do stuff, the sun goes down, and another day is gone.

Last week I overheard someone talking about Memorial Day and assumed it was that weekend. I could easily have checked, but I didn't. And of course, it wasn't. But it is now.

So again, wishing you and yours a thoughtful and considerate day of remembrance on this Memorial Day.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Just Writing Fiction Tonight" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/just-writing-fiction-tonight/>. Some thoughts here helped me, so I thought they might help you as well.

See "The Scent of a Story" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/05/the-scent-of-a-story.html>. Smell and taste are closely related. Smell can also trigger memories.

The Numbers

The Journal.....	670
Total fiction words for May.....	14404
Total fiction words for 2023.....	97868
Total nonfiction words for May...	23950
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	105640
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	203508
Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date.....	2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date...	4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221
Short story collections..... 31

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Workshop Sale, and About the Journal

May 27, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Dean's Special WMG Workshop Sale
- * About the Journal
- * Of Interest

Dean's Special WMG Workshop Sale

I'm posting today primarily to make you aware of this: Dean Wesley Smith is offering everything on Teachable at 50% off but only for three days in honor of Memorial Day Weekend.

The sale runs until Monday night at midnight west-coast time. For details and the code, See "Paying Attention Sale" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/paying-attention-sale/>.

But as long as I'm here anyway...

About the Journal

Writer friend Loyd J in a comment wrote, "I don't blame you for limiting your Journal to what you believe in. ... Thank you for providing the Journal and encouragement. Now I just need to follow the way."

And my response: "You're absolutely right. Having the knowledge is great, but only you can cross your arms, put it into practice, and Just Do It. Exactly what I did around 8 years ago, and that's the sole reason I've accomplished all that I have with writing fiction.

"If you waver even slightly, make even the slightest excuse-for or compromise-with the myths, they will eat-alive your self-confidence and your ability to write. Once you begin to question the truth of what your characters are conveying, you're lost."

If anyone out there knows of even one fiction writer anywhere who outlines, revises, seeks critical input from others, rewrites x or xx number of times and has written more stories and "better" stories than I have in the past 8 years, please enlighten me.

But I've set you an impossible task. You won't find such a writer, because s/he doesn't exist.

The longer a writer hovers in place over one story and the more critical input s/he absorbs and applies (from both the writer's critical mind and the critical minds of others), the further s/he moves the story from what actually happened as the characters lived it.

Consider, some of the best stories you have ever told were those you blurted out as you burst through a door. Remember?

- You'd been frightened when your car spun out on an ice-covered bridge but somehow you came away without crashing and without a scratch. (Nervous laughter.)
- Or you told about the jerk who cut you off in traffic and almost caused an accident as you were on your way to the grocery. (Face and neck still slightly flushed.)
- Or that time when you overcame your fear and climbed the water tower with your friends on a dare.

Hmm. Would those stories have been made better if someone who wasn't there "corrected" your recollection? No, of course they wouldn't. They would have been made different, but not better, and probably less-entertaining. Certainly less authentic.

Only someone who is insecure or unsure of themselves would welcome input and "correction" from outsiders, meaning anyone who wasn't there when the story unfolded. Anyone else, I dare say, would rightfully be annoyed that anyone would have the chutzpah to "correct" an original account.

I and other writers like me don't have that problem. We have accomplished much more important, much more difficult things before, so we are certain within ourselves that we can write a story—a few minutes' to a few hours' entertainment, nothing more—without having someone else validate it.

For example, instead of hovering over one story for an extended period of time, we write to the best of our skill level at the time, submit or publish, and move on to write the next story. In other words, we are aware of the value of time.

We do not waste that precious commodity obsessing over this or that word or this or that sentence structure when none of that will make the slightest bit of difference to the eventual reader. Instead, we use our time to actually write, the definition of which is putting new words on the page.

Or put it this way—self-doubting Writer A, who is mired in the myths, writes, then hovers (revises, seeks critical input, rewrites, polishes) and manages to churn-out two 60,000 word novels in a year. S/he is thought "prolific." S/he gets roughly 120,000 words of practice, but then corrects or allows others to correct what s/he has created.

Meanwhile, self-confident Writer B, who believes s/he can tell a lie for fun and profit (grin) without the input and support of a "village," writes one or two or more novels *per quarter* or

even *per month* to the tune of several hundred thousand or even a million words per year. That's several hundred thousand or a million words of Practice.

Who do you think will improve faster in the craft of writing?

Given all that, why in the world would I teach anyone else to do anything different than be true to themselves, their own creative subconscious, and their own characters? The simple answer is, I wouldn't.

And that, my friends, is why I never promote (or allow promotion of) the inane, insensible myths on this Journal. Be proud of your current skill level. Strive to learn more and improve through practice, but be proud. Defend your work.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Them Flies" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/05/them-flies.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal.....	810
Total fiction words for May.....	14404
Total fiction words for 2023.....	97868
Total nonfiction words for May...	24760
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	106450
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	204318
Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date.....	2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date...	4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	221
Short story collections.....	31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark, adherence to Heinlein's Rules, and that following the myths of fiction writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

The Six Ghosts of Fear, and Readers and Myths

May 28, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * The Six Ghosts of Fear
- * A New Short Story
- * Readers and the Myths
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“Before you can put any portion of my seventeen principles into successful use, your mind must be prepared to receive it. The preparation is not difficult. It begins with study, analysis, and understanding of three enemies you have to clear out. These are indecision, doubt, and fear. Members of this unholy trio are closely related; where one is found, the other two are close at hand.” Napoleon Hill in *The Six Ghosts of Fear*

“These six ghosts of fear, on their own or in some combination with each other, are non-realities every person suffers with at some time.” Napoleon Hill in *The Six Ghosts of Fear*

“I would rather be ashes than dust! I would rather be a superb meteor, every atom of me in magnificent glow, than a sleepy and permanent planet.” Jack London

Amen!

The Six Ghosts of Fear

This is another post that could wait, but only barely. Please see Garry Rodgers' “The Six Ghosts of Fear” at <http://dyingwords.net/the-six-ghosts-of-fear/>.

This is not something that is about writing, but it is about how to be successful at any endeavor, so including writing.

The article will have special meaning to those of you who understand that trusting yourself and your creative subconscious and writing into the dark are the result of facing-down and overcoming unreasoning fears.

Oddly enough, many writer who are mired in the myths of fiction writing also ascribe to the assertions behind “The Six Ghosts of Fear,” yet manage somehow not to notice that obeying the myths are a direct and passive response to that fear. Go figure.

A New Short Story

Oh, on Friday I auto-posted a new short story, “The Ballad of Rafe Wilkins” on my [Stanbrough Writes website](#) and on my [Stanbrough Writes substack](#). If you want to see a good example of my recent writing and see one of the hundreds of sub-stories in the Wes Crowley saga, check it out.

To subscribe and get a free short story every week in your inbox, visit the substack. “TheBallad of Rafe Wilkins” is previously unpublished as a stand-alone short story, but it was excerpted from a novel in the [Wes Crowley Gap series](#).

Readers and the Myths

I was going to wait and post this tomorrow along with the Bradbury Challenge stuff, but I decided to post it today. If you're watching the Indy 500 today, as I will be, enjoy.

Readers, like writers, have heard all the same myths of writing their entire lives: that for a novel to be any good, the writing has to be hard work. It must be planned and plotted and written and revised. The writer must seek external input and make sure every word and sentence is perfect. It must be rewritten and polished.

In other words, in their expectations, readers invoke the greatest myth of all: that a writer must suffer for his or her art. Only then can a fiction possibly be any good.

Traditional book publishers, too, uphold the charade. They insist they're looking for “a unique, original voice,” then also insist the writers follow the myths. And of course, following the myths will ensure that anything unique and original about the writer's voice is slathered over, washed out, or changed.

Some (including some short story publishers) even require outright that a story or novel must be rewritten a minimum number of times. The editors of Rose & Thorn online literary journal insisted in their submission guidelines that a story “must have been rewritten at least 6 times” before it was submitted.

I'm not sure how the editors thought they could tell a story had been rewritten 6 times or more, other than by asking the writer. Anyway, I suspect it's no surprise that journal is now defunct.

I am honest and up front with you and with other writers about my own writing process, or rather, my writing non-process: I write into the dark, I cycle to give the characters room to maneuver if they need to, and then I publish and move on to the next story.

But I sort-of lie to readers. Because readers have heard (and believed) the same myths writers are taught, if a reader ask about my process, I say that I write three drafts of every story or novel. (I believe Dean Wesley Smith does the same thing.)

What I do NOT say is that I write the first and only real draft to the best of my ability, and it takes only a few hours for a short story or no more than a month for a novel. About one hour for every 1000 words.

I also don't tell them my second “draft” is me running a spell check, which takes all of five or ten minutes. And I don't tell them my third “draft” is me applying the changes my first-reader recommends if I agree with those changes. That “draft” takes no more than a half-hour.

If you're a fiction writer, you tell lies for a living. You might as well tell a few half-truths to help with the implied value of your work too. (grin)

By the way, thanks to my Hungarian writer friend Balázs Jámbor for this topic. For more, [read his original comment](#).

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Everyone Is Doing Sales" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/everyone-is-doing-sales/>.

See "Meet BratGPT, the chatbot that refuses to play nice" at <https://interestingengineering.com/culture/meet-bratgpt-the-chatbot-that-refuses-to-play-nice>.

See "Induced hibernation-like state..." at <https://interestingengineering.com/science/induced-hibernation-like-state-in-mice-could-be-key-for-long-term-space-travel>.

See "Talking About Microfiction..." at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/talking-about-microfiction-with-sci-fi-ya-author-sophia-hanson/>.

The Numbers

The Journal.....	930
Total fiction words for May.....	14404
Total fiction words for 2023.....	97868
Total nonfiction words for May...	25690
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	107380
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	205248
Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date.....	2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date...	4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	221
Short story collections.....	31

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Yeahbut, and the Bradbury Challenge

May 29, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting
- * Yeahbut (guest post)
- * Of Interest

Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting

You can still join in the challenge at any time. There's no cost of course, and it's a great way to have some fun, increase your inventory, and jumpstart your writing. It's also a great way to get more practice pushing down the critical voice.

- Balázs Jám bor "I wish I lived" 2700 words Literary Fiction
- Balázs Jám bor "Annabell" 2500 words Literary fiction
- Christopher Ridge "Service Call" 3400 words Splatter Punk
- George Kordonis "Haunted Memory" 6265 words Science Fiction
- Chynna Pace "We Were Flies" 5858 words Thriller
- Karen Riggs "Snake River Blues" 3662 words Magical Realism
- Bill Sinclair "Sylvia's Threads" 2734 words General Fiction
- Alexander Teut "Horses's Hoofs" 6 507 words Historical Suspence
- Frank Theodat "[A Golden Age](#)" 2800 words Superhero Fantasy

If you're following along with your own silent version of the challenge, congratulations. I know at least one of you is doing that. Peggy K, who took advantage of my offer of a free WITD intensive, has written seven short stories since May 6 (so 7 stories in 4 weeks).

Yeahbut

The following is a guest post from Dan Baldwin, reprinted here with his permission. Also, Dan has agreed to become a regular contributor to the Journal. His posts will appear here every Tuesday beginning on June 6. Thanks, Dan.

One of the greatest gifts one writer has given to another is the list of five rules for writing from science fiction great Robert Heinlein. I bless the day I found them.

1. You must write.
2. You must finish what you start.
3. You must refrain from rewriting except to editorial order.
4. You must put [your work] on the market.
5. You must keep [your work] on the market until sold.

The rules are easy to understand and easy to follow. The challenge to following them is an enemy-of-the-writer called "Yeahbut." That's my term for the critical mind.

1. You must write.

“Yeahbut, first I need to think this thing through so I can create an outline. Then I have to develop a plot. After that I’ll need to draft detailed sketches of the major and some minor characters.”

All that may be fine if you need the exercise, but none of it is writing. The trick to “you must write” is to sit down, place your hands on the keyboard, and tap out “It was a dark and stormy night.” Then keep going.

2. *You must finish* what you write.

“Yeahbut, I’d better run this by my critique group before I go any further. I should also put what I’ve done so far away for a couple of weeks to let the thing ‘stew.’ Maybe I should do a bit more research. Hey, Netflix is running an Andy of Mayberry marathon right now.”

When yeahbut points you away from the work at hand, the best response is “I’ll finish this first.”

3. *You must refrain from rewriting* unless to editorial demand.

“Yeahbut I need input from as many people as possible.”

[Some] writers are insecure people who need constant validation that they’re not crazy old Uncle Joe up in the attic writing those Scarlet Pimpernel knockoffs. A good editor is essential, but I am leery of taking too much advice from people who do not know my characters, their motivations, or their situations.

Back in the day, when I passed around my novels, some of the feedback was good. But the feedback came from uninvolved people and not the characters; when I took their advice instead of listening to my characters, the work became someone else’s story.

4. *You must put [your work] on the market.*

“Yeahbut what if nobody likes my book?”

There is no reason to sit on a book, screenplay, short story, poem or your “How I Did It” memoir. Authors have many options. The traditional publication route is tedious and slow, but available to all. Hybrid publishers abound. Self-publishing is easy and fast.

Writers have too many sound options at their fingertips to hold back. Put your work out there and let the market decide what happens next.

5. *You must keep [your work] on the market* until it sells.

“Yeah but I can’t handle any more rejection slips.”

Writers going the traditional route should prepare for the inevitable rejection slips—and lots of them. It's part of the business. You believe in your work or you wouldn't have written it in the first place. So, do not get discouraged. Keep sending those inquiries.

Self-publishers are often discouraged because sales do not automatically zoom into the financial stratosphere. There's no guarantee that the media, podcasts or radio interviewers will respond. Negative reviews happen.

So what? Move on to the next work and allow the market to decide your earlier work's fate. I'm still earning "twos and fews" from books I put on the market decades ago. Think long-term and keep turning out product.

You're a writer. Write.

"Yeahbut..."

Ah, there you go again. But nothing! Just write.

* * *

Thanks again, Dan.

To get your own free annotated copy of the original Heinlein's Business Habits for Writers (Heinlein's Rules) click <https://harveystanbrough.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Heinleins-Business-Habits-Annotated-2.pdf>.

I also recommend downloading my essay, "What Heinlein's Rules Mean to Me" (also free) at <https://harveystanbrough.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/What-Heinleins-Rules-Mean-to-Me.pdf>.

Heinlein first mentioned his "business habits" almost in passing in his essay "On the Writing of Speculative Fiction" in the anthology *Of Worlds Beyond: The Science of Science Fiction Writing* from Fantasy Press, 1947. You can get a first edition for around \$40 and you can still find less expensive copies as well.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Last Day of Weekend Sale" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/last-day-of-weekend-sale/>.

See "How Time Off Benefits Writers" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/05/how-time-off-benefits-writers.html>. Oh to be young again.

The Numbers

The Journal.....	310
Total fiction words for May.....	14404
Total fiction words for 2023.....	97868
Total nonfiction words for May...	26000
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	107690
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	205558
Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date.....	2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date...	4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	221
Short story collections.....	31

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Do You Need a Copyeditor? and Yucca Bells

May 30, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Do You Need a Copyeditor?
- * A Beautiful Time of Year
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

Do You Need a Copyeditor?

In response to yesterday’s guest post by Dan Baldwin, one writer (thanks, George K) emailed,

“Dean said (in his 20booksto50 speech on youtube late last year) that his editor only corrects typos and thats it. They are ‘not allowed to change a word’. My question is when you said a good editor is essential are you talking about [only] searching for typos as well? What advice in your opinion do you accept from an editor?”

I responded to George but, since the statement and post were Dan's to defend, I also forwarded George's email and my response to Dan.

Still, I thought my response to George might be good fodder for a Journal post.

So do you need a copyeditor?

Only you can answer that question, and anyone who repeats the old myth that "all writers need an editor" is full of something. And it isn't something good.

First, I agree that most fiction could benefit from the attention of a good COPYeditor, but no other editors need apply. Frankly, they're shysters, only out to separate you from your hard-earned cash.

Because I was apparently dipped in the English Language River at birth, the nuances of the language are really easy for me. The language comes naturally for me. The nuances make perfect sense.

For that reason, I don't need or use an editor at all. But if I did, I would use only a copyeditor. This is also the advice Dean provides. In other words, we both advise against "development" editors, book doctors, etc. Because how can anyone else possibly know your characters and their story better than you do?

Also, as I've said here many times before, I don't even allow my own critical mind into my writing process, so I definitely would never intentionally allow critical input from anyone else, and that goes double for people who hang out a shingle as a development editor or book doctor.

So why do I recommend that most writers use a copyeditor?

A copyeditor doesn't directly affect (or touch) the story content. In fact, I used to provide a copyediting service for other writers. I no longer do so because nobody wants to pay for my services.

And I understand. A decade or so ago, we entered the age of The Reader Will Know What I Mean. To a large degree, the importance of actually knowing the nuances of the language, such as a good, solid grounding in grammar and punctuation, went out the window.

Not that good fiction is grammatically correct—it isn't and it shouldn't be—and punctuation always should be used not according to some "rules" but to force a particular reaction in the reader. But that solid grounding in grammar and punctuation is necessary in order to break the rules intelligently.

But back to what a copyeditor actually does: From my old copyediting page on my website,

A copyedit consists of a detailed reading for anything that might interrupt the reading of your work. This includes but is not limited to checking and correcting (or suggesting corrections for) the following:

- punctuation, spelling and wrong-word usage
- grammar and syntax but remaining true to the diction of the narrator or character (your style), including obviously accidental shifts in verb tense
- redundancies (usually these are in narrative, and I make recommendations only)
- consistency in punctuation, hyphenation, numerals, fonts, and capitalization
- consistency in character names, clothing, scene details, etc.
- anything else that might confuse or otherwise interrupt the reader
- pacing and flow (primarily I'll recommend reparagraphing to improve pacing and I'll provide examples from your work)

For more on copyediting, please read my Copyediting page at <https://harveystanbrough.com/copyediting/>. It's no longer a "live" page so it's available only via this link.

Because I don't personally use a copyeditor, I use a very good first reader. He reads my work for pleasure, and as he reads he notes any misspellings, wrong words (solder for soldier), inconsistencies, and anything else that grabs his attention without him "looking for" it.

He reports those problems to me, and I fix the ones I agree with. When I don't agree but believe he was confused (confusion is always the fault of the writer, not the reader) I repair whatever confused him. Often, in my case, that's a mis- or poorly placed preposition that left the meaning of a sentence too vague, things like that.

I hope this helps you understand the difference between a first reader, a copyeditor, and a person who's just out to make a buck by helping you "develop" your story.

Note: Dan's response to George's question might well be different.

One more thing (and why I despise so-called "development" editors)—I personally would never allow anyone else (even my first reader) to tell me how s/he "would have written it." (grin)

In fact, the last time someone had the gall to tell me how they would have written one of my stories or scenes or novels, I succinctly remember saying, "Yes? Well then, by all means you should."

And I meant it. Because what do I care? It wouldn't be the same story anyway, would it?

A Beautiful Time of Year

A friend recently reminded me that not everyone is blessed enough to have their own little slice of desert and asked me to send some pictures. So here y'go.

It's a beautiful time of year in southeast Arizona, in part because the cottonwoods, mesquites, acacias, and other flora are green, but especially because the yucca bells are out.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "I Feel Bad For New Writers... Part 10... More Myths" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/i-feel-bad-for-new-writers-part-10-more-myths/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 990

Total fiction words for May..... 14404
Total fiction words for 2023..... 97868
Total nonfiction words for May... 26990
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 108680
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 206548

Correction: Yesterday, I erroneously included the words in Dan's guest post as part of my nonfiction total. I initially reported 930 words instead of 310 words. For anyone who pays attention to such things, the numbers above are correct.

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221
Short story collections..... 31

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The Myths Are Very Much Alive

May 31, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * The Myths Are Very Much Alive
- * Of Interest

The Myths Are Very Much Alive

If you want to see the myths in action (strongly) read “Starting Over. It Never Gets Easier” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/05/starting-over-it-never-gets-easier.html> and the first couple of comments.

I was amazed. This is a bestselling author (a pair of authors and sisters, actually) talking about how hard it is to start a new novel. How discouraging must a statement like that be to a new writer?

Or is it ENcouraging? Maybe such statements enable the new writer to imagine girding himself or herself for battle in preparation to face the “foe” of writing. What a terrible way to look at something so filled with potential joy. Part and parcel of the myths.

Of course, to each his or her own, and certainly different strokes for different folks. But for your sake I hope you aren’t being led by the nose all the while loudly proclaiming that you’re marching to the sound of your own drummer. (How’s that for a string of aphorisms? [grin])

The thing is, the blank page is not your foe. The blank page is an opportunity. It is a surface across which you may record the story that will unfold as you and your characters race through it.

If you face the blank page with fear and trepidation, it will win every time. Even if you eventually write something on it, the writing will be drudgery, hard labor. And in the end the page will not be filled with the joy of a story, it will be spoiled. Why put yourself through all that?

As I wrote in my own comment on the post above, I feel bad for PJ. I’m always excited with the prospect of beginning a new novel. Like a kid on Christmas morning, I’m exhilarated to rip open the paper, fling it away, and see what’s inside.

UPDATE: PJ replied to my comment with “The cloud doesn’t last long, just the first couple chapters. Then it becomes fun again. And I have learned that sometimes I have to write a really bad opening chapter and then just chuck it.”

Separately, I was just telling another writer via email how much I envy her. She was surprised and asked why. I replied, “Because you’re at the beginning of your journey with WITD. The sheer excitement and exhilaration and fun of always looking and moving forward, never back.”

If there’s a downside to WITD, it’s that everything goes so quickly that you barely have time to appreciate the experience. My characters’ stories literally flashed through me. I mean, think about it: 73 novels, 9 novellas, and over 220 short stories in only 6 years of writing time. Plus the nonfiction books and all the blog posts. Even the longest novel I wrote (at around 106,000 words) took only 32 writing days.

I've thought many times how wonderful it would be if I could erase my longest series (now at 21 novels) from memory and start over, same main characters, etc. What a wonderful ride it was!

Maybe, maybe I can come up with something similar. I certainly hope so. All it takes is a good character name coupled with a problem in a setting and I'm off.

I literally don't understand the mindset of writers who allow themselves to be mired in the myths. If you have a story idea, and if it's something that excites you, how can you NOT just plunge in and let the story wash over you? How can you NOT literally revel in it?

How can you not LOVE it and love the emotions and the sometimes even physical sensations you experience as the story is revealed to you?

How can you be so tentative and even actually frightened of such a wonderful, magical thing as that?

And if I asked any of those writers who are mired in the myths any of those questions, they would say they can't simply plunge in or revel in the story because they're "serious" writers who want to put out "quality" stories.

Yet they're too frightened to put out quality stories. With every revision pass, every rewrite, and every editing pass they get farther and farther and farther from the authentic, original, "quality" story their characters gave them.

More's the pity.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Fun Comments" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/fun-comments/>.

See "I Can't Do Two Books Per Year Anymore" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/05/i-cant-do-two-books-per-year-anymore.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 740

Total fiction words for May..... 14404 (Here's to a *much* more productive June)

Total fiction words for 2023..... 97868

Total nonfiction words for May... 27730

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 109420

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 207288

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date.....	2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date.....	4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	221
Short story collections.....	31

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Learning Craft Through Immersion

June 1, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Learning Craft Through Immersion (Guest Post)
- * Of Interest

Learning Craft Through Immersion

a guest post by Chynna Pace

I enjoy learning foreign languages, and I have taught myself Korean for the past 9 years. Recently, it occurred to me that learning a language in order to communicate fluently with the natives of that language is a lot like learning writing craft in order to convey a story to readers.

With writing, I wrote constantly for a solid decade before ever picking up a craft book. I didn’t know anything about deep POV, or the five senses, or telling the story as if I were there living it. I just wrote, had a good time, and that was that. But then, when it came to Story, I had already been absorbing years and years worth of books, movies, and TV shows. It was a reservoir for me to draw on.

With Korean, I had to start from the ground up. I pored over textbooks, took notes, and watched some online courses as well. I was in pure student mode. And in the same way that a writer needs to know the tools of writing and how to use them, such as grammar and punctuation, I needed to spend that time with textbooks, because I didn’t have the foundation yet.

Those books were essential in teaching me the basics of Korean sentence structure, the rules of informal v. formal speaking, pronunciation techniques, how to read the Korean alphabet, etc. But after that, there came a point, about a year and a half in, that I quit using my textbooks. I moved on from being a student in the traditional sense and started more of an immersive learning experience.

I watched countless Korean TV shows, some that were fictional with interesting storylines, others that were like reality shows containing more casual conversation. And when I wasn't watching, I was listening, either to YouTube videos or podcasts, 100% in Korean. I didn't always understand everything, but I always listened, and kept at it constantly. Then I bought books in Korean, choosing translations of favorite stories that I practically knew by heart, like the Harry Potter books, to help with reading the language.

In short, I was filling myself up with the language to the point of overflowing with it. And the natural result of that was that I learned a ton and advanced hugely in my learning journey. I talked to Koreans who swore that I sounded like a native.

I absorbed so much of the language that, several times, I accidentally answered in Korean in response to family members, or, in one embarrassing case, a random person who started up a conversation with me in Barnes and Noble and probably thought I was a nutcase when I immediately started to reply in Korean before catching myself.

The way I improved my Korean is, in my opinion, identical to the way writers improve their craft. With language learning, it's about immersing yourself in that language and constantly absorbing it. With writing, it's about doing the same, but with Story. Books, short fiction, movies, TV shows, even music—anywhere stories are to be found.

I used to be the kind of writer who misunderstood what it meant to actually learn, practice, and improve your writing craft. I thought I had to write every story with a craft book open beside me—or better yet, memorize the craft book from cover to cover so that I always knew how to write the “perfect story.” I was steeped in the myths, and I thought that improving my craft involved lots of edits and rewrites. I couldn't have been more wrong.

Lately I've been realizing that it's not as difficult as I always thought it was. It's actually very simple. If you want to master anything, whether it's a foreign language, a musical instrument, or writing fiction, you have to immerse yourself in it.

Sure, there is definitely huge value in taking courses and/or reading craft books by professional writers who have been at this longer than you have and who have a huge body of work to their name. In fact, there are many courses I'd like to take if I had the money, such as the ones Dean Wesley Smith and Kristine Kathryn Rusch offer.

But anytime I have noticed myself writing a lot, improving my craft, and having a never-ending wellspring of story ideas, it's always happened alongside a constant habit of reading books and absorbing stories.

If you are a writer, you will always write. Writers write. That's just what we do. But there is a difference between writing from an empty reservoir, and writing out of an overflow of all the stories you've filled your imagination with, all the vocabulary and techniques and nuances of Story you've retained without even realizing it.

I don't read as much as I want to or should, but I fully believe Stephen King was right when he said, "If you want to be a writer, you must do two things above all others: read a lot and write a lot." And while Story can be absorbed in all of its forms, I've found that nothing fuels my writing like reading and studying other writers.

Read constantly, as much as you can, and you'll be amazed at how much you learn and how much your writing transforms. Every time you read a book or short story, you're immersing yourself in the craft of storytelling. Just like learning a foreign language, storytelling is, in a way, its own language. So to become fluent in it, to become a proficient storyteller, stories have to always be a part of you.

I make an effort to read something everyday, even if I'm too busy to read more than just one chapter. Most of my spare time goes toward writing, but when there's extra, I watch a good movie or TV show and absorb Story that way too. I try my best to live a life that is both fueled by, and filled with, Story. And I always notice growth in my own writing as a result of that.

In the past, there have been techniques I've tried to learn by memorizing passages in craft books, but that never worked. What ended up happening was that I absorbed those techniques naturally, just by reading other writers, and not only did they stick in my head better than any memorization exercise, those techniques ended up flowing out of me and showing up in my own stories later on, without even having to think about it.

I've seen it happen to me over and over again, and it's something I've been really excited about. Learning the craft is not hard. It's pure fun. I don't have to constantly worry if I'm improving or learning. If I just keep writing, reading, and absorbing Story, all I have to do is trust that I'm naturally absorbing everything I need to know.

Then I can get back to practicing, AKA putting new words on the page, which is the most fun of all.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "...warning of advanced AI as 'extinction' risk" at <https://techcrunch.com/2023/05/30/ai-extinction-risk-statement/>. If you haven't, read Jack Williamson's short novel [The Humanoids](#).

See "Excuses" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/excuses/>.

See "Time Billionaires" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/06/the-time-billionaires.html>.

Harvey's Numbers

The Journal..... XXX

Total fiction words for June..... XXXX
 Total fiction words for 2023..... 97868
 Total nonfiction words for June... XXXX
 Total nonfiction words for the year..... 109420
 Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 207288

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2
 Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
 Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
 Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73
 Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
 Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221
 Short story collections..... 31

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Zen in the Art of Writing, and People Machines

June 2, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Zen in the Art of Writing
- * Speaking of Writing
- * A Lunacy Too Far?
- * Of Interest

Quotes of the Day

“Critical Voice has one job, and that is to stop you from writing. Creative Voice is always positive. Critical Voice is always negative.” Dean Wesley Smith

“[W]e all have health and family issues that stop the writing. Those are not excuses. Those are reality and we come back to writing when the world allows us to.” Dean Wesley Smith

Zen in the Art of Writing

I swear, if it were not a copyright violation, I would serialize Ray Bradbury’s *Zen in the Art of Writing* right now, right here in the Journal. I can’t, of course, either legally or (more importantly) morally.

If the great man were still alive, I might be bold enough to ask his permission, as I asked SF Grandmaster Jack Williamson's permission back in the 1990s (and received it) to republish the essays from *People Machines* in *The Roswell Literary Review*.

By the way, if you write fiction (especially science fiction, but also fiction in general) I strongly recommend you buy a copy of *People Machines*. It's a collection of short stories by Jack Williamson, and each story is accompanied by an essay on the writing craft. Truly great stuff. You can buy a paper copy for a few dollars at <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0006W14I4>.

In Bradbury's *Zen in the Art of Writing*, practically every sentence is quotable wisdom about writing fiction, both attitude and craft. And every paragraph certainly contains at least one quotable thought. Which is to say, the book is chock full of lessons on how to think about writing fiction and how to write fiction.

I can't serialize that great master's course on writing for you, but I can strongly urge you to buy it, read it, and reread it as necessary. If you have [*Zen in the Art of Writing*](#), and if you're a writer, you don't need me, the Journal or anything else.

Go. Write.

Speaking of Writing

It's always both educational and therapeutic to share with others what you've learned or discovered or realized about your own storytelling practice. Doing so both leads the sharer to further revelations and helps other writers.

No deadlines, no pressure, but if you want to share, please remember the Journal is open to guest posts.

A Lunacy Too Far?

I am not making this up. See "Canada becomes the first country to print warning signs on each individual cigarette" at <https://interestingengineering.com/health/canada-becomes-the-first-country-to-print-warning-signs-on-each-individual-cigarette>.

Isn't this a control-freak lunacy too far? If the politicians are seriously concerned about the health of their constituents and not simply appeasing their voter base, how about putting a warning on each individual M&M or each individual candy corn or Reese's Cup or candy bar?

Or, if they're seriously concerned, why not nip the whole tobacco problem in the bud (forgive the pun)? Why not take actual responsibility and put their political future on the line with an outright ban on all tobacco farming and importation?

Too widespread? Okay, then why not ban cigarette production outright? For the answers to these and other similar questions, before you vote again (and if you really want answers), follow the money.

There you go. A whole raft of story ideas.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Zero-Sum Game” at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/zero-sum-game/>.

See “Stunning Photo of Earth...” at <https://petapixel.com/2023/05/09/stunning-photo-of-earth-taken-by-europes-powerful-new-satellite/>. More great images farther down the page.

See “Top 10 Baby Names of 2022” at <https://www.ssa.gov/oact/babynames/>. Need character names? You can also find the top names for different years on this site.

See “...first X-ray of a single atom...” at <https://news.ohio.edu/news/2023/05/scientists-report-worlds-first-x-ray-single-atom-nature>.

See “EU tech chief pushes for rapid creation of AI code of conduct” at <https://interestingengineering.com/science/eu-tech-chief-pushes-for-rapid-creation-of-ai-code-of-conduct>.

Harvey’s Numbers

The Journal.....	620
Total fiction words for June.....	XXXX
Total fiction words for 2023.....	97868
Total nonfiction words for May...	620
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	110040
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	207908
Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date.....	2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date.....	4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	221
Short story collections.....	31

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Marketing, and If You’re a Writer, Write

June 3, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * About BookBub
- * Free Email Marketing Service
- * What Sort of Writer Are You?*
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“[I]t is ... important for me to write in tranquility, trying to write as well as I can, with no eye on any market, nor any thought of what the stuff will bring, or even if it can be published...” Ernest Hemingway

“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

About BookBub

See “Reach More Readers. Sell More Books” at <https://www.bookbub.com/partners>. Also, here are the links for the Getting Started with BookBub webinar recording and the slides for that webinar.

See the Webinar Recording at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ucFV1PeDB-w>.

To download the Webinar Slides (PDF), click [GettingStartedWithBookBubAds_WebinarSlides.pdf](#).

Free Email Marketing Service

If you're looking for an email marketing service (like MailChimp, but better) I just discovered Brevo. They offer up to 300 emails per day and unlimited contacts at no charge.

If they'd been offering this when I left MailChimp, I probably would have gone with Brevo.

Check it out at <https://www.brevo.com/features/email-marketing/>. (I'll be staying with Substack.)

What Sort of Writer Are You?

Dale Ivan Smith asked this and some other questions on the Kill Zone blog at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/06/what-sort-of-writer-are-you.html>.

After reading Kathryn Lilley's list of writer types (excerpted in Smith's post), I couldn't resist leaving a comment:

"I don't fit any of the categories in K. Lilley's list. I certainly don't outline, but then it isn't my story. My characters, not I, are living it. In my own story, I'm sitting at my laptop with my fingers on the keyboard. But I do have fun running through the stories with my characters as their stories unfold around us.

"I'm not a revisionist. I simply record what happens in the story, and I would no more change any of the story events or my characters' reactions or dialogue than I would change my neighbors' account of their trip to Barbados or wherever. Not my place. Finally, if writing fiction wasn't fun, I wouldn't do it. When my characters tire of sharing their stories with me, there's always fishing.

"I call myself a writer (lower-case, no 'calling,' no angelic choir) because that's what I do. I write, every day. People marvel at my production, but I spend only about three hours per day doing my job, and I write only about 1000 words per hour (a blazing slow 17 words per minute).

"I write one fiction project at a time, though I have stopped writing one novel to write another, more insistent one, then returned to finish the first I also spend about an hour per day to write my instructive (and free) daily Journal to share my journey and what I've learned with other writers."

Note: Recently, of course, I haven't been writing fiction every day. That will resume soon, fingers crossed. But even in the midst of an emotional life roll, I'm still writing the Journal every day, or practically every day.

I wish the same for you. That if you call yourself a writer, you actually, you know, write.

There's certainly no shame in *not* being a writer. If writing isn't in you or if it isn't fun for you, I suggest finding something fun to do. Because life really is too short to waste any of it posturing or doing something you don't enjoy doing.

By the way, that three hours per day I mentioned—

If you spend only three hours per day not just in the chair but actually writing, that's 21,000 words per week; 90,000 words per 30-day month; and 1,095,000 words per 365-day year.

If you do the same thing but take weekends off, that's still 15,000 words per week; about 66,000 words per 22-weekday month; and 780,000 words per 260-weekday year.

The point is, there will be a lot of times when you are prevented from writing by circumstances beyond your control. So don't take it for granted. If you're a writer, write something every chance you get. Just sayin'.

And try new things. Join in the Bradbury Challenge of writing at least one new short story per week. You may report your story title, word count and genre to me if you want, and I'll share your achievement with all the Journal subscribers and readers.

Or fashion an intensive for yourself: Write a new short story every day for two weeks or a month. Or write 3000 words of publishable fiction every day for two weeks or a month, regardless of whether it goes into short stories, a novel or whatever. Write.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Pen Names" at <https://deanwesleymith.com/pen-names/>.

See "AI-driven US military drone 'kills' its human operator to finish mission" at <https://interestingengineering.com/innovation/ai-drone-turns-on-operator>.

See "BookBub for Authors: Tips From a Veteran Writer" at <https://www.amarketingexpert.com/2023/04/25/bookbub-for-authors-tips-from-a-veteran-writer/>.

See "...train collision in India" at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-65793257>. Somehow this tragedy spawned several story ideas.

The Numbers

The Journal.....	840
Total fiction words for June.....	XXXX
Total fiction words for 2023.....	97868
Total nonfiction words for May... 1460	
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	110880
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	208748
Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date.....	2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date.....	4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	221
Short story collections.....	31

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Welcome, and a New Short Story

June 4, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Welcome
- * A New Short Story
- * A Success Story
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Speed [in writing fiction] does not kill. But I always keep this in mind: the writing has got to be top notch.” Vincent Zandri

“If you have a number of serial readers who read everything you put out, you can't write fast enough for them.” Vincent Zandri

Welcome

to NYT and USA Today bestselling author [Vincent Zandri](#) and any others who have recently subscribed to the Journal. I hope you will find it entertaining and useful.

For a great deal more, please see the free downloads (Journal Archives and Gifts) at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives-gifts-dvds/>.

A New Short Story

Per usual, I forgot to mention yesterday I published a new, previously unpublished short story on Friday. It's a Dark Scenarios short story, and it's titled “Turnaround.” You can read it online, free, at <https://harveystanbroughwrites.com/turnaround/>.

If you'd like to subscribe, again free, click <https://stanbroughwrites.substack.com/p/turnaround> and then click Subscribe at the bottom of the story.

A Success Story

Matt Perryman, a writer friend living in New Zealand, shared some exciting news with me in an email. Graciously, he granted me permission to pass it along to you. Here's Matt:

“After our last conversation, which was on May 4th my time, I had a minor ‘road to Damascus’ moment in the early hours of the following morning. There’s an interesting and possibly mystical story to tell about that, maybe one day, but that’s not what I’m writing about.

“That following day, Friday May 5th, I committed to the intensive, write a story a day for 30 days, challenge.

“Well.

“I’m pleased to report that yesterday, June 3rd, I wrote my 30th consecutive story.

“The grand total for the month added up to a rounding-error on the far side of 60,000 words.

“Most of the stories will never see the light of day for a variety of reasons (none of them to do with critical voice). Some days I was on fire and on two days I struggled to get 500 words. Most days I cleared 2000 words without much trouble, writing mainly between 9 am and 11 am. I’ve met more than a few casts of characters who have novel-length and series-length stories to tell.

“But what I took away from the effort is much more important than a bunch of short stories. My craft has visibly improved. The words flow. There’s little or no anxiety as I sit down to write (and when it is there, I can put it aside and get on with the creating). I’m finding that I can almost ‘see’ the story opening up before me as I interact with the characters. I’m trusting intuition when it speaks and saying ‘yes’ instead of ‘that’ll never...’

“Anyhow. I wanted to say a gigantic ‘Thank You’ for your support, via email and through the Journal. Without you out there spreading the message of WITD and Heinlein’s Rules, month after month, there’s no telling how many people like me would still be lost inside the terminal record-skip of our own mental music. It reads like you get frustrated at times—and I do understand why with what passes for ‘writing advice’ out there—but those of us you do reach would never have made the jump otherwise. Sometimes the repetition of an idea is the idea...

“I’m not sure what’s next for me. Maybe I’ll dial back to the ‘leisurely’ pace of the Bradbury challenge. (The fact that I can write that without irony or a hint of self-doubt is worth the price of admission.) Whatever happens, I’m enjoying writing fiction for the first time in my life.”

Of course I’m happy to pass along what I’ve learned from my own experience as a writer, but Matt’s success isn’t down to me. His success is a direct result of his own efforts and his own willingness to trust himself and let go.

I wish the same for all of you.

Anyone else out there interested in doing your own WITD intensive, just follow Matt’s lead:

Write one short story per day for 30 days. Just write whatever comes, no pressure. Later you can publish or not, completely up to you. (But remember that even a story you think is terrible,

someone else will find brilliant.) The point is to have fun and to practice trusting your creative subconscious.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “The Pulp Fictioneer: June Notes 2023” at <https://franktheodat.substack.com/p/june-notes-2023>. Good stuff, and thanks for the nod to the Journal, Frank.

See “Carbon Emission Labels on Books” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/carbon-emission-labels-on-books/>. I am not making this up.

The Numbers

The Journal.....	770
Total fiction words for June.....	XXXX
Total fiction words for 2023.....	97868
Total nonfiction words for June...	2230
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	111650
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	209518
Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date.....	2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date.....	4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	221
Short story collections.....	31

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Turns Out I Was Wrong

June 5, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting
- * Turns Out I Was Wrong

- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Optimism is a perfectly legitimate response to failure.” Stephen King

“I distrust plot for two reasons: first, because our lives are largely plotless, even when you add in all our reasonable precautions and careful planning; and second, because I believe plotting and the spontaneity of real creation aren’t compatible.” Stephen King

“The job boils down to two things: paying attention to how the real people around you behave and then telling the truth about what you see.” Stephen King

Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting

You can still join in the challenge at any time. There’s no cost of course, and it’s a great way to have some fun, increase your inventory, and jumpstart your writing. It’s also a great way to get more practice pushing down the critical voice.

- Erin Donoho “Levee Breathing” 994 words Historical Fiction
- Balázs Jámor “The Door to Other Places” 2200 words Fantasy
(Balázs also reported he’s 7000 words into another story he started this week that wants to run into a novel)
- George Kordonis “The Redemption” 4431 words Dark Fantasy
- Chynna Pace “A Different Invasion” 4311 words SF
- Christopher Ridge “Grandpa’s got a chainsaw” 1200 words Humorous Horror

I’m missing a few of my challenge participants. I hope they’re continuing to write on their own. Almost everyone reports that the Challenge has helped them, that the words flow more easily, etc. (see an excerpt from George K’s email below). The trick is to keep it going after you exit the challenge.

Turns Out I Was Wrong

Well, as it turns out Wes Crowley wasn’t the only major voice in the Wes Crowley series of books, and even less-major voices have things they want to say, stories and partial stories they want to tell.

Hence WCG10SF5 (tentatively titled Rose Padilla), the 10th novel in the Wes Crowley Gap series, the 5th novel in the Santa Fe subseries, and the 22nd novel overall in the Wes Crowley saga.

I won’t lie to you. After writing only 7 novels since August 2022, and after it took me from January 23 through May 13 inclusive (so one hundred and eleven calendar days for 20 writing days) to write [The Road to Amarillo](#), I’m considerably out of practice.

Still, once a story begins to flow, if you just trust it and go with it, and don't try to force anything on your characters (they, not you, are living the story) you'll be fine. Or as writer friend George K. wrote in an email recently,

“I notice that I do best when I take WITD as a complete lark (Bradbury's words). The more ‘I don't care’ the easier the words come out. The more I ‘go after it’ the harder they come out.”

Thanks, George. That is true. And if I may, it's true because when you “don't care” you're not trying to control anything. You're just having fun and enjoying the story as it unfolds all around you. (After that, believe in yourself and publish. Put the story out there for people who need to see it.)

And the thing is, when you don't care the story will be authentic and higher quality than it would have been if you'd gone after it and let your critical mind “decide” anything. The longer you are able think of yourself only as your characters' stenographer (Stephen King's term), the more you'll produce and the better your stories will be.

That's exactly what I've been doing since April 2014.

It's also what I did yesterday, and that's why I was able to hit over 4200 words on the first day. It feels good to be in the saddle again. I have to admit, after having come through what I've come through recently and still being upright, I'm also feeling just a little bit invulnerable. And that is a great feeling.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Fighter Jets Scrambled in DC” at <https://www.axios.com/2023/06/04/sonic-boom-dc-region-f-16-fighter-jets-cessna>. Weird. Great story fodder though.

See “The world's oldest hotel” at <https://www.cnn.com/videos/travel/2023/06/01/worlds-oldest-hotel-hot-springs-japan-orig.cnn>. This hotel opened its doors in 705 AD. You can still stay there in 2023. Story setting?

See “Will Google turn digital publishing upside down...” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/like-dropping-a-nuclear-bomb-will-google-turn-digital-publishing-upside-down-with-ai-search/>.

See “Hong Kong police arrest democracy activists...” at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-65803053>. Huh. Wonder if the US will complain when they're tried for sedition and sent to prison.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 720

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283

Total fiction words for June..... 4283

Total fiction words for 2023..... 102151

Total nonfiction words for June... 2950

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 112370

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 214521

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221

Short story collections..... 31

I.M. An angel, my angel, left this earth on April 11, 2023 just before 10 a.m. My life and my world will never be the same.

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Fair Winds and Following Seas

June 6, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Fair Winds and Following Seas
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Fair Winds and Following Seas

That's the blessing Marines give each other when one of our own passes.

I wasn't going to post an edition of the Journal today, but yesterday I learned that one of my oldest, dearest friends, Edward Lee Courtney, passed away on June 4.

Still, to bend this toward writing I thought I'd offer up a few anecdotes. These are all real, but please feel free to use any of them as the seed of a story.

“Corky” and I served together in the Corps for only a few years, but in that few years, in the way of young men, we made a lifetime of memories. As you might imagine, often the memories involved alcohol, often not. Corky’s favorite whiskey at the time was I.W. Harper. Mine (before I found Jameson’s) was Wild Turkey. All of these happened in the early ’70s.

- We took target practice, him with a Ruger .41 magnum, me with a S&W .357 magnum. He fired at a target a few feet to my left, and I fired at a target a few feet to his left. We were around 50 feet apart. To us, the setup was perfectly logical. Our proximity to each other’s target ensured a quick report of hits. The chance of harm never occurred to us.

- In a faded green ’66 Chevy pickup with a wooden bed, no tailgate, and a busted gas gauge, we picked up a young Navajo sitting on two cases of beer alongside a highway on the outskirts of Yuma Arizona. He explained that he was hitching to Kingman to participate in a rodeo. We took him, of course, beer and all. It was a great rodeo. (By the way, gasoline was 20 to 30 cents per gallon.)

- On the topic of rodeos, Corky and I were both card-carrying associate members of the Rodeo Cowboys Association (RCA, the PRCA hadn’t come about yet). We both entered the bullriding competition at the Yuma RCA rodeo in the early ’70s. Corky drew a small, cross-eyed bull named Clarence. Corky had long legs. He could almost touch the rowels of his spurs under the bull’s belly. It wasn’t a good match.

I drew a bull everyone wanted, Number 11, White Lightning, a massive brahma with his right horn (thankfully, as it happened) turned crooked along his forehead.

I stayed almost the full 8 seconds (it’s longer than you think), but when I came off on his right side, my left hand remained trapped in the “death loop” that had helped me stay aboard. I managed to remain upright, frantically running alongside WL and tugging at my hand as he continued to leap and buck and tried repeatedly to hook me with that bent right horn.

Corky was one of three friends who came over the fence and helped the clowns get me untied. The others were Charles “Chuck” Bauer and Ray Hammond, a wide-eyed easterner about 5’6” and about as big around as my right arm. Ray rode that day too, to mark it off his bucket list, and swallowed a wad of chewing tobacco, also from his bucket list, with the bull’s first leap out of the chute. He turned green.

(Part of the White Lightning event informed a short story titled “Same Ol’ Bull, Same Ol’ Rodeo.” I think you can still find it at Amazon.)

Corky and I shared many, many other memories, some foolish, some crazy, but all fun. Corky left the Corps and, I learned much later, forged a successful career as a guard in the Missouri state prison system. He maintained his laid-back sense of humor even there.

When he first retired from the system, he was fond of telling people he’d recently met, “I just got out of prison.” And while he was still on the job, when one of the inmates yelled at Corky that he

was prejudiced, Corky looked at him, smiled, and in a smooth west-Texas drawl, said, “Racist? Hell, I don’t even own a race car. You can ask my wife.”

Corporal Edward Lee Courtney, USMC, was originally from Odessa, Texas. He was a year or two older than I, and he was my brother, albeit from different parents. Should you ever read the Wes Crowley saga, he appears through several volumes in the character of Courtney Lee Edwards, Corporal, Company D, Texas Rangers.

Fair winds and following seas, Corky. And thank you for everything. Semper fi.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Are You Better off Attending a Conference or Writing?” at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S1CaiRZU87s>.

See “How maglev trains work (5 min. video)” at <https://interestingengineering.com/ie-origins/ie-explainer/season-2/ep-15-how-maglev-trains-work>.

See “This lensless AI camera uses only textual prompts to ‘take’ a photo” at <https://interestingengineering.com/innovation/lensless-ai-camera-uses-only-textual-prompts-to-take-photo>. Not so much taking a photo as constructing an image. Still, pretty impressive.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 800

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283

Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246

Total fiction words for June..... 8246

Total fiction words for 2023..... 106114

Total nonfiction words for June... 3750

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 113170

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 219284

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221

Short story collections..... 31

I.M. An angel, my angel, left this earth on April 11, 2023 just before 10 a.m. My life and my world will never be the same.

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The First Quote of the Day

June 8, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * The First Quote of the Day
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“If you want to be a writer, you must do two things above all others: read a lot and write a lot.”
Stephen King

“Pace is the speed at which your narrative unfolds. There is a kind of unspoken (hence undefended and unexamined) belief in publishing circles that the most commercially successful stories and novels are fast-paced. Like so many unexamined beliefs in the publishing business, this idea is largely bullshit. ... I believe each story should be allowed to unfold at its own pace, and that pace is not always double time.” Stephen King

The First Quote of the Day

I remembered the first quote of the day a couple of days ago when a young writer emailed me. (Thanks, E. D.) Overall, she was worried about how much reading other writers' work would influence her own.

In her own words,

“I've just finished reading a wonderful story ... written by a fantastic author, and I find myself beginning to write a story much like hers. Her story really impressed me, to the point where I can hardly stop thinking about it. But I don't want to write a copy of her story.”

This has always been a concern for newer writers. Some even flatly refuse to read other writers' work because they're afraid that work will influence their own.

Let me put your mind at rest. Yes, if you read the work of other writers, especially stories you really like, that work will inform your own. Even their writing style will inform your own writing style, but it won't replace it.

As I told this young author, the way around this is to Just Write the Story. Don't worry about what the other author wrote, and don't consciously think about it (or anything else) as you're writing. Shut out the conscious, critical mind.

If you just write whatever comes, that story will be coming out of You and Your Creative Subconscious. Because of that, it will be unique and original and authentic. Because nobody else has your creative subconscious.

The only way for you to gum it up and write what that other author wrote is to write with your conscious, critical mind.

E. also wrote in her email,

"I've tried writing other stories, but this character—who I created years ago—is just nagging at me, dying for me to tell his story."

So write it! Jump on his story and write it before he withdraws the offer!

"He has a fantastic voice and I really enjoy him. I'm not sure what exactly his story is, and I'm excited to find out, but I realize as I'm writing that my story is touching on a lot of the same points her novel is[: mental health, medicine, trauma, war, family]. The last thing I want to do is copy (even unconsciously) what she wrote."

A few things:

1. "I realize as I'm writing...." That is pure critical mind. Don't think. Again, write the story already. Jump on it and write it.
2. Of course you aren't sure what his story is. It hasn't unfolded yet. It will do so as you and he race through it together. Just trust him and yourself and write whatever comes.
3. The author you mentioned is not the first to write about "mental health, medicine, trauma, war, [and] family" and neither she nor you will be the last.
4. And most importantly, as good as her novel is, it wasn't written from your creative subconscious.

A very personal example—

I don't believe I've ever admitted this before, but to this day, when I think of my enduring character Texas Ranger Wes Crowley, in my mind I see Texas Ranger Augustus McCrae (as portrayed by Robert Duvall in *Lonesome Dove*). Ranger Otis "Mac" McFadden was vaguely based on Woodrow Call.

I enjoyed *Lonesome Dove* and the prequels and sequels very much. But when I sat down to write a Wes Crowley short story ("Adobe Walls"), Wes and Mac (especially Mac) were already doing things that Gus and Woodrow never would have done.

And when I started writing my first novel (*Leaving Amarillo*), which turned out to be the fourth novel in the Wes Crowley saga, it was strictly by invitation. As E. put it, Wes was “just nagging at me, dying for me to tell his story.”

Sometime after I finished writing “Adobe Walls,” Wes tugged on my sleeve and whispered, “Wouldn’t you like to know how I came to be here [in the situation in ‘Adobe Walls’]?”

I said yes, then wrote three novels. I thought I was through with Wes and his story and his world.

Then he tugged on my sleeve again. “Wouldn’t you like to know the beginning, how all of this started?”

Of course, the answer to that was yes too. I wrote three prequels to *Leaving Amarillo*, and then I wrote six more novels, all sequels to *South to Mexico*.

Finally, Wes noticed there was a 16 year gap between Book 2 and Book 3. He turned to me again. “Shouldn’t we tell some of what happened during that time?”

Yes. Yes we should. And the Wes Crowley Gap series was born. As it turns out, I’m still writing it. There are 12 novels in the original Wes Crowley saga, and I’m on the 10th novel of the Gap series.

For the record, I wrote every Wes Crowley short story and novel into the dark. I rode through each story with my characters as the story unfolded around us, and frankly I counted myself fortunate that they asked me to come along.

As a result, despite the partial source of the original idea (a character like Gus McCrae), Wes and Mac and all the other men and women in the Wes Crowley saga are uniquely and authentically themselves and nobody else.

I should note that I also wrote every novel and series of novels and short story in the overall Wes Crowley story as a direct response to an invitation from and at the behest of the characters.

So when E. wrote that “...this character—who I created years ago—is just nagging at me, dying for me to tell his story,” I almost leapt out of my chair to say, Then Write It! Right now! Sit down right now and let it flow out of you!

Folks, when you are fortunate enough that even your characters are doing their best to get you to trust them and just write into the dark, you really should take advantage of that. If you don’t, sooner or later they will give up and withdraw the invitation.

As for mimicking anyone else’s work or style, you will, so don’t worry about it.

And as for touching on universal themes—for example, mental health, medicine, trauma, war, and family—if you don’t write about those or other universal themes, you won’t write, period.

There really is nothing new under the sun (or, as I learned with my 10-volume Journey Home series, in the universe) except your unique take on old stories.

But you can't consciously think your way to anything unique or original. That unique, original, authentic story can come only from your creative subconscious. And it will. If you trust it.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

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

See "How to Embrace Being a Discovery Writer" at <https://writingcooperative.com/how-to-embrace-being-a-discovery-writer-775a2508a9c>.

See "The Passive Income Myth" at <https://www.youtube.com/live/cpCOgwPBSII>. I recommend subscribing to this free You Tube channel. Vin Zandri makes a lot of sense, and I agree with a lot that he says. As always, take what works for you and leave the rest.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1260

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283
Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246
Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709
Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for June..... 12154
Total fiction words for 2023..... 110022
Total nonfiction words for June... 5010
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 114430
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 224452

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221
Short story collections..... 31

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Quotes of the Day, Of Interest, and a Reminder

June 9, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Not Much to Report
- * A Reminder
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Hardcovers, considered permanent and as a result difficult to afford, were for upper class and/or educated readers. ... Paperbacks were considered disposable, though, like the pulp magazines before them. So anything that was in cheap paper was considered cheap fiction, and not worthy of all the things we used to measure ‘good literature’.” Kristine Kathryn Rusch

“Algorithms, not creativity” Anthony Leung in Lexology

“I am careful not to confuse excellence with perfection. Excellence, I can reach for; perfection is God's business.” Michael J. Fox

Not Much to Report

Not much to report today. I didn't write fiction yesterday. Had a shopping trip to Sierra Vista and then wrestled with installing a new program on my writing 'puter. Back at it today.

However, the Quotes of the Day above and the items in “Of Interest” below were too good not to pass along.

A Reminder

If you are

- engaged in the Bradbury Challenge, or
- would like to jump in, and
- you would like to use the Journal as a place to report (for accountability) and-or
- share your accomplishment with your fellow writers, then

send me your information in the following format anytime before the Journal goes live on Monday morning:

Author Name “Story Title” XXXX words Story Genre

If there’s a URL readers can click to read your story, include that too. I’ll make it work.

Notice the format needs no punctuation. Makes it easy to copy/paste without having to edit anything. (grin)

As I mentioned in the past, it’s a good idea to write your story(ies) earlier in the week rather than later. The hours and days can easily slip away from you. And yes, you may report your story as soon as you write it. You don’t have to wait until the deadline.

Of course, you may also participate in the Challenge on your own. The idea (as proposed by Ray Bradbury) is to write at least one short story per week for a year. Nobody, he said, could write 52 bad short stories. (grin)

Hope you all have a great weekend.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Quick Note On Author Tag Lines” at <https://deanwesleymith.com/quick-note-on-author-tag-lines/>. I have to dissent a little. I say if you have it, use it.

See “Business Musings: Stars” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/business-musings-stars/>.

See “Creative Machines? The Riddle of AI and Copyright Authorship and Ownership” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/creative-machines-the-riddle-of-ai-and-copyright-authorship-and-ownership/>.

See “A good death” at <https://www.cbc.ca/newsinteractives/features/a-good-death-maid>. Story idea? Grisly or humane?

See “Five key takeaways from the House Judiciary Committee hearing on AI and copyright law” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/five-key-takeaways-from-the-house-judiciary-committee-hearing-on-ai-and-copyright-law/>.

See “Japanese government issues statement on AI and copyright regulation” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/japanese-government-issues-statement-on-ai-and-copyright-regulation/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 440

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283
Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246
Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709
Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for June..... 12154
Total fiction words for 2023..... 110022
Total nonfiction words for June... 5450
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 114870
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 224892

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
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The Different Types of Characters... or Writers

June 10, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * The Different Types of Characters... or Writers
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Always be a first-rate version of yourself, instead of a second-rate version of somebody else.”
Judy Garland

“I distrust plot for two reasons: first, because our lives are largely plotless, even when you add in all our reasonable precautions and careful planning; and second, because I believe plotting and the spontaneity of real creation aren’t compatible.” Stephen King

The Different Types of Characters... or Writers

Actually the title is a little misleading. I’m not talking about whether characters are stoic and quiet or whiny and loud. Nor am I talking about whether they’re proud or shameless, rural or urban, exotic or local, crude or urbane. I’m not even talking about the characteristics or traits or quirks the characters display.

Really, I’m not talking about different types of characters at all. I’m talking about different types of writers, as determined by how the writer sees his or her characters. Which type of writer are you?

1. *The characters in your mind are definitely not real. Are you kidding? LOL* They are only a figment of your very rich imagination. (Kudos to you, eh!) They don’t actually exist until You think them up or build them with layer after layer of first stereotypical and then unique character traits and then write them into being, making sure they’re “well-rounded.”

You are your characters’ creator in much the same way that God or Nature or the Universe (or Whatever) is your creator. (Scaled down, of course. As fiction writers, perhaps our hypocrisy does have boundaries.)

You control the catalyst for every situation, the unfolding of the situations themselves, and your characters’ physical, emotional and verbal reactions to those situations.

For each of your characters, you probably find value in constructing a character sketch, a history, and—through a probably extensive outline—a future.

Your characters can’t possibly surprise you, and you see that as a good thing. Then again, how *could* they surprise you? They see with your eyes, hear with your ears, smell with your nose, taste with your tongue, speak with your voice and remember your memories.

2. *The characters in your mind might be sort of real,* or they at least probably allude to characters who are real. Maybe they’re composites of people you have known, places you have visited or lived, and situations you have encountered, experienced or heard about.

They definitely are a figment of your imagination, BUT you certainly don’t have to think them up. They’re just up there, waiting in your creative subconscious for you to ask them to show you a story, which you then type across your laptop screen.

You do maybe use a limited character sketch and history, but you don’t have to structure a future for them with an outline. A general timeline or phaseline or signposts along the way will do, just to keep them on track. Wouldn’t want them to go too far astray or paint themselves (and you) into a corner in the story.

3. *The characters and their world exist in your mind.* When they and you are in the right mood, you are able to access your creative subconscious. There you pull back a curtain or open a door and are able to step through and into your characters' story, which is ongoing and happening as you experience it alongside them.

You move through the story with them, recording what happens and your characters' reactions as you go.

Sometimes you can be fairly sure of which characters you will encounter when you visit your creative subconscious—for example, when you set out to write another story in a series or ongoing saga—but you don't mind the excitement of occasionally meeting brand new characters and situations.

Even characters you have known and whose stories you have shared for awhile often surprise you by doing something unexpected, or revealing something unexpected about themselves or their past, or taking a different direction than you expected. But you don't correct them, at least most of the time. You try very hard to remember this is their story, not yours.

Most of the time you take a deep breath, plaster a silly grin on your face to push back your fear of the unknown, and plunge along after them. After all, there are no real consequences. You're only reporting what happens in their ongoing story.

4. *Maybe endless numbers of characters exist* in endless combinations in endless numbers of worlds in endless dimensions across the space-time continuum. Maybe your creative subconscious only provides a portal to those characters and dimensions.

Or maybe the characters exist only in your creative subconscious. It doesn't really matter, and you don't really care. Either way, the characters are real to you. How could they live such interesting, exotic stories and not be real?

You consider yourself fortunate that they chose you to serve as the stenographer or recorder or reporter for their stories. Because in your story, you're doing nothing more exciting than sitting at a laptop with your fingers on the keyboard.

You don't fear failing or not being good enough because (1) you're only telling a story, (2) it isn't even your story, and (3) whether it's "good" depends strictly on who's reading it at the time. What one reader (even yourself) doesn't like another will love.

Of course, you wouldn't even consider outlining and controlling the story and the characters because (duh) how can you plan something that's unfolding in real time all around you as you and your characters move through it? Your job is to convey what happens, not to alter what happened.

The characters and you share mutual respect and their only request is that you will report what happens faithfully and accurately. Of course, you wouldn't dream of breaking that faith or even wanting to.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “That Character Who Took Over” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/06/that-character-who-took-over.html>. Note: My post above was not in response to this. The timing of the posting of the two articles was strictly coincidental.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1000

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283
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Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709
Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for June..... 12154
Total fiction words for 2023..... 110022
Total nonfiction words for June... 6450
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 115870
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 225892

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
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[A New Page](#)

June 11, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * A New Page
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“[Gesturing] is about thinking and communication, and is a sophisticated aid to both.” staff writer for The Economist in a review of Susan Goldin-Meadow’s book *Thinking With Your Hands*

“I tend to take a really long time to write. My last book took 14 years, not because I wanted it to, that’s just what happened.” Daniel Mason, author of four novels

Sorry, but why bother?

A New Page

My youngest son visited yesterday and part of today. As a result, I didn’t do much yesterday, but I haven’t been much in the mood to write the past few days anyway.

But I did slightly edit (mostly paragraphing, pacing) several short stories to add them to my [Stanbrough Writes website](#) and then to my [Stanbrough Writes substack](#).

As are most things in my life, that was the result of something else.

As you probably know, you can subscribe to my Stanbrough Writes substack to receive a short story once a week on Friday in your inbox. Like the Journal, it’s free, and I never thought of making it a paid service.

Then a new subscriber (Thank you, L.N.) “pledged” (a substack word) \$80 for an annual subscription. Substack let me know. Of course, I get the \$80 paid subscription only if I turn on paid subscriptions in Substack.

Fine. I went to Substack to turn on paid subscriptions.

Only there was a catch: Substack uses Stripe exclusively to process payments. No choice. Stripe or nothing.

Fine. So I jumped through all the little Stripe hoops for about 5 minutes to set up an account. No big deal, and I pushed down my natural hatred of being coerced. I got through it.

But right afterward, I received a “warning” email from Stripe. They would COLLECT money for me, but they wouldn’t be able to SEND my money through to my bank account (they had both the routing and account numbers) unless I gave them a different physical address.

To take off on an old Seinfeld bit, Stripe apparently understands how to “collect” the money, but they don’t quite get the concept of “sending” the money, and for me, the sending is really the more important part.

It seems their system didn’t “recognize” my physical address. And of course they and other not-so-distant cousins of Neanderthals don’t allow using a PO box for a business address. (Substack itself recognized PO Box 604 as my business address.)

Apparently the folks who run Stripe live in a place where the post office will deliver mail to a physical address. I do not. Here in Saint David, it’s a PO Box, a rural box, or nada.

I have encountered this problem before. UPS, among others, didn’t “recognize” my address even after UPS drivers had physically delivered items TO my address. Go figure. (For the record, ironically FedEx never had a problem with recognizing my address.)

Anyway, I did try to resolve the issue with Stripe, but of course you aren’t allowed to talk with a human being who can actually, you know, REASON.

So I just closed my Stripe account, went back into Substack to “unlink” Stripe from my bank account, then went to my Stanbrough Writes website and set up a new page titled “Donations Accepted.”

So there went roughly three hours I’ll never get back, all because some 20-something or 30-something MBA thought it would be Gosh Just A Really Nifty Idea to disallow PO boxes as business addresses and require a physical address that’s recognized by some random assortment of zeroes and ones.

Okay, I feel a little better now. But I’ll just say, it’s a very good thing I don’t know where the MBA’s golf course is located. ‘Cause I’m old and I really, really, really don’t worry so much about consequences.

(By the way, if you happen to work for Stripe, PLEASE refer this post as high up the chain as you possibly can. Just so the morons might begin to understand what a stupid policy they have in place and how much business it might be costing them. Not that I hold out the slightest hope the message will sink in. You cannot reason with a dirt clod.)

Anyway, I went back to reliable old PayPal and set up a new subscription form (monthly and annual) and a new donation button.

Then I emailed my gracious would-be donor and gave him the URL for that page. And I told him exactly what I’m about to tell you and what I wrote in the intro to that page.

You may subscribe to your writing instructor’s substack at StanbroughWrites.substack.com completely free of charge if you want to. I’m currently offering a short story every week. I’m thinking soon I might start serializing some of my novels on there too.

(If I were you, I certainly would subscribe, if only to see whether my instructor applies all the stuff in his writing that he tells me to do in mine. Unfortunately, I could never do that with the people who taught me because they don't give anything away.)

But whether you do or don't subscribe, hey, no worries.

The subscription will remain free for those who want it. But for those who are able and who would like to pay for a subscription or donate, you are welcome to do so. All subscriptions and donations are gratefully accepted. If you do want to pay to subscribe or if you want to donate, visit <https://harveystanbroughwrites.com/donations-accepted/>.

To subscribe, select either a monthly (\$9) or annual (\$80) subscription, then click the Subscribe button. (My short stories sell for \$3 each, so I see the monthly fee as a \$3 discount and the annual fee as a \$76 discount.)

To make a one-time donation, scroll down just a little on that same page and click the Donate button. That's all there is to it.

And yes, you may also pay for a subscription or donate via personal check. Mail it to PO Box 604, Saint David AZ 85630. However you choose to support my efforts, Thank You!

But again, you can subscribe completely free. You don't have to pay for a subscription, and you don't have to donate. No skin off my teeth. (Well, no teeth, so....)

Then I realized I had only one more story pre-posted and scheduled. *At the moment* (some of you will see what I did there) that's a drawn-out process. As I mentioned earlier, I schedule a post to the Stanbrough Writes website, but then I schedule the same post to the Stanbrough Writes substack.

Really, I only use Substack so I can send those stories and this Journal to your inboxes. Maybe I'll switch to doing it a different way again. Maybe even (shudder) pay money to provide a service that doesn't pay me.

Or maybe I'll do what Dean does: just post what I want to post and let you come look if you want to. I've visited his site every day since February 2014. Whatever, I'll figure something out.

And yes, I know I could post the Journal and the stories **ONLY** to Substack, but I won't do that. There's just something about having them available on my own website that turns me on.

(Ohh, brain spike! Maybe I'll make ALL subscriptions to the Stanbrough Writes substack paid, but let readers read the stories free of charge if they come to the Stanbrough Write website! Hmmm. Shadows of Mohammed Ali:

If you come to me,
the stories are free.

If deliver to you,
the stories are, um, er, paid. Well crap, that didn't rhyme.)

So anyway, for now everything's still free. Yesterday morning, I scheduled stories in both places out through September 1. Later I'll schedule more.

And as for Stripe and all its executives, they can bite me. I know my own physical address, and my house doesn't disappear just because their machine doesn't recognize it.

May all their children be born naked, and may they triple-bogey every hole on the course for a year. Amen.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Gestures are a subtle and vital form of communication" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/gestures-are-a-subtle-and-vital-form-of-communication/>. And character gesturing and facial expressions should be included in your fiction.

See "Attend Licensing Expo With Me" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/attend-licensing-expo-with-me/>.

See "Character Type & Trope Thesaurus: Orphan Archetype" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/character-type-trope-thesaurus-orphan-archetype/>. Read about it, learn, then forget it when you're writing.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1380

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Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709

Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for June..... 12154

Total fiction words for 2023..... 110022

Total nonfiction words for June... 7830

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 117250

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 227272

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date.....	4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	73
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Bradbury Challenge, and Support Each Other

June 12, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting
- * Support Each Other
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting

You can still join in the challenge at any time. There’s no cost of course, and it’s a great way to have some fun, increase your inventory, and jumpstart your writing. It’s also a great way to get more practice pushing down the critical voice.

During the past week, in addition to whatever other fiction they’re writing, the following writers reported their progress:

1. Erin Donoho “The Choice” 1500 words Historical Fiction
2. Balázs Jámbor “A Knight’s Tale” 2200 words Fantasy
3. Loyd Jenkins “First Job” 2630 words Urban Fantasy/Horror
4. George Kordonis, “Flower Thief” 2271 words Urban Fantasy
5. Alexander Nakul “What Cosmic Eyes saw” 1782 words Horror
6. Chynna Pace “Toy Store Murders” 3181 words Mystery
7. Christopher Ridge “The Neighbor” 3000 words Humorous Crime
8. Karen Riggs “Purple is the Color” 7481 words Horror

Congratulations to all those hanging in there. And again, it’s never too late to start.

Support Each Other

It's important that you support each other. Do blog tours together or for each other, mention other writers' books in your stories. If your character is reading in the story, why not have him or her read a story by one of your fellow writers?

I've done this, thus far, for many writers. Some are past favorites I've never met (Hemingway, Block, Tolkein, King, et al). Others are writers among my Journal audience. A few have done the same thing for me.

You'd be surprised how many readers will search for a book title or author name just to see whether it's real. I do that often as a reader. And all too often I am disappointed to learn the book and author doesn't exist at all.

But why? I've never understood why a novelist or short story writer would mention a fake book title or fake author name in their work. Why not support your friends and colleagues and acquaintances? It costs you nothing and it might prove extremely helpful to the other writer.

Along those lines, once upon a time I was invited to participate in an anthology. I wrote a story specifically in the genre called for in the anthology and submitted it. The anthology editor got back to me the same day. He eagerly accepted the story.

Then he asked how many followers I have on social media, etc.

I said I didn't have a clue. I'm a writer, not a marketing expert.

So "with regret" (his words), the editor reversed his decision and rejected my story. His stated reason was that the inclusion of my story wouldn't be "fair" to the other authors whose work would be included in the anthology because I don't have as many social media followers as they do.

To me, that makes no sense. The presence of my story (considering the glowing initial comments of the editor, would have elevated the anthology a bit. And the other authors in the anthology would have gleaned at least some new readers (my readers) had my story been included.

Granted, my readership would possibly have skyrocketed as their readers discovered my work, but how would that have hurt any of the other writers?

As this same editor has said many times, "A rising tide lifts all boats." I guess the saying pertains only to yachts and pleasure cruisers, not us little guys fussing around in bass boats.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Newsletters Part III: Welcome Sequence How To" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/06/newsletters-part-iii-welcome-sequence-how-to.html>.

See “More Licensing Expo” at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/more-licensing-expo/>. Note: This is not part of the Licensing Transition class. This is separate and must be paid for separately.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 600

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283
Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246
Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709
Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for June..... 12154
Total fiction words for 2023..... 110022
Total nonfiction words for June... 8430
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 117850
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 227872

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221
Short story collections..... 31

I.M. An angel, my angel, left this earth on April 11, 2023 just before 10 a.m. My life and my world will never be the same.

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark, adherence to Heinlein’s Rules, and that following the myths of fiction writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

Time to Give Back

June 13, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Time to Give Back
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Time to Give Back

I know this is much later than usual, but I decided I didn't want to hold it until tomorrow.

First, please watch and listen to bestselling writer Vin Zandri's short video, "Production." You will find it at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IvcJjRVo9Gw>.

I plan to email Vin to ask whether he might write up a guest post for the Journal on marketing or advertising, lending us his expertise on the topic. (Vin, if you're reading this, save me the email and let me know. Gracias.)

Second and more importantly, it's time to give back, not to me but to your fellow writers who follow this silly blog.

If you're selling a lot of books—and of course, "a lot" is an extremely subjective term—write a guest post of your own for this Journal. Either that or at least drop by and leave a comment at <https://hestanbrough.com/time-to-give-back>. (Yes, you can also comment directly on the Substack, but the former is preferable.)

If you don't want to comment directly or if you have trouble doing so, email your comment to me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com. If you're selling books pretty regularly, inquiring minds want to know your methods.

Amazon ads? BookBub? Some other kind of advertising (social media, etc.)? A combination?

I have around 100 subscribers to this Journal plus a lot of folks who don't subscribe directly but who read the Journal faithfully. Especially if you're a solo, one-person independent writer, publisher, and marketer, please let us hear from you.

Even if you can't share much or believe that what you have to share is not important, it might be important to someone on this side of the fence, so please take a shot. It won't cost you anything but a little of your time.

And remember, a rising tide lifts all boats. That is exactly why this Journal has been running so long.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "If humans went extinct, what would the Earth look like one year later?" at <https://theconversation.com/if-humans-went-extinct-what-would-the-earth-look-like-one-year-later-199737>. All about setting, especially for dystopic stories.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 330

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283
Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246
Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709
Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for June..... 12154
Total fiction words for 2023..... 110022
Total nonfiction words for June... 8760
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 118150
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 228272

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221
Short story collections..... 31

I.M. An angel, my angel, left this earth on April 11, 2023 just before 10 a.m. My life and my world will never be the same.

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Marketing and Advertising

June 15, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Marketing and Advertising
- * YouTube and Plots
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Cormac McCarthy, maybe the greatest American novelist of my time, has passed away at 89. He was full of years and created a fine body of work, but I still mourn his passing.” Stephen King (Thanks, Gary V.)

“Marketing, y’gotta have a plan. Advertising, y’gotta have money.” [Vincent Zandri](#)

“Time is a great teacher, but unfortunately, it kills all its students.” Hector Berlioz

Marketing and Advertising

First, welcome to Ken and any others who have subscribed or dropped by to read my Substack or my Journal posts at <https://hestanbrough.com>. Be sure to visit the Archives, Gifts and DVDs page on that site for some nifty free stuff.

Apparently, most writers prefer to keep what works for them in marketing and advertising to themselves. Helping other writers, I guess, is anathema.

I don’t understand, but I *am* aware that my understanding is not a requirement for others’ actions or inactions. Of course the whole matter does cause me to question why I bother to write and post this Journal at all.

In [“Time to Give Back”](#) I asked you to share your marketing and advertising intel with the rest of us here via the Journal in either a comment or via email.

Crickets. Nobody responded. For some reason, that actually surprised me. Anyway, please don’t respond now. It’s fine, and lesson learned.

I also specifically invited Vincent Zandri to share his personal experience re marketing and advertising. Even though his video channel is not a how-to for writers, he went above and beyond and created a new video just to address this question.

Like me, Vin seems to know that helping other writers doesn’t harm the writer doing the helping, even when it isn’t something he normally does. Thanks, Vin, for being willing to share your personal experience with all of us. I watched and listened to the video and got a couple of ideas that hadn’t occurred to me before.

I recommend you watch Vin’s video to get some good ideas on marketing. Go to https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-uv6qTgXG_Q. Then check out his books below.

I’ll be looking into some of the advertising platforms Vin mentioned in the video. If I have any thoughts on them that I think might be helpful, I will share them.

Vincent Zandri

<http://www.vinzandri.com/>

New York Times and USA Today bestselling ITW Thriller and PWA Shamus Award winning author of [American Prison Break](#), [The Embalmer](#), [The Shroud Key](#), and more. Grab the brand new novel [Moonlight Kills](#).

YouTube and Plots

Vin also has me thinking of maybe starting my own YouTube channel. If I do, it will be to discuss the more personal inside info of the plotlines and settings and characters of my books, etc. In other words, something pretty strictly for readers. With over 80 novels and novellas and well over 200 short stories, I could hit those three topics (plotlines, settings, and characters) for years.

Before anyone yells at me for mentioning plotlines, each of my stories and novels, like all stories and novels, has a plot (noun). I just don't "plot" (verb) my books, meaning laying out everything in advance and forcing the story, situations and characters to adhere to it.

As Bradbury says, "Plot is no more than footprints left in the snow after your characters have run by on their way to incredible destinations."

True dat. And I'm not so insecure that I have to know (or even wonder) what will happen next in a story or novel. My job is to observe and report, not to make stuff up.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Business Cards and Job Titles" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/06/business-cards-and-job-titles.html>.

See "The Red Queen Effect — For Writers" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/06/the-red-queen-effect-for-writers.html>.

See "Pundits Weigh in on Gilbert's Decision..." at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/pundits-weigh-in-on-gilberts-decision-to-pull-russian-set-novel-over-ukrainian-backlash/>. Worthless POS control-freak busybodies. They can't create anything themselves, so they devote their lives to tearing down everyone around them.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 660

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283

Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246

Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709
Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for June..... 12154
Total fiction words for 2023..... 110022
Total nonfiction words for June... 9420
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 118840
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 228862

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221
Short story collections..... 31

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A Special Offer re Marketing, and Censorship

June 16, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * A Special Offer re Marketing
- * Maybe a New YouTube Channel
- * Sensitive Writing Guide (Um, No)
- * Paperback Book Sale
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“They said I was splitting hairs and losing my objectivity. I reminded them that I was a postmodernist who didn't believe in objectivity.” Rosaria Champagne Butterfield

“Hatred and anger are the greatest poison to the happiness of a good mind.” Adam Smith, 18th century economist

A Special Offer re Marketing

One writer reminded me via email yesterday that Dean Wesley Smith is currently advertising yet another Write Stuff Bundle “on this very thing along with his workshop, ‘Making More Than Coffee Money’ for only \$20.00.” The workshop is offered as part of the bundle.

I saw Dean’s post yesterday as well and chose not to link to it in “Of Interest.” But since this other writer mentioned it, and since part of this story bundle has to do with marketing, I figured I’d link to it here.

See “Write Stuff Story Bundle” at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/write-stuff-story-bundle-2/>. Read the whole post. It isn’t long. And if you believe the bundle (or even part of it) will help you, spend the twenty bucks. Getting the little semi-workshop on marketing from Dean is well worth the price. He values it alone at \$150.

I am not vouching for everything in the bundle. Far from it. For just one example, “six simple steps” to starting a novel are at least four steps too many.

In my experience, starting a novel takes only two steps: sit at your keyboard, and type an opening word or phrase or sentence. “The” or “A” or “Once upon a time” are often good opening gambits. Then simply continue until the characters lead you to The End.

When I am able to write again, I will stick by that formula. As I wrote in this space yesterday, I’m not all that essential to the process or to the story structure, characters, etc.

In fact, I’m only a life-support system for my fingertips, the use of which my characters have leased from me by agreement that I get to read their stories first. My only job is to observe and report my characters’ story as it happens, not to make stuff up on their behalf.

That said, to each his or her own. But frankly, I’ve been where you are. That’s the purpose of the Journal: to help cut your learning curve.

Maybe a New YouTube Channel

Well, my new friend Vin Zandri patiently explained to me that despite all the BS I kept encountering in my online reading about starting a YouTube channel and a video podcast, doing so is actually straightforward and simple.

Thanks, Vin, for pulling me back from the brink of... well, something. Frankly, between the stress of a few very harsh personal losses and some unfulfilled expectations recently, I was feeling kind’a like the guy who’s the subject of Garth Brooks’ “Friends in Low Places.” Especially in that very special third verse. (grin)

Which—don’t get me wrong—is perfectly fine. Been there, done that, including frequenting an establishment back in the day (as mentioned in the chorus) that was actually named The Oasis.

Some of my better memories of my time in the Corps were initiated in that little hole-in-the-wall bar.

Anyway, I'll be setting up a YouTube channel in the coming days. If I'm happy with it, I'll spread the URL all over the place so you and/or your reader friends can join me. I'm excited.

I'll advertise it to the folks who are subscribed to read my short stories on the Stanbrough Writes substack too. In fact, I'll probably broadcast it there, maybe on Mondays or Wednesdays. Or maybe both. (The free short stories go out on Fridays.)

The original purpose of my HarveyStanbroughWrites.com website was to chat with readers, sharing insider scoop about my stories, characters, and settings. But doing so live and talking instead of writing all of it will be a ton better.

Oh, and if you're one of the five people on Earth who aren't familiar with the song "Friends in Low Places," you can hear the sanitized version pretty much anywhere. To hear Garth Brooks do the "extra" third verse live, visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MYecJqjBSSI>. Enjoy. (grin)

Sensitive Writing Guide (Um, No)

I mention the following only because it gives me the opportunity to speak against censorship.

I was approached via email by Abby B., who asked me to include an article titled "Sensitive Writing Guide" to my list of recommended writing resources over on harveystanbrough.com. I flatly refused, but I thought I'd share it here with you just in case you might find it useful.

In part, she wrote, "...one can enhance interaction by creating a safe and inclusive environment for communication. When writers are mindful of the reader's emotions and experiences, they can establish a sense of trust and empathy."

How very precious that she presumes to know and "be mindful of the reader's emotions and experiences...." Stereotypes, anyone?

Because how can you possibly pretend to know a reader's emotions and experiences without stereotyping them and assuming "they" (whomever "they" are) all have the same emotions and experiences?

In my world, intent carries far more weight than perception. If you intend in your writing to offend someone, shame on you. Stop being hateful and just live your life.

But if you simply write a story and someone takes offense just so everybody else will see how very offended they are or to exercise censorship of your story, shame on them. They should maybe find a different hobby and learn that one person's rights stop where the next person's rights begin.

If you truly want to be included, don't stand outside and throw rocks while hurling epithets and soundbites. Come on in. But then, I suspect most of those who incite such incidents would rather go home to their gated communities than come in and have a good time.

I was fortunate to learn during my time in the Marine Corps that everyone—every skin color and shade and race and nationality, rich, poor and in between—bleeds red. And only weaklings, most of whom have been worn down, even want anyone to make allowances for them.

Whatever. I have never, do not, and will never endorse censorship in any form. That said, some of you might disagree. If you do, and if you believe a sensitive writing guide might be up your alley, here's the link Abby B. sent me: <https://www.websiteplanet.com/blog/sensitive-writing-guide/>. Enjoy. I hope those who read it are careful not to wrench their shoulder patting themselves on the back.

Paperback Book Sale

Relax. Not my books. These are the books of Bayard and Holmes.

Because I've found these folks' nonfiction books priceless for researching certain things, I thought I'd tell you about this sale. It ends on June 19, so be sure to take a look if you're at all interested in learning about spycraft from people who have lived it.

Please visit <https://bayardandholmes.com/sale/>.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See "Licensing Expo 2023 All Done!" at <https://deanwesleymith.com/licensing-expo-2023-all-done/>.

See "AI Makers Guaranteeing..." at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/ai-makers-guaranteeing-that-your-generative-ai-output-is-safe-from-copyright-exposures-might-be-a-lot-less-filling-than-you-think-says-ai-ethics-and-ai-law/>. Important information, including PG's take.

See "Reader Friday: Page Turners" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/06/reader-friday-page-turners.html>. You should have a cliffhanger at the end of every major scene and chapter. You should write a great opening line (the hook) at the beginning of every major scene and chapter. That is how you create a page turner.

See "Microsoft's Satya Nadella Is Betting Everything on AI" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/microsofts-satya-nadella-is-betting-everything-on-ai/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1250

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283
Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246
Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709
Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for June..... 12154
Total fiction words for 2023..... 110022
Total nonfiction words for June... 10670
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 120090
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 230112

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221
Short story collections..... 31

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A New YouTube Channel

June 17, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Dean's Offer
- * A New YouTube Channel
- * Some History
- * Reading Order
- * Paperback Book Sale
- * Thoughts on "Time to Give Back" and Censorship
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“I’m not essential to the process or to the story structure, characters, etc. of my characters’ stories and novels. I’m only a life-support system for my fingertips, the use of which my characters have leased from me by agreement that I get to read their stories first. My job is only to observe and report my characters’ story as it happens, not to make stuff up on their behalf.”
Harvey Stanbrough

“I am only my characters’ stenographer.” (paraphrased) Stephen King

“I’m not engaging in self-censorship to appease people that will never be appeased anyway.”
Dawn Turner

Dean’s Offer

A reminder, don’t forget that Dean Wesley Smith is currently offering a Quick Solutions Series workshop, valued at \$150, as part of a story bundle. If you haven’t yet, I strongly recommend you take advantage of his offer.

To read more about it or to jump in, see “Write Stuff Story Bundle” at <https://deanwesleymith.com/write-stuff-story-bundle-2/>.

As I mentioned before, I do not vouch for everything in the bundle. But I do vouch for Dean’s workshops. I’ve taken dozens of them. Without even realizing it, Dean typically shares valuable information that goes beyond the scope of the workshop itself.

While I’m on the topic, the most valuable “course” I took from him was the little \$75 lecture (number 1) on Heinlein’s Rules. It covered the rules, but it also included a great deal more. I also recommend it, especially if you’ve not yet been able to pull the trigger yet on trusting yourself and writing into the dark.

A New YouTube Channel

Speaking of pulling the trigger, I have established a new YouTube channel. There’s nothing there yet, but I plan to live-stream once or twice a week, possibly as early as Monday(6/19) or Wednesday (6/21).

If you’d like to drop by and take a look, or for your future reference, you may access it at either <https://www.youtube.com/c/HarveyStanbrough> or <https://www.youtube.com/@HarveyStanbrough>.

I still have much to figure out, like what specific time I’d like to livestream. Or maybe I’ll use my substack to let potential visitors know what time the livestream will be on each day that I do it.

Yup, that makes sense. So if you’re interested in getting news about when the YouTube channel is live, please subscribe to the StanbroughWrites substack over at <https://stanbroughwrites.substack.com/>.

If you can't find a subscription button otherwise, click the title of the current story, then scroll to the bottom and click Subscribe.

And just so you know, I do suspect some aspects of the writing will come out too. I'm not sure I could separate the stories, settings and characters from the writing even if I wanted to. (grin) I hope you'll join me there.

Some History

Actually, I found I had initially set up the YouTube channel way back in December 2011, so almost twelve years ago. Then apparently I got sidetracked and never did anything with it. Which is fine.

Back then I'd written several hundred or a thousand poems, dozens of articles, and maybe a short story or three, but I wasn't really a fiction writer, much less an avid or successful one. I was still firmly in the writers' myths camp, completely ruled (and frankly, immobilized) by fear.

I would go to writers' conferences as an invited speaker on poetry and the language, and I would tell others there that I had a novel in me, that I was outlining it, that I would write it when the time was right. To this day I've never written that novel, but I did outline it for three-plus years.

About the only thing I said back then that makes any sense to me now is that I was "waiting to write a novel until I could find a cast of characters I wanted to live with for that long." Hyuck, hyuck, isn't that funny?

Like most people, I assumed it took months or even years to write a novel, and the longer it took, the better the novel would be. And of course, any alternative opinion was laughable.

What a load of horse-shtuff.

Ironically enough, once I learned to trust myself and my creative subconscious, I didn't have to live with any cast of characters for longer than a month. (Well, technically it did take me 32 writing days to write one novel, but none of the others took even a full month.)

And of course, I intentionally chose to live with many of my characters for months or years because I simply enjoy their company.

- Witness [the Journey Home SF series](#), or
- the [Nick Spalding action-adventure series or the Blackwell Ops crime-thriller series](#), or
- the [much vaunted Wes Crowley Saga](#), a western series to rival Zane Grey or Louis L'Amour or Larry McMurtry's *Lonesome Dove* saga.

But spending time with the characters was not forced on me by my own insecurity as a writer. I *chose* to go back to those characters time after time, to explore their worlds more deeply as they shared more of their experience and stories with me. Which is to say I was blessed.

Reading Order

I just finished setting up the reading order for my various novels and series. It's kind'a cool seeing them all in one place like that: <https://harveystanbroughwrites.com/reading-order-for-novels/>.

I'm not sure what will happen with my Stanbrough Writes website. I'm currently posting the free short story of the week both on the website and on the Substack. I don't like that. I've never been one to enjoy touching work twice.

Currently stories are posted in both places for every Friday from yesterday ("[Five Tight Indians](#)") through September 1. After that date, I probably will only post them at the Stanbrough Writes substack.

And I no longer need the website to post articles for readers and interested writers about the storylines, characters, and settings of my stories and novels. The YouTube channel will take care of all that. So again, at the moment I'm not sure what will become of my Stanbrough Writes website.

I think it might become the cog that points to all the more-specific sites. It probably will also serve as the central point for donations for those who enjoy my various substacks. We'll see.

Paperback Book Sale

This is a repeat from yesterday because it's chance to get some important resources at their lowest price.

Relax. These are not my books. (grin) These are the books of Bayard and Holmes.

Because I've found these folks' nonfiction books priceless for researching certain things, I thought I'd tell you about this sale. It ends on June 19, so be sure to take a look if you're at all interested in learning about spycraft from people who have lived it.

Please visit <https://bayardandholmes.com/sale/>.

Thoughts on "Time to Give Back" and Censorship

Professional fiction writer and friend Dawn Turner offered a comment on my post "Time to Give Back." You can read it at [https://harveystanbrough.substack\[dot\]com/p/time-to-give-back/comment/17394514](https://harveystanbrough.substack[dot]com/p/time-to-give-back/comment/17394514). You might find it helpful. Dawn is one of the three or four I really expected to comment.

Dawn also left a guest-post length comment on "A Special Offer re Marketing, and Censorship," including the third Quote of the Day above. I strongly urge you to read it at [https://harveystanbrough.substack\[dot\]com/p/a-special-offer-re-marketing-and/comment/17393871](https://harveystanbrough.substack[dot]com/p/a-special-offer-re-marketing-and/comment/17393871).

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See “Comments and Questions Here” at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/comments-and-questions-here/>. A very generous offer.

See “Ten things I learned about writing from Stephen King” at <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/oct/30/ten-things-i-learned-about-writing-from-stephen-king>.

See “Writing Mindsets” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/06/writing-mindsets.html>. Mine was the first comment. Go figure.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1310

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283
Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246
Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709
Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for June..... 12154
Total fiction words for 2023..... 110022
Total nonfiction words for June... 11980
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 121400
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 231422

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221
Short story collections..... 31

I.M. An angel, my angel, left this earth on April 11, 2023 just before 10 a.m. My life and my world will never be the same.

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark, adherence to Heinlein’s Rules, and that following the myths of fiction writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

Writing Sales Copy, and Stereotypes

June 18, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Re Cormac McCarthy
- * YouTube
- * Dean's Caution About Writing Fiction Sales Copy
- * Random Thoughts on Stereotypes
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Government is never populated by saints, angels, or true prophets.... [S]uch people would be suited to run a society from the top down, treating each individual equally and fairly.” The Passive Guy

Re Cormac McCarthy

From My Friend Gary V.: “Whether you love or hate Cormac McCarthy, Harold Bloom’s critique of *Blood Meridian* (4 yrs. ago) is the best book critique I’ve read.” See the review at <https://lithub.com/harold-bloom-on-cormac-mccarthy-true-heir-to-melville-and-faulkner/>.

YouTube

I plan to note here in the Journal each little thing I learn as I move deeper into my YouTube channel experience. So just in case some of you were as lost as I was when I started, maybe these little reports will help with your learning curve and ease the transition should you decide to try it as well.

Thanks to several folks who subscribed to my YouTube channel and the notification I received about each of those subscribers, I know now that YouTube itself will notify subscribers when I put up new content. So that’s a load off my mind.

I’ll still notify those who are subscribed to my Stanbrough Writes substack, though.

Dean’s Caution About Writing Fiction Sales Copy

Dean Wesley Smith warns that when writing fiction sales copy, you must avoid writing the plot. Instead, simply write hype to tell the reader what the book is about. Do NOT tell the reader what *happens* in the book. That’s the difference.

As he says, “Nobody wants to read plot” in sales copy. They don’t want to read “this happened and then that happened and then that happened” etc.

But more to the point, speaking here on my own behalf, you don’t WANT them to read plot in your sales copy. Think about it: If you tell them what happens in the book, you erase their need to buy and read the book.

Case in point—a couple of years ago I went looking for Steven Pressfield’s *The Legend of Bagger Vance*. I found it but, based solely on the sales copy, I decided not to buy it. Why? Read the sales copy for yourself at <https://www.amazon.com/dp/038072751X/>. Does it make you want to buy and read the book? And the same holds true for some of his other novels.

If you want to write effective cover blurbs and descriptions for your fiction, I strongly urge you to buy Dean Wesley Smith’s *How to Write Fiction Sales Copy*. I recommend the paperback (it’s only \$10), as you will refer to it again every time you finish a new novel and want to publish it. My copy is dogeared. You can find the paperback new at <https://www.amazon.com/dp/1561466476/>.

Random Thoughts on Stereotypes

Stereotypes are only a veil. Every one of them. Period.

They are necessary and useful in fiction and in life, but only when applied to individuals. And upon even cursory scrutiny, they quickly fall away, revealing the truth of the individual beneath

You, I, and everyone else—the first time we encounter another human or other creature in fiction or in real life—see a stereotype. You can’t stop yourself from using stereotypes in life or in writing fiction. But in writing fiction, accepting that as fact is useful.

Why? Because the stereotype enables the reader to see, hear, and sometimes even smell your character. Yes, smell. Is your character a bum or a hobo or a homeless person? an oilfield worker? a cowboy?

But as anyone with a brain knows, stereotypical traits that identify the character as a member of a particular group fall apart and-or are overshadowed as individual traits become apparent.

The stereotype is extremely good for misdirection. Imagine the large, elderly gentleman getting out of his beat-up, ancient pick-up truck in front of a bank.

He gets out of the pick-up and he is dressed in a straw hat that’s seen better days, faded blue coveralls over a stained white t-shirt and scuffed black heavy-soled lace-up boots.

Maybe little bits of hay or straw are scattered over his coveralls and a lump of something with straw in it extends from beneath the heel of his left boot. Go ahead. What would you think?

Follow him into the bank. As it happens, you have business there too.

Standing in line behind him, you watch as he nods, smiles and addresses an elderly passing female as “Ma’am” and then a younger one as “Miss.”

Finally he’s at the teller’s window. Again he smiles kindly. “I reckon I need to make a deposit. Last week’s receipts.” And he pulls a roll of cash out of his pocket like you’ve never seen.

As he counts it out and lays it on the counter, hundred dollar bill after hundred dollar bill, you calculate he’s depositing \$8300.

A gentleman in a fine suit comes up behind the teller, reaches past her and offers a smile and his hand. “Mr. Smith, our best customer. Always happy to see you, sir.”

They chat for a moment, conclude their business, and Mr. Smith turns away, smiling and nodding at you as he passes.

When you attain the window, you frown and say quietly, “Who was that guy?”

The teller chuckles. “Don’t let appearances deceive you. That was Mortimer Smith. He’s the only multimillionaire I know who still works on his own farm.”

As you can see, the stereotypical traits fade as the reader gets to know the character. Yes, just as the stereotypical traits fade as any actual human gets to know any other actual human, or other creature for that matter.

Well, unless the individual traits shore up the stereotypical traits. Then the sense is “well, of course the character does that or would say that” and the reader doesn’t want to know anything more in-depth about the character. The character is fun to watch, maybe, but you wouldn’t invite him or her to your backyard barbecue.

The writer would do this only for a secondary, cardboard “good” character (a protagonist’s friend or acquaintance) or for any “bad” character, even the antagonist. Because who wants to get to know the bad guy?

Just a thought, but probably a writer will develop a well-rounded antagonist only if there’s a chance that character will be redeemed later in the book or series.

(In my Wes Crowley saga, Otis “Mac” McFadden became an antagonist. He had several endearing, redeeming traits and was a well-rounded character. But if he ever appears in film, who knows what the screen writer will do?)

Protagonists begin as stereotypes and quickly display several “good” traits, but also one “bad” or “flawed” trait for the sake of reality. Any well-developed protagonist in any story **MUST** be well-rounded.

Antagonists begin as stereotypes and quickly display several “bad” or “evil” traits. Well-rounded antagonists also display at least one “good” or “redeeming” trait for the sake of reality. As you will see below, this is not always the case.

But secondary, cardboard (but still important) characters are different. For them, the writer will introduce the good or bad stereotype, then apply one good or bad individual trait that shores up the stereotype. Think of Joe Pesci’s silly, erratic “little man” character the the Lethal Weapon films.

Of course, Pesci’s character is an example of a “good” stereotype. (There are dozens of others. That’s just the one that came to mind.)

For a bad stereotype, see Joss Ackland’s performance as Arjen Rudd in Lethal Weapon 2. (“Diplomatic immunity” with a smug smile.) Even as a main character (the antagonist) he isn’t well-rounded. I don’t recall him having any good or redeeming traits.

Okay, that’s enough of this for now. And yes, I’m aware I talked about writers “developing” characters. For a great deal more on that, I recommend my book [*Creating Realistic Characters*](#) .

Or you can purchase [the audio lecture and PDF handouts](#) (see Course 2) by the same name.

These are things you must learn with your conscious mind. Then, as you write with your creative subconscious, forget everything and Just Write. What you’ve learned will come through as the characters need it. Any questions, fire away.

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See “Accentuate the Positive” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/06/accentuate-the-positive.html>.
Yes, happy father’s day to all the dads out there.

See “Tone in Writing: 42 Examples of Tone For All Types of Writing” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/ton-in-writing-42-examples-of-tone-for-all-types-of-writing/>.
Does anyone not know this already?

See “...Technology and the New Leviathan” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/152813-2/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1420

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283

Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246

Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709
Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for June..... 12154
Total fiction words for 2023..... 110022
Total nonfiction words for June... 13400
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 122820
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 232842

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
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Writing Crappy First Drafts, and Bradbury Challenge

June 19, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Thanks
- * Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting
- * Writing Crappy First Drafts...
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Well begun is half done.” Aristotle

“Be careful about reading health books. You may die of a misprint.” Mark Twain

Thanks

to everyone who subscribed to my new YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/@HarveyStanbrough> and-or to the StanbroughWrites substack at [https://stanbroughwrites.substack\[dot\]com/](https://stanbroughwrites.substack[dot]com/). I appreciate your support and I will do my best not to disappoint you.

Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting

You can still join in the challenge at any time. There's no cost of course, and it's a great way to have some fun, increase your inventory, and jumpstart your writing. It's also a great way to get more practice pushing down the critical voice.

During the past week, in addition to whatever other fiction they're writing, the following writers reported their progress:

- Erin Donoho "True Love" 5200 words Christian fiction
- Balázs Jámor "The Character Problem" 1800 words Fantasy
- George Kordonis "'Missed Flight" 3721 words Ghost Story
- Alexander Nakul "A Classic Cat" 4051 words Historical, Humor
- Chynna Pace "The Magic Experiment" 3429 words Fantasy
- K.C. Riggs "Swallow" 2773 words General Fiction
- Bill Sinclair "[I Once Met a Man Who Mentioned Himmler's Holiday](#)" 1670 words General Fiction

Writing Crappy First Drafts—What a Crappy Idea

guest post by Dan Baldwin

*Note: This is a heavily edited compilation of two of Dan's blogettes. Any mistakes are mine.
Harvey*

Some so-called writing experts advise writers to "write a crappy first draft."

Translated, it means throw out everything you've ever learned about the craft of writing, your entire 12 – 16 years of education in the English language, and your commitment to excellence and replace it all with crap. These experts actually encourage poor craftsmanship; you can clean up the "mess" in your multiple revisions.

As an often-quoted friend of mine used to say, How is that a good idea?

Another version of this theory is, "You'll toss out 80 percent of your first draft, so don't worry about it." This kind of thinking relates to the "fix it in post" concept I addressed in an earlier piece.

I don't understand why anyone would advise anyone to write a crappy first draft. And it seems like a cop out to me. If you're going to write something, give it your best from the first word to The End.

What's the point of giving into laziness and sloppy writing on a first draft? And is it really lazy considering all the extra work you heap upon yourself cleaning up your joyfully written mess?

There's a famous story about an encounter between Sir Lawrence Olivier and Dustin Hoffman while filming Marathon Man. Hoffman had to appear exhausted from running on a scene. To prepare for the shooting, he ran up and down nearby stairs until he really was exhausted.

Olivier is supposed to have looked at Hoffman and said, "My dear boy, why don't you just try acting?"

Writing crappy first drafts? What a crappy idea. Why not just write your best the first time?

[I believe] a competent writer cannot write a sloppy draft unless he commits himself and directs his attention to said crap.

If you think about it for a moment, you'll realize you know too much to do that. You have to work at screwing it up. Why would someone bang out a bunch of crap when with the same effort s/he could produce quality work? I don't get it.

How much "fix it in the rewrite" mentality a writer adopts is a personal matter. I rewrite only to editorial supervision and then only if I agree with the editor.

My process is to write a good first draft. Before writing Chapter Two, I read over Chapter One and clean up any problems such as typos or factual errors, and then I move on. I repeat that simple process chapter by chapter.

When I finish, I send the piece off to my editor. Then I write a good opening line and begin the next novel. There's no mess to clean up because I don't leave a mess in the first place.

You may not believe it, but neither do you. Not unless you force yourself to on bad advice.

The next time you start writing, cut the crap.

Dan's Recommended Reading:

The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law

American Indian Myths and Legends, edited by Richard Erdoes and Alfonso Ortiz

Mark Your Calendars to meet Dan: Desert Foothills Book Festival October 21, 2023

Talk with you again later.

Of Interest

See "comments on Licensing by others and Dean" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/comments-and-questions-here/#comments>.

See "Create Jigsaw Puzzles (for licensing)" at <https://www.createjigsawpuzzles.com>.

See “POD Tote Bags (for licensing)” at <https://thecleverbusiness.com/print-on-demand-totes-bags-backpacks/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 770

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283
Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246
Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709
Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for June..... 12154
Total fiction words for 2023..... 110022
Total nonfiction words for June... 14170
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 123590
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 233612

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221
Short story collections..... 31

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First Livestream Delayed

June 20, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * First Livestream Delayed
- * Speaking of Writing Fiction

- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“The publishers and the printers are making more money than you are, and you’re the writer. They vacation in the Hamptons while you struggle to pay the rent. Tell me that makes sense.”
Vincent Zandri on traditional publishing

First Livestream Delayed

I was playing around with my internal camera’s video settings and didn’t like what I saw on the screen. Then I realized it was “broadcasting” at only 720p. I’ll never hit studio quality, and I don’t need to, but c’mon. I don’t wanna transmit something all that grainy either.

My slate-grey t-shirt looked sort of grey with black, blue and red sparkles. And whatever you think of me, rest assured I do not wear sparkles.

Anyway, I found out I look better (better color, etc.) on my smaller 11.5” HP writing puter even though it also is only 720p. BUT the image is reversed, flipped horizontally. That’s just annoying. I tried updating the driver, etc. I also looked all over the place for the settings recommended online (“mirror image” and “flip horizontal”) but I’m telling you, they don’t exist on either of my computers.

So I drove to a local store and bought a separate 1440p camera. Installed in a snap, but couldn’t find where to use it (and its mic) instead of the on-board laptop camera and its mic. (I finally disabled and later re-enabled the on-board camera.) PLUS the image was STILL reversed. So same boat, and thirty bucks lighter in the billfold.

I also tried the new webcam on the 14” HP, thinking at least I’d get a clearer picture. Sure enough, the picture was clearer, but the camera reversed the image on THAT laptop too. That was enough. Me having a separate web cam simply wasn’t meant to be. I took it all down and will return it to the store probably later today.

Just so you know, I’m usually like a dog on a bone for quality. I write the very best I can the first time through, and I was the best version of a Marine at every level and a cop and a landscaper and a cowboy and an oilfield hand and an editor that I could be the first time through. But this camera debacle has convinced me it’s time to relax a little.

So when I livestream for the first time here in a day or two, you might get a halfway decent but reversed video from my little 11” HP, or you might get a grainier but at-least-not-reversed video from this 14” HP. You’ll still get the best I can do at the moment, but it won’t be as good as I had hoped it would be.

And I figure for the first one, I'll talk about something that should be of interest to both my readers and my writing friends: my writing space, AKA The Hovel. And whatever happens will happen.

In addition to everything else, the pump in our well quit yesterday. The well guy was out and it looks like there's a direct electrical short down at the pump, meaning the pump will have to be pulled, etc. Wish us luck.

I'm looking very forward to getting back to writing fiction again. Soon.

Speaking of Writing Fiction

[Pro writer Dawn Turner](#) left a great comment on Dan Baldwin's guest post on writing crappy first drafts:

“My process is to write a good first draft. Before writing Chapter Two, I read over Chapter One and clean up any problems such as typos or factual errors, and then I move on. I repeat that simple process chapter by chapter.”

“Such a perfect explanation of my own process, Dan. So simple, and yet, it seems to baffle so many authors. I still don't get that.

“I remember participating in an online editing group several years back. (Eesh, gotta be 15 years ago now, since it was before I published my first book. Yikes! Where does time go?) We were supposed to send the first draft of each chapter to the group as we finished. I always seemed to get the same comment: ‘You've edited this. It's too clean.’

“First, no. I did what we were supposed to. I wrote it, read it over to make sure there weren't any glaring typos, and sent it. Moved on to the next chapter. No editing. I just wrote like I normally do.

“Second, those comments left me feeling like I was doing something wrong by writing WELL in my ‘first’ draft. Which is stupid in the extreme. Why should ANYONE feel bad because they write well in the initial draft? If anything, the writers who aspire to write ‘crap’ for their first draft should be the ones who feel bad, for wasting so much time, since they then have to edit that drivel. LOL

“Needless to say, it didn't take me long to realize those editing groups were a waste of MY time, and I stopped doing that to myself.”

Extremely wise thoughts, Dawn, and thanks for sharing your experience.

Talk with you later.

Of Interest

See “We Have a Ghost.. Movie” at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/we-have-a-ghost-movie/>. A bit about licensing.

See “Going Rogue! *(video)” at <https://www.youtube.com/live/X6Dla06r4Zwhttps://www.youtube.com/live/X6Dla06r4Zw>.

See “If Not Big Names, Then What?” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/if-not-big-names-then-what/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 890

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283
Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246
Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709
Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for June..... 12154
Total fiction words for 2023..... 110022
Total nonfiction words for June... 15060
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 124480
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 234502

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221
Short story collections..... 31

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To Sell More Books, Stop Selling Books

June 21, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * To Sell More Books, Stop Selling Books
- * Guest Posts
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

To Sell More Books, Stop Selling Books

guest post by Matt Perryman

Matt Perryman graciously offered the following as a guest post a few days before it goes live on his own Substack. Visit Matt's Meaningful Particulars substack at <https://mattpmn.substack.com>. I encourage you to visit and consider subscribing.

The other day while browsing a reasonably popular writing blog, I read a post about creating an email newsletter. The post was full of horrible advice.

The nuts 'n bolts stuff was fine as it goes. The problem is that they ended up regurgitating that favorite old saw of the broke writer:

Don't email your list more than once a quarter! Any more and they'll unsubscribe!

Followed by the lemming-like commenters agreeing that they would never read any emails from a writer who sent more than once a month at most. They wouldn't want to pester anyone unless they had a new book to sell.

I know that the friends I appreciate most are the ones that I rarely see, and only when they want me to buy something.

This advice, if followed, will kill any benefits you may get from having an email newsletter. If you insist on writing to the whims of the dour comment-lady telling you to send less email, you may as well save the money and time and not send it at all.

I propose that you do the opposite.

Send your email newsletter more often, not less.

Weekly is better than monthly. Three times a week is better than weekly. If you can spend 20 minutes writing an email every day, all the better.

Writers don't only buy into myths about writing. They believe a good many falsehoods about promotion, too — such as this mind-worm that they must only send emails once every blood-moon, and only then if they have a new book for sale.

They don't want to "bother" their readers. They don't want to be too "salesy."

Dour comment-lady even said she would unsubscribe if you dared to mail her more than once every February 29th.

Forget all that. If you have an offering that will make their lives better in some way or another, they want to hear from you.

There are two takeaway points in that last sentence.

First, do you want to spend your efforts pleasing people who are angered by hearing from you?

What are the odds that such people have any interest in your books? Do you think that a person who is upset that you emailed them is going to be a fan of your writing or purchase from you?

Reader, if that's true you want her gone. She's not your fan, she's never bought your books, and she probably doesn't even like your books. It costs you money to send her emails that she doesn't want.

You don't want dour comment-lady reading your emails when her spot is taking up space that a true fan could fill.

Second, if you're sending good stuff that your real fans want, they aren't going anywhere. Notice the two parts: "good stuff" and "real fans" are each an essential ingredient.

That means you can't send the boring lectures and meandering monotone-voice engineering reports found in most author newsletters. If you only send boring 30% OFF ENDS TODAY sales pitches or boring walls of text, no wonder nobody wants to read it. I'd unsubscribe too.

It's on you to send email worth reading. If you think that's difficult, I remind you that the major obstacle to that target is pandering to subscribers that don't like you.

Writers see the sausage made from inside the factory. Our world looks different than it does to the fans on the outside. What you prefer, like, want, wish, or hope doesn't enter into the logic of the fan.

You are not your fans.

"Fan" is short for fanatic. These are your most loyal, engaged, and responsive readers. These are the people who buy everything you release the hour its available and then tell all their friends. They pay the food bill.

Write to your fans, for your fans.

One last thing to wrap this up.

Writers would love it if they could make their perfect thing and people would just come buy it. People should come buy their stuff if it's good. No argument from me. Sadly for us idealists, however nice the "should," reality is your only reliable guide.

It helps to think of your customer, in any business, as Homer Simpson.

Homer Simpson has no attention span. He lives on impulse. If you aren't making your presence felt on a regular cadence, he's already forgotten all about you.

That's no insult, by the by. We're all busy, interested in our own personal sphere of concerns, and easily distracted by an environment designed to distract. Even your fanatics are fallible, finite, limited, ordinary human beings just like you.

The more they hear from you, the better the response.

You don't have to write something every day, although if done well, the effects might surprise you.

What do you send? You're a storyteller. Tell an interesting story. What happened to you today? What's an interesting takeaway tip, lesson, or mind-twisting insight you can pull out of that story?

Then drop a link to a book. Don't sell. Offer the opportunity to buy. There's a difference.

That's all it takes.

If you want to sell more books, more is better than less, in general and for the most part. None of this involves any hard-closing strong-arm sales tactics that nobody reads anyway. You're building lasting connections.

All you stand to lose is your comment-lady. But she doesn't like your books anyway.

Thanks for reading.

Matt

P.S. If you found this valuable, interesting, funny, or it made you upset that you had to use your mind for activities that don't involve infinite scrolling, I ask that you do me a favor and share it with just one person.

Talk with you later.

Guest Posts

I still want guest posts if you have something to share from your own experience from writing, publishing or marketing. But if those posts are available online elsewhere, from this point forward I will introduce them here in the Journal and then link to them instead of printing them here in their entirety.

Of Interest

See “Four New Pop-Up Classes Available” at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/four-new-pop-up-classes-available/>. Read this post. The titles of the new pop-ups alone should give you some ideas, especially #82 and #83.

See “How to Write a Class Essay Using AI” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-to-write-a-class-essay-using-ai/#comment-470171>. Wow. The cover pic for the video looks like something straight out of the film *Idiocracy*. Somehow I am not surprised. (Of course to be fair, the vid is actually about how to write a “1st class essay” not a “class essay.”)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 150

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283
Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246
Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709
Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for June..... 12154
Total fiction words for 2023..... 110022
Total nonfiction words for June... 15210
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 124630
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 234652

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
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[More About YouTube](#)

June 23, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * My First YouTube Video
- * More About YouTube
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Things need not have happened to be true. Tales and adventures are the shadow truths that will endure when mere facts are dust and ashes and forgotten.” Neil Gaiman

“Just write one true sentence.” Ernest Hemingway

My First YouTube Video

You can see it at [https://youtube\[dot\]com/live/NJj5bpcw4J4](https://youtube[dot]com/live/NJj5bpcw4J4). Lasts all of maybe 6 minutes.

One thing I learned (on watching the video separately myself later) is not to turn the computer away from me while I’m talking. (grin) I pretty much muted myself. Lesson learned.

Also, a couple of folks mentioned it would be better if I lit-up my face. We’ll see. The next edition will be in the Hovel, which I keep naturally dark (so no backlighting issue).

The next one will be this morning (Friday) at 9 a.m. Arizona time, live from the Hovel. I’ll give you a little tour of the Hovel (at least the east end of it where my office is) and we’ll go from there. I hope you can join me.

More About YouTube

Although the following instructions are for a PC, you should have similar settings on any Apple product.

1. The following is contingent on you setting up a YouTube channel. It costs nothing and it isn’t difficult. I recommend these instructions from Google Support:

- a. Sign in to YouTube on a computer or the mobile site.
 - b. Click your profile picture. Create a channel.
 - c. You’ll be asked to create a channel.
 - d. Check the details (with your Google Account name and photo) and confirm to create your channel. Then fill in all your account information, preferences, etc.
2. To broadcast over your channel, first, click Create (or the icon, which looks like a small video camera facing right with a + on it) in the upper right corner, and then click Go Live. YouTube

will make you wait at least 24 hours the first time to go live, so go ahead and get this out of the way.

Note: I haven't tried the Upload Videos, New Playlist, or New Podcast settings.

3. Once you've done that, be sure your computer has a webcam and a microphone. To check,

a. Click the Windows icon in the lower left corner of your screen, then click Settings > Sound. Scroll down to Input. The box below that will display the name of your microphone(s).

b. If the box says "Disabled" or "Microphone Disabled," click it and then click "Enable." That should solve your problem.

c. If YouTube still doesn't "see" your mic, right click on the Windows icon in the lower left corner of your screen.

1. From the ensuing pop-up menu, select Device Manager.

2. When the Device Manager opens, click the arrow to the left of "Audio inputs and outputs." It will show one or more microphones (if your computer has one or more) and speakers.

3. Double-click the listed microphone, and then click the Drivers tab. When that opens, click Update Driver and select "Search automatically for drivers."

4. If the Device Manager says your drivers are up to date and the mic still doesn't work, go back to Settings > Windows Update and see whether it recommends an updated driver. (You can also go to the manufacturer of your PC. They usually have drivers available for download, but they don't deliver them as a suppository the way Windows does.

d. Follow the directions, then close the Device Manager.

4. When all of that is done and YouTube recognizes your camera and your mic and you're ready to "go live" or livestream for the first time, um, don't. Trust me. (grin) Instead, do this:

a. Open your YouTube channel and click Create or the video camera icon and then click Go Live again. (If you didn't do this earlier, you might have to wait 24 hours.)

b. On the next screen, click Start on either of the two options. I recommend the second option, Later Date. This will give you some much-needed flexibility.

c. On the next screen, click Go on either of the two options. I selected the first option, Built-in Webcam. That will lead you to the Create Stream page.

d. Check your details and edit if necessary. Be sure to scroll all the way down to see all the choices and boxes you have to tick. Click Next.

e. Check your preferred customization. Click next.

f. Select your Privacy setting. For the first one, you might want to click Private. Just sayin' (grin). Then schedule it. Click Done.

Obviously, you can also go live instead of scheduling your video for later. Up to you.

That ought to do it.

Now, it's your turn. If you find ways to fine-tune any of the above or if you encounter glitches I didn't mention, please be as unabashedly unashamed about "failure" as I am and share.

After all, if you fail that only means you were bold enough to try in the first place. In my world, being bold trumps being timid at every turn. You may either comment on the blog itself at <https://hestanbrough.com/more-on-you-tube> or email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

Talk with you later.

Of Interest

See "Smith's Monthly" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/smiths-monthly-2/>.

See "Happy Summer Solstice" and "Exciting News" at <https://preview.mailerlite.com/e4w9k6x9p3/2242955214334204186/k8j0/>.

See "Along with the standard computer warranty agreement" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/along-with-the-standard-computer-warranty-agreement/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 890

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283
Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246
Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709
Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for June..... 12154
Total fiction words for 2023..... 110022
Total nonfiction words for June... 16100
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 125520
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 235542

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date.....	2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date.....	4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	221
Short story collections.....	31

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More Notes on YouTube

June 24, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * More Notes on YouTube
- * Disillusionment
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“A champion is someone who gets up when he can't.” Jack Dempsey

More Notes on YouTube

I came to write this right after I closed my livestream yesterday. I think it ran for about 15 minutes, and I know I rambled a bit. Mea culpa, of course. Who else?

Not a big deal. All part of the learning curve.

Re the rambling, for my next livestream, I'll probaby make a few notes so I have an idea up front what I want to talk about.

A little later, I might also start making vids in advance and scheduling them. But that won't be live and I'd really like to be able to respond to questions and comments as they come in. So we'll see.

There won't be anymore awkward carrying the camera (laptop) around. Even with the image not reversed, it's difficult to frame what I'd like viewers to see. I'm not sure why I hadn't realized that, but I know now.

As I believe I alluded to in the livestream, I'm also thinking about talking to readers about characters, settings, locations and-or storylines once or twice a week, and then talking about the actual process of writing once a week or so.

Originally I planned to talk about characters, settings, locations and-or storylines and also allow talk about writing and creation to seep in here and there.

I learned from today's episode that doesn't work, at least for me. It doesn't feel right. I can talk about the writing process or genres or cycling etc. and use my fiction as an example, but I can't go the other way with it, if that makes sense.

Oh, and my wife suggested I set my laptop up on one of my old humidors to level the camera a bit. I did that, elevating the laptop about 4.5" and it seemed to work better, at least when the computer and I weren't waltzing across the floor like a couple'a drunks. (grin) But I've already said I won't do that again. I promise. Probably.

Anyway, I wanted to ask—If you had your druthers, what day(s) and time(s) would it be more convenient for you to tune into a livestream? Please don't be shy about letting me know. Yesterday afternoon I asked those who are subscribed to my Stanbrough Writes substack the same question. (As of this writing, nobody has bothered to respond.)

By the way, I'm no longer posting the stories to my HarveyStanbroughWrites.com website. I'm posting them only to the substack now.

If you'd like to see the most recent (yesterday's) story, visit [https://stanbroughwrites.substack\[dot\]com/](https://stanbroughwrites.substack[dot]com/). "Theorum" is the latest story. And if you'd like to subscribe and haven't yet, scroll to the bottom of the story and click Subscribe. It's free.

Disillusionment

I'm no virgin to human foibles. I am aware we all have our likes and dislikes, prejudices and even hatreds. What keeps the exchange of ideas flowing is that we don't announce or divulge those prejudices and hatreds unnecessarily while discussing matters on which the prejudices and hatreds have absolutely no bearing.

For example, Kristine Kathryn Rusch does this a lot in her Business Musings blog, often bringing her personal view of politics into play even though it has no bearing on the topic at hand.

She sets so many hatred-driven political ambushes in her posts that a year or so ago I emailed her privately to complain. She wrote back to say that "going forward" her Business Musings blog would be a "safe space for everyone." Within a few posts she was back to her old ways, and I unsubscribed.

Truly, tigers can't change their stripes, but actual tigers in the wild don't go about openly displaying those stripes and yelling, "Hey, pay attention to me. C'mon, pet me. Never mind that you might lose a hand or arm."

Dean Wesley Smith has most often avoided mentioning his own personal political stance, dislikes and hatreds. But in a post that was ostensibly to review guitarist Keith Urban's performance at a casino in Las Vegas, he vividly displayed some unsavory traits, again completely unnecessarily.

The actual review of Urban's performance was three short paragraphs, beginning with "Keith is flat amazing" and ending with "...amazingly good." Everything else seemed to me to comprise the bellowing of an angry child. I was sorely disappointed.

Most prejudices and hatreds are based on willful disrespect and ignorance, and neither is an excuse. Dean's post was no exception. If you feel disdain for a particular group or type of people, you would be wise to keep your mouth shut, especially when those people pay a good part of your salary.

So here's some advice that has nothing to do with writing but everything to do with marketing: You don't have to change your self-sanctified beliefs, whatever they are. We all have them.

But you might take care not to broadcast them openly and with visceral hatred. If you do, people who have long admired you and looked at you as a kind of mentor might shy away.

Now understand, I don't care personally about your politics. I don't even want to know what they are. I don't care whether you're a staunch conservative or a libertarian or a liberal or a full-on socialist or whatever.

With regard to Dean's post in particular, I don't care if you hate "cowboys" or view them with disdain (though I seriously doubt there was even one actual cowboy at the concert). I also don't care if you hate "rednecks," the term I suspect Dean was avoiding with his use of "cowboys," and I don't care if you use that term.

I don't care if you hate or view with snobbish disdain fat or obese people or white people or human beings of any skin tone or ethnic or religious background, or enthusiastic people in general. And (trust me on this) I especially don't care if you are unable to bring yourself to believe fully in your "vaccine" or believe it won't work after all unless everyone around you is also vaccinated.

Maybe if everyone along the emperor's parade route had also stripped naked, the emperor in "The Emperor's New Clothes" might not have felt so foolish. Just sayin'.

But I don't care about any of that. All of that is your business. None of it matters in the slightest to me unless you shove it in my face, especially while we're ostensibly talking about something that has nothing to do with any of that.

This is specifically why I don't discuss politics or any of that crap in this Journal. I have very strong personal beliefs, but I don't want to run off those who are serious about learning the craft and joy of writing by divulging those beliefs here.

Besides, it really doesn't take a genius to understand that blanket assumptions made about types or groups of people are always, in every case, false.

If you don't want to drive possible readers and students away, I suggest you keep your politics and insensitivities and prejudices and hatreds to yourself. And I am very, very sorry Dean chose not to.

Talk with you later.

Of Interest

See "21 Road Trip Writing Prompts" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/21-road-trip-writing-prompts/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1150

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283
Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246
Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709
Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for June..... 12154
Total fiction words for 2023..... 110022
Total nonfiction words for June... 17250
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 126670
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 236692

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark, adherence to Heinlein's Rules, and that following the myths of fiction writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

Make Finding Your Books Easy for the Reader

June 25, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Make Finding Your Books Easy for the Reader
- * About Dean Wesley Smith
- * Re the Livestreams
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Writing by a deadline can be a really good thing and does wonders because you don’t have time to think. Just relax and follow your characters around and they take care of the rest.” [Christopher Ridge, Horror writer](#)

“I lost some time once. It’s always in the last place you look for it.” Neil Gaiman

Make Finding Your Books Easy for the Reader

Yup, for some of you it’s time to be on the receiving end of a finger-wagging session. (grin)

Emails are one of the most often overlooked marketing tools. I know several writers who, although they seem to be serious about the craft and about making money from their fiction, don’t include even the URL of their own website at the bottom of their emails.

Don’t have a personal author website? No problem. How about including the URL to your Amazon author page? Or your author page from other sales venues if you have them?

Do you have a Facebook account? Include the URL.

Any other social media accounts? Include the URL.

And make any URLs you include live links, meaning clickable. A reader is more likely to click through if s/he can simply click a link than if s/he has to highlight, copy, and then paste the URL into a browser address window.

So what else to include? Use your imagination.

I don’t include my Twitter URL in my signature, but only because the stuff I post on Twitter comes from one or another of my blogs.

Oh, the signature—Anybody who’s received an email from me has seen my signature.

When I say “signature” in this case, I’m not talking about my name or initial. I mean the email program signature, the bit below the text of the email that provides valuable information for anyone who wants it.

If you’re a writer and you have an email account, set up a signature. If your email provider doesn’t offer a signature that will be appended to all outgoing emails, change providers. It’s that important.

The signature enables your email recipients to see at a glance where they can find your website, your books, etc. It can help them get to know who you are.

My signature is at the bottom of every email I send out, centered between two sets of three spaced asterisks. I recently updated it, so it now reads

* * *

I only write when I’m inspired, so I see to it that I’m inspired every morning at 5 a.m.

[My YouTube Channel](#)

[My Amazon Author Page](#)

[StoneThreadPublishing.com](#)

[My Author Website](#) (HarveyStanbrough.com)

[My Daily Journal for Writers](#) (HEStanbrough.com)

[Free Story of the Week](#) (and more!)

* * *

Note that I made the text of the next to the last two a link, but I also included the partial URL of those sites so the reader would see them. Hey, the more times your name is in front of a prospective reader, the better.

The location of the URLs and links matters too. What’s important to you?

- In my signature, I put my YouTube channel up top because it’s new and I want more people to check in.
- I put my Amazon author page and my publisher site next because that’s where folks can most easily find my books.
- My author website and this Journal are in the middle because they’re less important. I don’t think subscriptions for even this Journal have changed by more than 10% over the past 9 years. And
- I put Free Story of the Week last so it would stand out. Discoverability. I like to believe folks will read my stories, enjoy them, and go online to look for more.

Where you put your links is completely up to you, of course, but give it some thought. The purpose is to make it easier for readers to find you and your books.

While we're on the topic, it's also a good idea (IMHO) to set your author website as AuthorName.com. (Note: If you write under a pen name for some strange reason, use the pen name.)

In addition to harveystanbrough.com (plus hstanbrough.com and hestanbrough.com and all three in .org) I used to have websites for my major pen names (ericlstringer.com, nicholaszporter.com, gervasioarrancado.com).

In fact, I still have my Gervasio Arrancado magic realism persona and website. Gervasio might well be back to spin some more tall tales, so I'll keep that one alive for awhile, though at the moment there's nothing there.

I also had websites for a couple of my stronger characters (wescrowley.com and charlietask.com) as well as for my thriller series (blackwellops.com) and my magic realism tales (cantinatales.com). I will allow those to fade away.

Finally, I also strongly recommend making your primary email address YourName@emailprovider.com. Why?

Because (again) it puts your name in the reader's mind.

You can also use YourName@yourwebsiteURL.com (e.g., Harvey@harveystanbrough.com). But any emails addressed to my URL email address are redirected to harveystanbrough@gmail.com anyway, so (shrug).

Okay, I hope some of this helps.

About Dean Wesley Smith

Listen, if you're just starting out, Dean Wesley Smith is a great source of information on the writing craft. Or rather, his online workshops (especially the classics, which are also half-price) and lectures and WMG Writer Guides are great sources of information.

But if you want the occasional, rare gem from his website, you'll need to bookmark his site and visit it yourself every day.

After yesterday's assinine post on his blog, I won't be pointing anyone in his direction anymore. I'm through supporting him. God knows when the chips were down and he could have supported me, he turned his back. (Yes sir, a rising tide lifts all boats, but only if you're allowed to put your boat in the water.)

If you're trying to pull the trigger on writing into the dark or adhering to Heinlein's Rules, really you just have to man-up and do it. Or woman-up and do it. Whatever. But if you need help in that regard or guidance or a cheering section, frankly you have me.

As a bonus, I won't charge you an arm and half a leg, or probably anything at all. Because in my camp a rising tide truly does lift all boats. And I won't try to sell you a bill of goods or a load of political or otherwise biased horse excrement.

Re the Livestreams

I've decided not to worry about how many are able to attend livestreams. Numbers of those willing to view the recorded event are much higher anyway. I think maybe five viewers were able to catch the previous livestream, but a scant hour or so later, over 90 viewers had seen it.

So thanks to the few of you who responded to my question, but I'll just go live when it feels right and you can catch it live or on the flip side, as we used to say. (grin)

Oh, and hey, you Bradbury Challenge participants, don't forget to get your titles, word counts and genres in before the Journal goes live on Monday morning.

Talk with you later.

Of Interest

See "Character Type & Trope Thesaurus: Lover" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/character-type-trope-thesaurus-lover/>. I wish I'd had the idea for all these writing thesauruses.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1200

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283
Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246
Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709
Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for June..... 12154
Total fiction words for 2023..... 110022
Total nonfiction words for June... 18450
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 127870
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 237892

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	221
Short story collections.....	31

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Another Video and the Bradbury Challenge

June 26, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Another Video, a Little More Advice
- * Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Surveillance techniques familiar to authoritarian dictatorships have now been repurposed to target American workers.” Wired Magazine

Another Video, a Little More Advice

I made a spur of the moment video yesterday from my little writing 'puter. Oops. After the fact I found the sound was out of sync with the video. (If you restart the vid a time or two, the sound syncs.)

The vid ran about 12 minutes. You can see it at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n8-MJlraaqg&t=36s>.

I want the picture and sound to be clearer, so I'll be investing in an external camera soon. I've done a little research.

My new camera will broadcast 1080p at 60 frames per second. That should fix the video quality issue so it isn't so grainy. Ideally the camera will also have a stereo mic and maybe even a light ring.

There were a couple of places in the video where it jumped back a few seconds and repeated. I don't know whether that was because I used the older computer or was a glitch of YouTube.

Anyway, that has me thinking I might record videos in advance, then upload them and schedule them for release on YouTube. I'm not sure whether I'll do that. I'm still thinking about it. If you have any insight on the matter, please share.

I'm also thinking in the longer term about recording some videos specifically for writers. Maybe a series of best practices videos that will comprise a shortcut for those who are serious about the craft and want to be long-term, prolific professional fiction writers. If that comes to pass, of course I'll announce it here first.

I do enjoy the spontaneity of livestreaming. But either way I need to establish a schedule and, more importantly, re-establish a routine. Having a relatively firm routine with a daily word-count goal and certain working hours is why I was able to write as much as I did in such a short period of time.

Highlights of the Video—

- I think my mourning period is almost over so I can finally get back to my writing.
- I revamped the menu at StoneThreadPublishing.com.
- I recently published the chronological reading order for my novels at my [Stanbrough Writes website](#) and added a menu-item link to that page at both this Journal and my author site
- A bit on where I get ideas and a few story starters (see the vid at about 8:19)

Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting

You can still join in the challenge at any time. There's no cost of course, and it's a great way to have some fun, increase your inventory, and jumpstart your writing. It's also a great way to get more practice pushing down the critical voice.

During the past week, in addition to whatever other fiction they're writing, the following writers reported their progress:

- Erin Donoho "Habit" historical fiction 3400 words
- Balázs Jámbor "Premonition of the Ruby's Nighthfall" 3400 words Fantasy
- George Kordonis "Missed Flight" 2739 words Ghost Story
- Alexander Nakul "Last Years' Wolf" 1303 words Erotic Fantasy
- Chynna Pace "The Cereal Box Conspiracy" 8067 words Humorous Fantasy
- Christopher Ridge "Rambling Redneck Babes VS. Ragin' Cajun Tapeworms" 28000 words (novella) Horror/Bizarro
- K.C. Riggs "Letter to my Eight-year-old Self" 1585 words General/Memoir

Talk with you later.

Of Interest

See "Military-grade AI being used to spy on American civilians" at <https://interestingengineering.com/innovation/military-grade-ai-may-now-be-spying-on-american-civilians>. One of those things that will be nothing until suddenly it's something.

See “Talking about AI in human terms is natural—but wrong” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/talking-about-ai-in-human-terms-is-natural-but-wrong/>.

See “Niche Marketing Part One” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/niche-marketing-part-one/>.

See “How to Quick Pitch Your Book in a DoorDash World” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-to-quick-pitch-your-book-in-a-doordash-world/>. I link to this only for the time stamp stuff. I do not endorse or recommend “pitching” your book to anyone but a reader through publication.

See “Soldiers Don’t Go Mad” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/soldiers-dont-go-mad/>. About two of my favorite poets.

See “YouTube is testing an AI-powered dub tool to translate creators’ videos” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/youtube-is-testing-an-ai-powered-dub-tool-to-translate-creators-videos/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 670

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Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709
Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for June..... 12154
Total fiction words for 2023..... 110022
Total nonfiction words for June... 19120
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 128540
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 238562

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221
Short story collections..... 31

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Reworking My Routine, and Big Brother

June 27, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Reworking My Routine and Schedule
- * Big Brother Might Be Closer Than You Believe
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Reworking My Routine and Schedule

I'm using the final few days of June to focus on reworking my routine and schedule. I've come up with a new challenge for myself: to get back to my production levels of January 1 through July 31 2021, during which time I wrote 13 novels, a novella, and two short stories, comprising 534,744 words of published fiction.

Don't let the big number deceive you. That time span is 212 days, so I averaged only 2522 words of published fiction per day, meaning I averaged about 2.5 hours per day writing fiction. Yet I wrote well over half a million words of published fiction in that seven months. Again, in *only two and a half hours (average) per day*.

Maybe you have as much "free time" to write as I have and maybe you don't, but unless you're looking for an excuse for a lack of production, that isn't the point. The point, dear friends, is that if I can write 1000 words per hour (a blazing slow 17 words per minute) so can you.

Yes, I can touch-type, having learned in high school. But Dean Wesley Smith hits 1000 words per hour average too, using only two fingers. And his annual production of "consumable words" (so fiction and nonfiction, including his blog) is routinely around 1,300,000 words.

(Sigh. Okay, so by that standard, I have to look again at my numbers. From January 1 through July 31 2021 I also wrote 146,430 words of nonfiction in this Journal. So that raises my total number of "consumable words" for that seven-month period to 681,174 for a daily average of 3213 words. But I don't really care about that. Fiction is what interests me.)

However you choose to count your words, count them. The totals will build rapidly and you will be surprised at how much you're getting done. The one thing you can't afford to do is give in to an application failure: you have to apply your backside to a chair. Then simply put your fingers on the keyboard and write whatever comes.

Trust it. Trust yourself and your characters and Just Write, and you'll be fine.

My daily word count goal during this reset (as it was when I started 9 years ago) will be 3000 publishable words of fiction per day.

Setting a realistic daily word count goal remains the best possible advice I can give you, and doing so myself is the only hope that my reset will work. Barring an actual real-life emergency, my reset will begin officially on July 1.

Notice that I don't care either way where my 3000 words of publishable fiction per day go. Some will go into a novel or novella, some into a short story. Doesn't matter. As I've said many times before, what matters is THAT I write, not what I write.

Big Brother Might Be Closer Than You Believe

In yesterday's edition of the Journal, as the first item in "Of Interest," I posted this:

"See 'Military-grade AI being used to spy on American civilians' at <https://interestingengineering.com/innovation/military-grade-ai-may-now-be-spying-on-american-civilians>. One of those things that will be nothing until suddenly it's something."

Interesting Engineering's *Blueprint* newsletter also ran a poll, asking Americans whether they were concerned. The results might easily give you some story ideas:

Only 47% said such spying "should be illegal," 9% said it "makes me nervous," and another 9% wasted their response with a silly "I'm spying on them." Pfft. Whatever.

Interesting Engineering gave respondents a limited choice of answers. I have no idea why they would include that last one or even what it means.

But fully 35% of respondents were actually all right with being spied on or with companies spying on others, boasting "I have nothing to hide."

Of course, whether you have anything to hide is not the point, is it?

Because if you're certain the point is that you have nothing to hide, I know of people who would be more than happy to spy on you at work. Oh, and during your commute. And for that matter, at home and in your bedroom.

Talk with you later.

Of Interest

See "Experiment with AI..." at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/experiment-with-ai-to-understand-it-marketers-and-publicists-encouraged/>.

See "Where to Start with Audiobook Publishing" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/where-to-start-with-audiobook-publishing/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 700

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283
Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246
Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709
Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for June..... 12154
Total fiction words for 2023..... 110022
Total nonfiction words for June... 19820
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 129240
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 239262

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark, adherence to Heinlein's Rules, and that following the myths of fiction writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

Advice on Self-Publishing

June 29, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Advice on Self-Publishing
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Advice on Self-Publishing

First, please also see my *Quick Guide to Self-Publishing & FAQs, Toward Efficiency in Epublishing*, and *The Essentials of Digital Publishing*. You can download each of them, free, by visiting <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives-gifts-dvds/> and clicking the links. Please take advantage of these gifts.

What brought this topic to mind? A writer friend asked a few questions yesterday about starting out in self-publishing. I thought I'd expand here on the answer I gave him.

Picking the Name of Your Publishing Company—I've used StoneThread Publishing, my publishing company name, so long that I've forgotten many of the specifics. I recommend choosing a name that conveys something special to you or about you. But I also recommend doing at least a Google search to see whether anyone else is already using the name.

As an example, a long time ago I was going to use Writing the World as my publisher name, but I soon found out roughly half a million other people had the same thought. I passed.

Second, I strongly recommend you consult with an IP attorney and have him or her help you set up a corporation. StoneThread Publishing (and HarveyStanbrough.com, for that matter) are both LLCs. But LLCs do me absolutely no good with tax liability.

Don't be me. If you're going to go into this as a business, be smart and set up a corporation.

ISBNs—If you want to buy ISBNs for your paper books, yes, you have to go through Bowker. Frankly, I recommend against it. It's too expensive, and it's not necessary.

Also, my ego isn't all that fragile. I just want the books out there and bringing in money. Readers don't notice or care who the "publisher of record" is unless the publisher is something truly ugly like one of the vanity presses. More on that shortly.

Instead, I use the free ISBN from Amazon or D2D for paper, just as I do for ebooks. And yes, that makes Amazon or D2D the "publisher of record," but again, who cares? The reading public doesn't know or care, so why spend the extra money for ISBNs? That's my reasoning.

And for the record, neither Amazon nor D2D (nor B&N, Kobo, et al) are publishers. Some are stores, some are stores and distributors, and some are distributors. They assign a free ISBN to appeal to you and to make it easier for them to sell licenses to your work. (For ebooks, D2D assigns an ISBN just as Smashwords used to. Amazon assigns only an ASIN for ebooks and reserves ISBNs for paper.)

You as Publisher—As for the ACTUAL publisher of my work, every publication I put out—whether short story, short story collection, novella or novel—has a title page. At the top of that page is the title, centered, and then my name, centered.

A few lines below that, there are three more centered lines. The first line varies and identifies the genre, series, etc. It might read

an intense short story from
a fractured short story from
an intense short story collection from
a Stern Talbot PI novel from
a Journey Home science fiction novel from

a Wes Crowley Gap series novel from
a twisted mystery novel from

You get the idea. And the other two lines, also centered, always read

StoneThread Publishing
<https://stonethreadpublishing.com>

So from the moment the reader opens the book (ebook or paper) they see that the publisher is StoneThread Publishing. And then they see the URL so they can check it out and see that it's a real publisher with a lot of books, collections and short stories available.

Exclusive or Wide—I don't distribute only to Amazon. Why would I want to keep my books away from people who prefer to buy from Apple or Kobo or B&N?

I do upload to Amazon, but I also upload to D2D (<https://draft2digital.com>) and let them distribute to everyone except Amazon. And when I start going back to paper (if I do) I'll probably go through D2D for that as well. You have choices.

Vanity Publishers—Earlier I mentioned vanity publishers. Every day writers who don't know any better spend thousands and sometimes even tens of thousands of dollars buying "publishing packages" from vanity publishers.

That's all bullshit. All of it. Stop it. Please. Don't be duped.

Some of those places even promise (I am not kidding) a social media account (do it yourself, anyone?), a website, press releases (so 1980s), worldwide distribution (duh) and more.

ALL of that is stuff you can easily, EASILY do yourself. Oh, and later if you want to break your contract with the vanity publisher, you won't be able to unless you're willing to pay a few thousand more to buy your way out.

Listen to me—vanity publishers will do ABSOLUTELY NOTHING to improve or promote or sell your book other than possibly listing it among thousands of others. Why? Because they don't care. They have no reason to sell your book, no incentive. They made all their money up front off of you.

If you want to spend money to have someone else publish your work, PLEASE save yourself some money. Instead of sending some shyster company several thousand dollars, talk to me. I'll charge you a LOT less, and I'll even teach you how to do it yourself as we go. For that matter, any of your friends would probably do the same and appreciate the extra cash.

To see lists of these vanity publishers, key "vanity publishers" into your search engine. Just off the top of my head, PublishAmerica springs to mind, as do BookLocker and AuthorHouse and Wheatmark. Is Ex Libris still around? Them too.

And there are many, many others. Never, ever, EVER pay someone to publish your work.

And while we're on the topic, never contract with someone over the phone to publish your work. If they don't have a website, run, don't walk. Why would you do business with someone who isn't willing to put the agreement in writing?

And even if they DO have a website but offer paid "packages" to publish your book, again, run, don't walk. All they want is to separate you from your money. Nothing else, period.

Paid Services—These are not the same as vanity publishers. For one thing, they won't take any of your rights to the work and they'll charge a reasonable fee.

For example, paying someone else to copyedit for you or create a professional cover for you or to do the interior layout of your paperback, etc. is perfectly fine. That isn't the same thing as paying to have someone else publish your book.

(Just so you know, the guy who wrote me didn't ask about vanity presses. That just sprang to mind from the ISBN discussion.)

Other Minor Matters—Okay, also, you don't have to register your work with the Copyright Office, nor do you have to obtain an LCCN (Library of Congress Control Number). That's more of the stuff vanity presses will promise to do for you. Completely unnecessary.

Registering your work with the copyright office is only to officially claim ownership at a particular point in time. If you WANT to register your work with the copyright office, I recommend registering the first work in every novel series you write.

If you want to register everything, I suspect it would also work to collect everything you wrote under a single title—say Collected Fiction by Author Name for 2023—and file for a single copyright registration to prove your ownership of the material in that collection.

But again, you don't have to register a copyright at all in order to own the copyright. I recommend buying and reading *The Copyright Handbook* by Fishman (look it up, around \$40).

A Template for Novels—I have a novel template that I use for all of my novels. It has the front matter and back matter as well as the font size for the title, chapter heads, etc. so all I have to do is write the part in the middle and make slight changes to the front matter and back matter. (grin)

If you'd like to see it and use it as an example to make your own, I'd be happy to make it available to you in PDF. Email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

Talk with you later.

Of Interest

See “Walking The Streets Of Texas” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/06/walking-the-streets-of-texas.html>.

See “Microsoft Designer” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/microsoft-designer/>.

See “Improving Your Creativity” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/06/improving-your-creativity.html>.

See “Germany’s ContentShift Accelerator: Six 2023 Finalists” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/germanys-contentshift-accelerator-six-2023-finalistsuto-draft/>.
I honestly have no idea whether this might be important to know, but it sounded important.

See “How Espionage Informed This Thriller Writer’s Fiction” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-espionage-informed-this-thriller-writers-fiction/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1450

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283
Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246
Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709
Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for June..... 12154
Total fiction words for 2023..... 110022
Total nonfiction words for June... 21270
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 130690
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 240712

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221
Short story collections..... 31

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Trusting Yourself as a Writer

June 30, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Trusting Yourself as a Writer
- * Video Stuff
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“There’s some sort of circle involving self-trust where the more you trust your ability to create, the easier it becomes.” Garry Rodgers, unknowingly helping me write this blog post

Trusting Yourself as a Writer

On Garry Rodgers’ [Kill Zone blog post yesterday](#), I left this comment:

“The lack of courage is the huge one. And to make it worse, the fear that immobilizes or radically slows so many has either no consequences or only imagined consequences.

“Given a grounding in grammar and punctuation (and any who don’t have that grounding [can obtain it](#)), the only way to break free of that fear is to suck it up and learn to trust yourself and what you know, and your ability to put that knowledge to use.

“Your creative subconscious tells unique, original stories in your authentic voice. The more you trust yourself and defend your work, the more freely story ideas will come to you.”

Garry responded with this:

“Thanks, Harvey. Yeah, trust in yourself. There’s some sort of circle involving self-trust where the more you trust your ability to create, the easier it becomes. I have a friend who recently got bit by the imposter syndrome bug right when they were polishing the final draft and they went dead in the water.”

And I responded this morning:

“There’s some sort of circle involving self-trust where the more you trust your ability to create, the easier it becomes.’

“Truth. But very few will ever try it. We’re all bombarded throughout our lives with how very difficult it is to do something as simple as telling a story. Ridiculous of course, but the myths are so pervasive that most obey them as if to do otherwise is illegal.

“There are no bad consequences for not obeying the myths of writing. I’ve had young writers tell me point blank that if they don’t rewrite at least X-variable number of times, it will kill their career. What career?

“Plus, writing in your original, authentic voice is how you make a career. As Judy Garland once advised, ‘Always be a first-rate version of yourself, instead of a second-rate version of somebody else.’

“Opinions of what is or isn’t ‘good’ vary greatly and are always a matter of reader taste. For every person out there (even the writer him/herself) who doesn’t like a story or think it’s up to snuff, there will be ten more who like it.

“I often tell about the story ‘Old Suits.’ I wrote it some years ago and almost didn’t publish it. I thought it was horrible, one of the worst stories I’d ever written or read.

“But in the end I trusted myself and forced myself to publish it. A few weeks later, out of the blue I received an email from a reader I’d never met (and still haven’t) raving about what a great story it was, what a difference it made in her life, etc.

“I never trusted my own opinion again.

“I’ve always found it odd that when writers think what they’ve written is “good,” they immediately add ‘But as a writer I’m the worst judge of my own work.’

“Yet untold numbers of writers will put a finished story or novel into a desk drawer, never to see the light of day because they think it’s ‘bad.’ (Some who have done so will read this and think No, I know it was bad.

“But they miss the point, which is, the old saw about being the worst judge of their own writing cuts both ways. Too bad it escapes them when they need it the most.”

And do with it what you will, that’s the truth.

Video Stuff

I bought a new webcam, installed it, was thrilled with the clarity, and immediately raced off to YouTube to put up a new video.

Only YouTube didn’t recognize it for whatever reason. It used the internal webcam from my computer, so the video quality was just as bad. Even after I disabled the internal webcam, YouTube still didn’t recognize the new one.

The embarrassing but fortunately very short video is still there (I couldn't find a way to delete it) but it isn't worth watching. It's only me registering surprise at having stumbled into what amounted to a self-ambush.

I will return the camera today and have already ordered another one—one that the Amazon listing assures me is accepted by YouTube—and learned two valuable lessons.

The first is the old lesson that everything that glitters is not gold, and the second is to always set the streaming session to Private to test a new piece of equipment. How I've lived this long without having learned the second lesson earlier, I have no idea.

Talk with you later.

Of Interest

See “No Such Thing as Writer’s Block” at [https://vincentzandri.substack\[dot\]com/p/no-such-thing-as-writers-block](https://vincentzandri.substack[dot]com/p/no-such-thing-as-writers-block). What he said. (grin)

See “Special Workshop Sale” at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/special-workshop-sale/>. To cut to the chase scroll down to The Workshop Sale. I posted this to help you, not to support him.

See “Who Should Be Telling This Story?” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/who-should-be-telling-this-story/>. Take what appeals to you and leave the rest.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 860

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283
Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246
Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709
Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for June..... 12154
Total fiction words for 2023..... 110022
Total nonfiction words for June... 22130
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 131550
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 241572

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	221
Short story collections.....	31

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A New Story

July 1, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * A New Story
- * Another New Story
- * My New Webcam
- * Revising My Schedule and Routine
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

"I did some financial planning, and it looks like I can retire at 85 and live comfortably for 11 minutes." Anonymous (Thanks to Sam Turner for the Quote of the Day)

A New Story

"Spider" posted yesterday (Friday). You can read it over at [https://stanbroughwrites.substack\[dot\]com/](https://stanbroughwrites.substack[dot]com/). You can subscribe there too, to get a new short story every week. It's free.

Another New Story

I mentioned in a video awhile back that I enjoy buying paintings, prints and other artwork as long as they have stories in them. In other words, if I look at a piece of artwork and immediately see at least a few story starters, I'll buy it. Then I take it home, hang in on the wall somewhere, and wait for the right time and mood for the story to emerge.

This morning I started a new story titled "A Midnight Sketch." It's based on the multi-media pen, ink and watercolor DeGrazia sketch titled "A midnight sketch 3AM summer of 1972."

I won't list this story below until tomorrow. I might finish it and I might not. I'm playing with this one, practicing with it, seeing whether I can pull off a new (to me) technique/effect that I noticed in another writer's work.

My New Webcam

My new webcam will be in today or Monday, depending on whether the good folks at the PO put it into my PO box or hold it at the desk.

When it comes in I'll play with it a bit. If it works with YouTube (as advertised) all will be fine. If not, I'll probably record videos offline and then upload them to YouTube. I'm hoping for the former.

Revising My Schedule and Routine

Still revising. I tried this morning to go back to the early morning in the Hovel routine. I don't know whether I can adjust back to getting up that early.

If not, I'll have to get the Journal out earlier here at the house, then let the cats out and supervise them for a half-hour or so, then breakfast, then finally to the Hovel to write a little later in the day.

I miss seeing the early morning sky though. For years I went to the Hovel at 3 a.m. I did that this morning too, but after all this time I recognized hardly anything in the pre-dawn sky. It will work out one way or another.

Talk with you later.

Of Interest

See "Our Place in Time (to Scale) video" at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nOVvEbH2GC0>. Kind'a neat.

See "6 Stories of Aliens and the Unexplained That Are Just Out of This World" at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/world-ufo-day-2023>.

See "8 Mistakes You're Making on Your Author Website" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/8-mistakes-youre-making-on-your-author-website/>. Take what works and leave the rest.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 480

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283
Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246
Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709
Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for July.....	XXXX
Total fiction words for 2023.....	110022
Total nonfiction words for July... 480	
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	132030
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	242052
Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date.....	2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date.....	4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	221
Short story collections.....	31

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Restarting My Restart

July 2, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * What Hell Looks Like
- * Restarting My Restart
- * My New Webcam
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“I never read reviews. My job is to write the stories. It’s none of my business what the reader thinks of them, and every reader will have a different opinion. (Same reason I don’t seek or accept critiques of my writing.)” Me, yesterday, on a post in TKZ

“Jay Lake, who sadly passed away in 2014, used to say ‘stories belong to the reader,’ meaning that readers own their reactions to a story or novel, and the same applies to their reviews.” Dale Ivan Smith, TKZ author

What Hell Looks Like

If you want to see what my personal Writer's Hell looks like, read James Scott Bell's "The Most—and Least—Enjoyable Parts of Writing" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/07/the-most-and-least-enjoyable-parts-of-writing.html>.

I'm in the wrong business. Ninety-nine-plus percent of writers propagate and support and rah-rah the myths and teach would-be and younger writers that writing fiction has to be this horrible, difficult toil, and those would-be and younger writers eat it up. They seemingly can't get enough.

In this one tiny little blog, I tell writers they should believe in themselves and that writing can be a great deal of actual FUN (gasp!) and even would-be and younger writers line up to boo and throw stones.

Sigh.

But back to the article.

The resemblance to how I feel about writing fiction begins with "I love this place." That's also the full first paragraph of the article.

But that resemblance slams to a hard stop with the end of the second sentence of the fourth paragraph: "I'm in a land of infinite possibilities and not wedded to any of them." Everything after that is unnecessary nonsense. It's make-work. The more difficult the process of writing, the more valuable the product must be, right?

Wrong. Full stop.

For me, writing is fun.

It can be just as much fun for anyone who doesn't feel a need to engage in martyrdom and personal angst to give his or her stories value.

I trust myself enough to simply report what happens as I run through the story with my characters. So the entire story or novel is "the most enjoyable part of writing."

Well, at least up until I know how it will end.

Once I realize how the story will end, I get bored. I just want to type the words to get me to the end so I can move on to the next story.

On the best stories, the ending surprises me as much as the rest of the story did. I write it, then sit back and say, "Oh! That's the end."

Owing to the title of this section, I should add that I know I would make a truly lousy priest or preacher. I can easily see me counseling a member of the flock:

“Yeah, sure, I can show you the way to salvation. But the thing is, if you aren’t willing to fight for your own soul, why should I bother?” Pause.

You know, ’cause you have free will and stuff. So hey, if never-ending travail and suffering for your ‘art’ is your thing, knock yourself out.

Me, I’m just a writer.

Restarting My Restart

Not that this probably matters to anyone but me, nor should it, but I’ll be restarting my restart.

Trying for July 1 was a stupid idea. Besides, I’ve never been a calendar-driven kind of guy. A new week, year, and decade begins with every sunrise. What matters is taking advantage of one and running with it.

Independence Day is coming up, and that makes this the July 4th Weekend. Plus my wife’s birthday is on July 4 and we’ll have at least one offspring coming in to visit.

Friday and Saturday are usually the two busiest away-from-home days for us, and when I do a hard reboot I need room for the restart to flow uninterrupted. So I’ll probably reschedule the restart for July 9 or 10, though it could possibly happen earlier.

I could restart on July 5 or 6 for example, but only if I’m certain I won’t want to go play elsewhere on the 7th or 8th. I need to restart on a day that will give me at least an uninterrupted week to build momentum. Right? Are any of you tweaked in that particular way too?

Anyway, there’s just a lot going on at the moment, so it’s difficult to focus on anything as unimportant as writing fiction. I’ll restart after all the smoke clears.

My New Webcam

I did receive my new webcam, but I’m even putting off messing with that until all the other stuff’s over and things have calmed down again. I removed the shrink-wrap from the box, opened it to make sure it was what I had ordered, then closed the box and set it aside. Time enough for all of that later.

Okay, here’s wishing all of you a safe, enjoyable what’s left of the weekend plus Independence Day. Enjoy the brats and burgers and ‘dogs and sodas and suds, but maybe make time to reflect for a moment on the freedoms we still enjoy.

Oh, and for you Bradbury Challenge participants, there is no rest for the weary. Remember to get your story titles, word counts and genres in to be before the Journal goes live on Monday. K.C. Riggs has the right idea. She turns in her story on Monday, then has the rest of the week to writes on other projects. (grin)

Talk with you later.

Of Interest

See “If the Moon Were Only One Pixel (a tediously accurate scale model of the solar system)” at https://joshworth.com/dev/pixelspace/pixelspace_solarsystem.html. One of the coolest things I’ve seen. Frankly, it reminded me of driving across the breadth of Texas, where a friend once joked, “Ain’t nothin’ but miles and miles of miles and miles.”

See “Light Speed – fast, but slow” at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nQUwHdSAhmw>. Another really cool lesson for SF writers.

See “I Feel Bad For New Writers... Part 11” at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/i-feel-bad-for-new-writers-part-11/>. Especially look at those for Indie Focused Writers.

See “European Publishers See Audiobooks...” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/european-publishers-see-audiobooks-ai-as-inevitabilities/>. See PG’s take.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1030

Writing of “A Midnight Sketch”

Day 1..... 1341 words. Total words to date..... 1341

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283

Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246

Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709

Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for July..... 1341

Total fiction words for 2023..... 111363

Total nonfiction words for July... 1510

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 133060

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 244423

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221

Short story collections..... 31

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The Power of Word Count Goals

July 3, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * The Power of Word Count Goals (and Tracking Them)
- * Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“My perfect day is sitting in a room with some blank paper. That’s heaven. That’s gold and anything else is just a waste of time.” Cormac McCarthy

The Power of Word Count Goals (and Tracking Them)

K.C. Riggs

The following is a guest post by K.C. Riggs, who is easily among my favorite writers. I highly recommend her novels, [The Widow's Circle](#) and [Number 5 in the 7th](#). Now, here's K.C.

I'm a fiction writer. I've been actively writing fiction since about 2008 and self-publishing my work since 2016—yes, it took me a long time to get up the nerve to publish my writing, but that's a topic for another time. I've always Written Into The Dark, long before I had heard that name for it, but that's another topic also.

The topic I want to talk to you about today is word count goals—and keeping track of them. I learned about word count goals from Harvey Stanbrough and am now an absolute proponent of them.

I strongly encourage you to set word count goals for your writing and, as important as the goals themselves, to keep track of your progress toward them. Here's why.

For me, the word count goals are to encourage me to write and to hold myself accountable for doing it. Like any tool, they only work if you use them. I've been hit or miss with that but now am fanatic about keeping track whenever I write fiction.

My word count goals do help encourage me to write, especially the longer I've tracked my fiction word counts. I don't cheat on the numbers so they also hold me accountable. How much I've written—or not written—is right there in my spreadsheet.

I first got a word count spreadsheet template from Harvey. It worked beautifully, except that I'm very visual and when I looked at the spreadsheet, it just looked like a lot of numbers to me. So I finally developed one of my own.

Now, I'm not an Excel power user by any means, so my spreadsheet isn't nearly as elegant or self-calculating as Harvey's but I can see progress and trends at a glance, and this for me has been key.

Mine is set up weekly, Monday through Sunday, with the goal for each day (1000 Mon-Fri and 500 Sat-Sun), along with actual words written each day and tallied for the week. Below is a copy of two weeks of my spreadsheet for this year. GTG is shorthand for my current novel.

As you can see, each week stands out on its own with Date, Goal for that day, and the Actual column derives from the Ending column. I record the ending word count for my work in progress, and the calculation for Actual subtracts the Ending for the day before.

Every week is an individual snapshot that shows all my daily goals and progress toward the weekly goal. Having each week as a discreet package makes it easier for me to understand at a glance.

GTG				77391	GTG			
Date	Goal	Actual	Ending		Date	Goal	Actual	Ending
23-Jan	1000	1009	78400		30-Jan	1000	1192	84991
24-Jan	1000	1082	79482		31-Jan	1000	1155	86146
25-Jan	1000	1053	80535		1-Feb	1000	1162	87308
26-Jan	1000	283	80818		2-Feb	1000	613	87921
27-Jan	1000	1580	82398		3-Feb	1000	1096	89017
28-Jan	500	792	83190		4-Feb	500	319	89336
29-Jan	500	609	83799		5-Feb	500	710	90046
				needed				needed
Weekly	6000	6408		-408		6000	6247	-247

I wrote no fiction this year until Jan 23 so I had to bring the ending total forward from the end of 2022 to start this year. That's the 77391 you see in the top line.

I've been using this format for a couple of years. But then I wanted to also see how I was doing each month and how the weekly and monthly goals translated into an annual goal. So I added some more.

I now have monthly goals which translate into quarterly goals which translate into an annual goal, all of which are at the bottom of the spreadsheet. And I can always see where I am in

relation to each goal: daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, or annual. That visual has really pushed me to write more.

Because of being able to see all those goals and actuals, I've set myself additional challenges, like how many words/day do I need to write by the end of this month to beat my best month? I got a new best month that way.

But wait, there's more. I'm not smashing my goals. I don't make all my daily or weekly goals. I've never (since I've been tracking) met a monthly goal, or an annual one for that matter.

I hear you thinking, *Isn't that depressing?* But think about this:

- Even though I haven't met one single monthly goal in 2023, I've already written 104,154 words of publishable fiction this year.
- In May I beat my previous best month by over 2000 words.
- In June I missed beating May by less than 2000 words.
- And I'm 66.7% of where I needed to be by end of June to be on track for my annual goal—and catching up!

This is a long race, not a sprint. My word count spreadsheet is helping keep me in it for the long haul. A lot of Kentucky Derby winners have come from last place. Maybe word count goals and a spreadsheet to track them would help keep you in it for the long haul too. It's pretty thrilling to see those numbers add up.

Happy writing!

A couple of notes from Harvey

1. You can find K.C.'s novels and short stories at Amazon and at all the stores served by Draft2Digital's distribution platform (Apple, Kobo, B&N, et al. Look for K.C. Riggs.
2. Um, I can't vouch for my spreadsheet being "elegant," but I'd be happy to share it as well. Just email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting

You can still join in the challenge at any time. There's no cost and it's a great way to have some fun, increase your inventory, and jumpstart your writing. It's also a great way to get more practice pushing down the critical voice.

During the past week, in addition to whatever other fiction they're writing, the following writers reported their progress:

- Erin Donoho "The Dancer and Her Partner" 4000 words YA contemporary
- Balázs Jámbor "Jennifer" 2600 words General fiction
- George Kordonis "Shadow" 1561 words Horror
- Alexander Nakul "Trap near the Rookery of Raging Lynx" 2290 words Erotic Fantasy
- Chynna Pace "The Dinner Club Witches" 2586 words Cozy Fantasy
- Chynna Pace "Cue the Murderer" 1433 words, Thriller
- Christopher Ridge "The Kill Room" 2800 words Horror

- K.C. Riggs “El Dia de San Juan” 2606 words General Fiction

Good going, everyone! Keep having fun!

Talk with you later.

Of Interest

See “Why Can’t a Novelist Write Like a Screenwriter?” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/why-cant-a-novelist-write-like-a-screenwriter/>. Maybe a gem or two.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1090

Writing of “A Midnight Sketch”

Day 1..... 1341 words. Total words to date..... 1341

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283

Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246

Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709

Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for July..... 1341

Total fiction words for 2023..... 111363

Total nonfiction words for July... 260

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 134150

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 245513

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark, adherence to Heinlein’s Rules, and that following the myths of fiction writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

Squash Blossom

July 4, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Happy Independence Day
- * Squash Blossom
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Happy Independence Day

Here in the 'States we celebrate our independence from England. It's quite a kerfluffle over here, though I fear most of our citizens and permanent visitors have given up on the true meaning and gravitated more toward July 4 as a chance to blow stuff up and gorge on hotdogs and hamburgers.

As I wrote a few days ago, here's wishing all of you a safe, enjoyable Independence Day. Enjoy the brats and burgers and 'dogs and sodas and suds, but maybe make time to reflect for a moment on the freedoms to which we still manage to cling in this nation.

Today is also my bride's birthday. After those festivities, we probably will visit a favorite antique mall in Sierra Vista.

Squash Blossom

Okay, don't write me. This isn't really a squash blossom and I'm aware of that. But it's as beautiful as a squash blossom, and with the thorns, it's even more indicative of Arizona and the Sonoran and Chihuahuan deserts.

Enjoy.







Talk with you later.

Of Interest

See “Scientific Consensus: The development of full artificial intelligence” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-development-of-full-artificial-intelligence/>.

See “Chat GPT on Self-Publishing...” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/chat-gpt-on-self-publishing-via-kdp-earn-more-money/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 200

Writing of “A Midnight Sketch”

Day 1..... 1341 words. Total words to date..... 1341

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283

Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246

Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709

Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for July..... 1341

Total fiction words for 2023..... 111363

Total nonfiction words for July... 2800

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 134350

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 245713

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark, adherence to Heinlein’s Rules, and that following the myths of fiction writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

Holiday Recap

July 5, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Holiday Recap
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Holiday Recap

I hope everyone had an enjoyable Independence Day celebration, if you chose to celebrate at all.

We spent much of the day in Sierra Vista, first shopping at our favorite antique mall, then lunch at Culvers right at noon, and then a stroll through the several rows of booths at the annual Sierra Vista celebration at the Veterans' Park. The whole time, a band played marches and other patriotic songs.

Later, at home in St. David, we watched the national Independence Day celebration from Washington, complete with probably the most incredible fireworks display I've ever seen, all with the Washington Monument in the foreground.

Later, I dragged myself into the 21st century (yes, 23 years late) by learning a lot of things about my smart phone. I'm still amazed that little phone has tons more storage and memory than the entire computer system on which NASA relied when they sent the first men to the moon.

But frankly, I'm even more amazed and a bit disheartened that today, even with all the enhanced computing power, they're almost too timid to do it again. Great achievements, whether national, regional, local or personal, require commitment and a certain amount of daring.

You know, like writing into the dark. Daring to trust in your ability to tell a story without input from a thousand different directions. If you dare nothing you will achieve nothing.

Anyway, you all came this close || to suffering through another amateur YouTube broadcast from me. I was going to live stream directly from my phone, mostly to see whether I could do it.

After all, with my flashing through the learning curve (well, flashing at a snail's pace) I learned to check and answer emails, and that the phone would much rather I'd use an app than going to a platform via a browser, and so on..

Anyway, you were spared that live stream when, fortunately, YouTube flashed a notice that my channel isn't yet adequate in some way to enable me to live stream from a mobile device. They assured me I could still do so from my desktop or laptop computer though.

(I guess the ability to move my laptop from one place to another doesn't make it "mobile" in this new world. Whatever.)

So in a day or two or three, after I've checked out my new webcam (currently still in the box), I'll annoy you with another live stream. Until then, I just wanted to toss out this update.

Talk with you later.

Of Interest

See "I Tried Writing Like...Ray Bradbury (and you should join me)!" at <https://youtu.be/Rp2UPO6ydzk>. I didn't watch all of this. Too bubbly for me, but maybe there's

something in it that will help you. One thing—Bradbury never limited himself to 1000 words per day or even thought of such things. He just wrote.

See “Everything Wrong with the Hero’s Journey” at <https://www.literaryrebel.com/everything-wrong-with-the-heros-journey/>. Something to ponder, think about, and discuss, but forget while you’re writing. Thanks to Alex T for the tip.

See “The Savage Realm” at <https://www.literaryrebel.com/savage-submissions/>. If you write sword and sorcery fantasy, this might be a good market for your short fiction. Thanks to Alex T for the tip.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 540

Writing of “A Midnight Sketch”

Day 1..... 1341 words. Total words to date..... 1341

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283

Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246

Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709

Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for July..... 1341

Total fiction words for 2023..... 111363

Total nonfiction words for July... 3340

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 134890

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 246253

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221

Short story collections..... 31

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Talk Among Yourselves

July 7, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Talk Among Yourselves
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Talk Among Yourselves

Part 1

I have to be away for awhile. I mean, I'll be here, just south of beautiful downtown Saint David Arizona, but I'll be away from the Journal. As I wrote a few years ago in some poem, it's time to reconnect some frazzled ends. (And yes, I took a shot at doing this not long ago, but the attempt never got off the ground.)

For several years, things ran very smoothly for me. I had an established routine, and I loved it. Then a series of occurrences happened, each of which threw its own big wrench into the works to clog the machine. And each happened before I'd quite gotten over the previous one.

Thanks to those occurrences or maybe their timing or maybe their severity or maybe who-the-hell-knows, now I, a guy with possibly the most advanced sense or urgency you will ever witness, have all but ground to a halt.

The biggest occurrences were me stopping cigars, my reassignment of a couple of my computers for some inane reason, and my little daughter-cat contracting some ridiculously random disease. And then her suffering and her inevitable decline and eventually her pitiful, untimely death in my arms on April 11 of this year. She was an incredibly brave little girl.

Part 2 (a little fun to deflect the aggravation)

Of course, all of that was augmented by my ongoing, please-make-it-stop, you-have-GOT-to-be-kidding-me frustration with all the self-important tadpoles in the world.

You know the ones I mean. They smile as if they've just gotten a dose of Soma and everything is fine all the time and they drive 40 in a 55 on a two-lane road with very few passing zones and they wouldn't pull over for an ambulance, even if they noticed it, which they probably wouldn't.

And when they finally DO turn off they're actually surprised that all those people in all those cars were behind them for the past fifteen miles, and they're equally surprised that those folks seem to be annoyed about something or other and "Golly gee, I wonder what's bothering them?"

Or they park their shopping cart sideways in the aisle at the grocery store, then carry on a lengthy conversation on the phone with someone else about whether they should buy the name-brand sugar or whether the generic sugar is just as good.

“Oh, okay, thanks. And by the way, I heard your son was accepted at Any Other State University and goodness I wonder why he wants to move so far away?”

(Yeah, y’know, I wonder too. No really. It couldn’t possibly be to keep his brain from atrophying by association.)

“Oh and while I have you on the phone, did you hear about what happened to Woman We Haven’t Seen Since High School? Yes, I know I’ll see you at dinner tonight, but let me tell you now. I have plenty of time. Listen. And blah blah blah blah blah.”

And if I quietly say, “Excuse me” and gesture toward the shopping cart, the blockage (yes, I’m aware of the intestinal implication) flashes me a glare, frowns and says, “Do you *mind*? I’m *talking!*” and turns away.

And whatever you’re thinking, nope, you can’t. If you do that, you’ll go to jail or be banned from the store or whatever because You Were Rude.

Or they remain parked in one of the limited spaces at the post office so they can read the mail they went inside and retrieved TEN MINUTES ago. Because, of course, there is nobody on Earth besides them. Oh, and plus, they just got a phone call from another member of their species who happens to be shopping.

And here I am, a guy who just wants to drive close to the speed limit, buy a bag of sugar so I can keep feeding the hummers who stop by to visit, take say a minute or two (no longer) to park, walk in and check my PO box, walk out and drive home where I can write stories to entertain people.

And I’ve given up my ability to self-medicate. Sigh.

(Thanks for playing along. [grin])

Part 3

Things aren’t fun anymore.

Like many of you, I’ve lived through and participated in a lot of not-fun things, but that was back when doing so was (or seemed) necessary and I was bulletproofed with youth.

These days, things are different. These day, the saying “Life is short” has real meaning, so hey, if it ain’t fun, I ain’t doin’ it. It’s that simple.

So I have to figure out a few things and try to get back to having fun. I can't be much of an adviser or instructor or mentor to anyone else if I can't put myself back on track.

Not that I'm All That, but my advice on writing fiction is why most of my subscribers come to the Journal in the first place. Though I suppose after Part 2 it's possible that they'll come back to see just how far off the deep end I might go. And when.

My greatest success as a writer was when I wrote 13 novels in the first 7 months of 2021. On average, I wrote a new novel every 14 days.

All the while I was talking with writers and others every day via email, publishing what I'd written, publishing the Journal almost every day, etc. etc. etc. And yes, I still had time to do other things, family things, reading, studying the craft, etc. My routine flowed as easily as the blood flowed through my veins.

The thing is, I did all of that before, so I know I can do it again. I want (need) to get back to that level of productivity. At least 3000 words of publishable fiction per day, every day. Of course, now and then there will be days when I have to do other things, but the average should hold up. In this game, the average over time is what matters.

But to do that, first I have to toss out some mental trash, reset some priorities, and get my writer life back on track.

I have a few things to learn, like the new webcam I bought and the ins and outs of YouTube (if I keep doing that) and my smartphone, which I only recently began learning how to use, and so on.

Eventually I also have to learn either Affinity Publisher or Atticus if I want to put my books in paper. We'll see. Going to paper isn't a priority for me. If it's important to my heirs, well, in addition to my IP I'll also hand-down Affinity Publisher and Atticus. Maybe they'll be motivated to take the books to paper.

But whatever else, having fun writing fiction has to come first. It has to. If writing fiction can't come first and foremost, then I'll just stop because why bother. And who knows, maybe I've done enough anyway.

If I can't give myself fully to the accomplishment of a goal, I'd rather not attempt it at all. Some of you know what I mean. For anyone who doesn't, there really is no way to explain it. The long and short of it is that I have to re-establish a routine and get it going again.

So that's what will be going on in the Stanbrough camp over the next day or two or twelve. When the smoke clears I'll be back to talk about the immediate future, either way.

In the meantime, I encourage especially newer subscribers to take a look at all the free offerings at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives-gifts-dvds/>. (Only the DVDs are not free.)

Hasta la later.

Of Interest

See “Last Day of the Workshop Sale” at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/last-day-of-the-workshop-sale-2/> .

See “Promise Words” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/promise-words/>. See what you think. I think it isn’t the words, it’s how they’re used.

See “Book Files and Formats: How to Protect Your Writing Investment” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/book-files-and-formats-how-to-protect-your-writing-investment/>. Okay, first, Microsoft Word and Adobe In-Design are not file types. They are software programs. They generate file types. Second, everything in this article is an excellent reason to go indie and self-publish. Not surprisingly, the author of the article, David Wogahn, is also the author of Countdown to Book Launch (ridiculous) and the president of AuthorImprints, one of those subsidy publishers I warned against a few days ago.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1390

Writing of “Marvin McTavish Decides”

Day 1..... 326 words. Total words to date..... 326

Writing of “A Midnight Sketch”

Day 1..... 1341 words. Total words to date..... 1341

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283

Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246

Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709

Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for July..... 1667

Total fiction words for 2023..... 111689

Total nonfiction words for July... 4730

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 136280

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 247969

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark, adherence to Heinlein's Rules, and that following the myths of fiction writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

The Essential Elements of a Story

July 9, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Preamble
- * The Essential Elements of a Story
- * The Challenge is Still on
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“More people would learn from their mistakes if they weren't so busy denying them.” Harold J. Smith

Preamble

Even while posting less often to the Journal, I still visit certain sites each morning. I'm always looking for gems of new (to me) knowledge, but more and more often I'm finding bad or partial advice that, in my opinion, requires some clarification.

That was the case this morning when I came across [“5 Timeless Tips for Career Novelists”](#) at the Kill Zone blog. The advice was good as far as it went, but the author left out some key information. Vital information, in fact.

I don't leave comments at those places to argue or to show what I know. The purpose of TKZ and other similar blogs is ostensibly to pass along information to would-be writers and novice writers. When I leave a comment, I do so to enhance or refute one or more points made in the post, specifically to offer those would-be and novice writers more information or a different take.

That's what I was doing this morning when I left a comment. I remembered I had discussed the same topic in a post on the Journal awhile back. I quoted from that post in my comment. Then I realized it would be a good idea to bring that post forward and re-post it. I will also save the article as a PDF file and upload it to the Archives & Gifts page.

The Essential Elements of a Story

Originally published in this Journal on November 11, 2020.

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. Although this is designed as a primer to writing into the dark, you will use exactly 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
- * Describe the setting (all five physical senses filtered through the POV character and delivered along with his opinions of the setting) to pull the reader into the story
- * The micro-story of the opening
- * Action (in the written story, dialogue equals action because it makes the reader lean-in)
- * 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 of elements? That's because these are essential elements: the hook, description of the setting, the micro-story of the scene or chapter, and the cliffhanger, which leads to the next hook.

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, but to YSO, it's forboding. To you, the room is cold, but to YSO, it's comfortable or warm. To you, it smells of a sweet aroma, but 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.

The Challenge is Still on

I’ll be back tomorrow (and every Monday) to report results from the ongoing Bradbury Challenge.

Talk with you later.

Of Interest

See “Our immoralist problem” at <https://mattpmn.substack.com/p/our-immoralist-problem>.

See “5 Reasons Why Suburban Life is Irresistible to a Suspense Writer” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/5-reasons-why-suburban-life-is-irresistible-to-a-suspense-writer/>. Excellent story ideas.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1190

Writing of “Marvin McTavish Decides”

Day 1..... 326 words. Total words to date..... 326

Day 2..... 346 words. Total words to date..... 672

Writing of “A Midnight Sketch”

Day 1..... 1341 words. Total words to date..... 1341

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283

Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246

Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709

Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for July..... 2013

Total fiction words for 2023..... 112035

Total nonfiction words for July... 5920

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 137470

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 249505

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221

Short story collections..... 31

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Bradbury Challenge

July 10, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Bradbury Challenge
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“One important key to success is self-confidence. An important key to self-confidence is preparation.” Arthur Ashe

Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting

Most of those who have joined in this challenge have written tens of thousands more words than they might have otherwise. You can still join in the challenge at any time. And if you're a fiction writer, why not?

There's no cost, and the challenge is a great way to increase your inventory and jumpstart your writing. Chances are you'll have more fun than you've had in a long time. The challenge is also a great way to get more practice pushing down the critical voice.

During the past week, in addition to whatever other fiction they're writing, the following writers reported their progress:

- Erin Donoho "A Pearl for My Love, 1500 words, historical fiction
- Balázs Jám bor "David X and the books of destiny" 3000 words Fantasy
- George Kordonis "Depressed Girl" 2019 words Psychological Thriller
- Alexander Nakul "Dark-Skinned Priestess " 2134 words Erotic Fantasy
- Chynna Pace "Beef Jerky Ghost" 3335 words Fantasy
- Christopher Ridge "Hangry Pains" 4200 words Horror
- K.C. Riggs "Bunnü the Magnificent" 1131 words Mythology

Congratulations to the participants. And again, feel free to jump in at any time. We're all waiting for you.

Talk with you later.

Of Interest

See "We landed in Pamplona at night": Hemingway's first encounter with the Running of the Bulls" at <https://english.elpais.com/culture/2023-07-08/we-landed-in-pamplona-at-night-hemingways-first-encounter-with-the-running-of-the-bulls.html>. Great read. Story ideas, etc.

See "Sanfermines: The best fiestas in the world" at https://english.elpais.com/elpais/2018/07/09/inenglish/1531140699_623458.html. A longer read but good general research and some story ideas.

See "Visualizing America's billion square feet of vacant offices" at <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/visualizing-1-billion-square-feet-of-empty-office-space/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 260

Writing of "Marvin McTavish Decides"

Day 1..... 326 words. Total words to date..... 326

Day 2..... 346 words. Total words to date..... 672

Writing of “A Midnight Sketch”

Day 1..... 1341 words. Total words to date..... 1341

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283

Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246

Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709

Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for July..... 2013

Total fiction words for 2023..... 112035

Total nonfiction words for July... 6180

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 137730

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 249765

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221

Short story collections..... 31

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IP Valuation

July 11, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Ernest Hemingway and Stephen King
- * The Conscious, Critical Mind in Video
- * Doing Nothing
- * IP Valuation
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Ernest Hemingway and Stephen King

I'm not much for wishing I'd written someone else's work, but I really wish I'd written *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. It's Hemingway's best novel. When I read that one, it feels familiar, as if I did write it.

It isn't so much that I wish I'd actually put the words on the page in that exact order as that I had lived the experiences and in the places that enabled him to write it. In fact, I've written several short stories similar in tone and subject matter for which I did have the experience.

The closest I came previously to wishing such a thing was with Stephen King's *The Stand*, but I didn't wish I'd written it so much as wished I could write like that. But eventually I learned so many lessons about writing fiction from that one that I no longer needed to wish I'd written it.

Back to my personal rating of Hemingway's works, *The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway: the Finca Vigia Edition* competes with *The Old Man and the Sea* for runner up to *For Whom the Bell Tolls* as his best work. *The Complete Short Stories* wins, I think, for sheer volume.

The Sun Also Rises and *A Farewell to Arms* come next in either order in a bid for fourth and fifth, and *To Have and Have Not* rounds out a short list of his better fictions.

The Conscious, Critical Mind in Video

If you want to see the conscious, critical mind keeping writers from writing, watch Season 4, Episode 7, "The Cheever Letters" of the sitcom *Seinfeld*. (The writer conundrum continues through the next few episodes.)

Doing Nothing

I want to say I've learned that I'm not good at doing nothing, but that isn't exactly true. I've known for a long time I'm not good at doing nothing. In fact, I'm horrible at it. What's worse (or better, to me) I don't want to get good at it.

But during my hiatus I find myself having to learn patience. I've had to wait for various reasons (e.g., shipping time on things I've ordered, unbearable heat after about 9 a.m., etc.) to accomplish tasks I've set for myself.

The ultimate goal is to get my office and my equipment back in order so

- I have a permanent place to report every morning again, so
- I can reestablish my routine, so
- I can get back to the joyful escape of writing.

I suspect (and hope) when everything's in order again the dam will burst. As it is, I've allowed a few hundred words of fiction to seep out now and again. It will feel good to sit in the right environment again and let the words flow.

IP Valuation

Dean Wesley Smith wrote a wake-up call regarding IP valuation. It's a must-read and the main reason I'm posting an edition of the Journal today.

The article won't spoon-feed you any answers, but it will hint at some great questions you should consider asking an IP attorney and/or estate attorney about your IP.

And you don't have to have dozens of novels or multiple series. With IP, because of all the forms licensing can take, having even one novel or short story collection is exponentially larger than having none. So if you haven't considered some of the questions the article will pose, I suggest you start now.

To read the article, see "Valuation of IP" at <https://deanwesleymith.com/valuation-of-ip/>.

Talk with you later.

Of Interest

See "Former FBI agent shares 3 things..." at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/former-fbi-agent-shares-3-things-people-with-high-emotional-intelligence-always-do-when-talking-to-others/>. Reading this might help inform your characters.

See "Six Useful CHATGPT Prompts for Fiction Writers" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/six-useful-chatgpt-prompts-for-fiction-writers/>. I don't buy it, but maybe we're different, you and I.

See "9 Common Dialogue Problems..." at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/9-common-dialogue-problems-and-how-to-fix-them/>. I encourage you to download the Journal archives and search for "dialogue" or "realistic dialogue."

The Numbers

The Journal..... 660

Writing of "Marvin McTavish Decides"

Day 1..... 326 words. Total words to date..... 326

Day 2..... 346 words. Total words to date..... 672

Writing of "A Midnight Sketch"

Day 1..... 1341 words. Total words to date..... 1341

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283

Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246

Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709
Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for July..... 2013
Total fiction words for 2023..... 112035
Total nonfiction words for July... 6840
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 138390
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 250425

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221
Short story collections..... 31

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New Business Cards

July 13, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * New Business Cards
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“I had eight weeks to finish my novel. Eight weeks. And I was on Chapter 10 – a long way from the end. If I wanted to finish on time, I’d have to write 4,500 words a week. I could do that. If I switched to extreme writing mode. In other words, ‘neglect everything else’.” A prominent, regular contributor to TKZ

When I read “I’d have to write 4,500 words” I was expecting the next to words to be “a day,” not “a week.” This sort of quote makes me very, very, very glad I’m me. 4500 words is literally 4 and a half hours’ work at most. h

“Nobody can consciously ‘think up’ anything spontaneous. Spontaneity is a characteristic of real, unscripted life and, in fiction, of the creative subconscious mind.” Me, in a comment on a Passive Voice post

New Business Cards

I haven’t used a business card or bookmark or anything else with my information on it, since the early 2000s when I was still speaking at writers’ conferences and conventions. I don’t think I ever gave out a business card even to my students when I was teaching in-person seminars.

But [*John Gilstrap’s recent TKZ post about business cards*](#) started me thinking. The way he uses business cards now is exactly the way I used to use them. And you can never tell how many new readers you might find with the simple act of handing out business cards.

I do recommend one caveat: be sure the would-be recipient actually wants your card. Otherwise you might as well drop it into the trash and save him or her the trouble.

I researched different business-card printers for my specific requirements and settled on GotPrint.com. You can design your card on their site, but I didn’t do that. I designed my card, front and back, on a separate program (Serif PageMaker 9.0), saved the designs as .jpg files, and uploaded them.

Finally I ordered 500 double-sided business cards for around \$50 plus shipping. The front is matte black with my personal and promotional information (see below) and the back is off-white and displays a QR code for my publisher, another for my YouTube channel, and another for this Journal.

Shipping took about a week, and the cards came in yesterday. I was a little disappointed at first glance. Because their cutter was maybe 1/32nd of an inch off, there’s a thin line of white across the bottom and up the right side. But it almost looks like part of the design. It also gives the card a bit of a 3D effect, so I don’t mind.

I can read the front of the card all right, though font size I chose for the genres is a bit small. I’ll change that a little next time. I’ll increase the font size a bit, put the genres on two lines, and nudge my email addy down a little. Otherwise I like the design as-is, and the QR codes on the back work just fine.

By the way, I looked at different QR code generators, but most were ploys to get me to sign up for an account, etc. It was more than a little frustrating.

Then I realized, happily, that Serif PageMaker has an on-board QR code generator. That solved that problem. If you have a particular design program you like, check to see whether it has a QR code generator.

Here’s the obverse of the card. What looks like off-whitish smudges are not apparent on the card. They’re a trick of my phone camera.

[photo deleted]

And here's the reverse. The QR codes are scannable. G'head, try 'em:

[photo deleted]

If you're seeing this on Substack, visit <https://hestanbrough.com/new-business-cards/> to see both pictures.

Talk with you later.

Of Interest

See "WGGB publishes policy position..." at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/wggb-publishes-policy-position-on-risks-and-benefits-of-ai/>. See PG's take.

See "Princess, Washerwoman, Warrior, Goatherd: How Real are Your Characters?" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/princess-washerwoman-warrior-goatherd-how-real-are-your-characters/>. Yet another series of problems we who write into the dark never encounter.

See "How to Figure Out Which Writing Advice Fits You Best" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-to-figure-out-which-writing-advice-fits-you-best/>. Blah, blah, blah. Been there, done that, and bought in for far too long before learning the truth. There's only one question to ask: Would you rather knuckle under to unreasoning fears and never reach your potential (or even know what that potential is) or would you rather believe in yourself, take a deep breath, and dive in?

The Numbers

The Journal..... 650

Writing of "Marvin McTavish Decides"

Day 1..... 326 words. Total words to date..... 326

Day 2..... 346 words. Total words to date..... 672

Writing of "A Midnight Sketch"

Day 1..... 1341 words. Total words to date..... 1341

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283

Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246

Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709

Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for July.....	2013
Total fiction words for 2023.....	112035
Total nonfiction words for July... 7490	
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	139040
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog).....	251075
Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date.....	2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date.....	4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	221
Short story collections.....	31

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Almost There: A Progress Report

July 14, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Almost There
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Almost There

I'm actually typing this on a new (to me) computer, an 11.6" HP x360 that converts to a tablet. Pretty cool. Now I can move my business computer out to the Hovel.

I bought this little computer from Amazon's Renewed store for only \$107, complete with a 30-day return policy and a 3-month warranty. Hard to go wrong.

I spent the afternoon yesterday setting this one up, installing my favorite browser, my Dropbox desktop app, and Microsoft Word 2010 just in case I need it now and then. But most of the time, most of my writing, fiction and otherwise, will be done in the Hovel beginning very soon.

I've only been gone from the Hovel for a few months, but really if I include the total disruption of my writing life, it's been almost two straight years. August 6 it will be two years that my writing has been disrupted.

I don't need to tell anyone that though. I've posted my numbers below almost every time I've posted a new edition of this Journal, so you can see for yourself.

Anyway, I suspect all three stories listed down there right now will be finished in short order, probably plus a couple or a few.

I still have a little preparation to do. This morning (weather was permitting, meaning a monsoon deluge didn't fall, darn it, and the temp wasn't above 90° already, yay) I finished building and installing a screen for the east-most window on my south wall to keep out creepy-crawlies so I can blow cooler air into the Hovel at night. Then I should be able to work comfortably in there until around noon or so.

Whatever you've heard, adobe ain't all that. Yeah, the walls are dirt and thick and it looks really cool, especially to a guy who's spent so much time in Mexico with Wes Crowley.

But here's the thing: If you're in a cave, with thick sides and a thick roof, it stays a comfy 70° or so. But if you're in an adobe house with a "normal" roof, it's hot in the summer and cold in the winter.

Frankly, I'd rather have a roof of criss-crossed ocotillo branches like the desert cantinas in the late 19th century. That would provide airy shade but allow the heat to escape. And when it rained (seldom) it would clean the floors. (grin)

Anyway, tomorrow I'll sweep the Hovel thoroughly, then spray the floor against scorpions, etc. After that I should be all set again. So that'll be only one more day with any luck, and two or three without. But today I'm rewarding myself with a trip to Sierra Vista to an estate sale or two. One is eerie. I'll tell you about that later.

Oh, I still have to unpack my new webcam and learn the ins and outs of that too. If it doesn't work as expected, then I'll send the blasted thing back and you guys will have to put up with grainy video. (grin)

Anyway, from what I can tell, I'm not getting a lot of readers following the YouTube channel. Seems it's mostly writers, so I'll probably talk writing as much as anything else.

But don't expect me to tell you the myths are fine and it's all right if you want to go ahead and bow to the unreasoning fears. Ain't gonna happen. Very, very few will actually go whole-hog and give writing into the dark a real authentic try, but those who do will thank me.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Pulp Speed Post Forward Again" at <https://deanwesleymith.com/pulp-speed-post-forward-again/>. Always worth sharing.

See “AI Writing” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/ai-writing-2/>. For those who are interested.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 640

Writing of “Marvin McTavish Decides”

Day 1..... 326 words. Total words to date..... 326

Day 2..... 346 words. Total words to date..... 672

Writing of “A Midnight Sketch”

Day 1..... 1341 words. Total words to date..... 1341

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283

Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246

Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709

Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for July..... 2013

Total fiction words for 2023..... 112035

Total nonfiction words for July... 8130

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 139680

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 251715

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221

Short story collections..... 31

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Another Story, a Contest, and Whoop or Whip?

July 15, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Another Story, and a Contest
- * Whoop or Whip?
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“I never don the glistening white Authorial robes or ascend into the ivory control tower. I just take a deep breath and roll off the parapet of the story. Then I run through the trenches of the story with my characters, recording what happens and what they say and do in response. Great fun and authentic, unmanipulated stories. Can't beat it.” Me in a comment on a TKZ post

Another Story, and a Contest

A really easy contest.

Yesterday, Friday morning, a new short story went out. It's titled “Someone You Will Never Have to Be” and I found a stupid typo in it. Actually, it's a wrong word. (Also, there might be more than one typo in the story.)

The main typo is a four-letter word, but it's not a curse word. It's a wrong word, but it isn't a homophone, like waist/waste or their/there (or a southern homophone like all/oil). (grin)

Anyway, the first two letters of the word are correct, but the last two are wrong. Plus, the correct word is only three letters.

If you find the typo I'm talking about (not difficult), email to let me know two things:

1. The error and the correct word.
2. Which short story collection or novel you would like from my vast offering over at StoneThread Publishing. Browse the story collections and novels here <https://stonethreadpublishing.com/>. I can send any book in .epub, .mobi or even .pdf, so be sure to let me know which format you want too.
3. Bonus: If you find more than one typo, you may request more than one short story collection or novel.

Oh, and I hope you enjoy “Someone You Will Never Have to Be” despite the stupid typo.

If you didn't see the story in your inbox, that's because you haven't subscribed yet. You can correct that AND see the story [***If You Click Here***](#). There's a subscribe button at the end of the story.

Whoop or Whip?

Okay, this is a personal pet peeve. It has to do with the dumbing down of the citizens of the USA.

Multiple times over the past several days, on merchandise from coffee mugs to t-shirts and an actual label on a fake food can, I've seen "whip" spelled "whoop." You know, like in "whooping cough" or the similar "woops" or the cousin "oops" from which it was derived.

Some of the merchandise bragged about "opening a can of whoop-ass" on someone.

Okay, so lemme ask you, whattayou gonna do? You gonna tell a joke that's so funny the victim will laugh until he whoops? Or until he's whoopin' non-stop? Is that what you mean? An' then what? How's he gonna keep laughin' if he's whoopin' all over the place?

Or did you actually mean you're considering opening a can of "whipass"? Because that would be much more serious. For that one I'd sell tickets. A lot of people enjoy watching a good fight.

If you beat a foe in a fight, it may be said that you "whipped" him (okay, or her). But I've never heard anyone say that one combatant "whooped" another, at least not without busting a gut laughing. "I'm sorry. He did what?" (grin)

It's whip, not whoop.

Probably the initial transition happened down south somewhere when some writer overheard some guy say something like, "Y'know what? 'At ol' boy at the end of the bar needs a good whuppin'" or even "Yup. That man's headin' for a whuppin'."

Just in case anyone's wondering, "whop" is a similar word that means "hit," but with a more comical connotation, as in "She whopped him upside the head with a wrench." Actually, being whopped might cause a guy to whoop (audibly), if it didn't cause him to lapse into a coma.

Anyway, in both of those cases "whup" was a southern pronunciation of "whip." It has nothing to do with "whoop" or any other sort of comical utterance (Brick's whisper on the sitcom *The Middle*) or malady (again, whooping cough).

But our zany writer, having heard "whup" misspelled it "whoop" because s/he has zero skill at spelling phonetically. The fact is, "oop" has a distinctly different sound than "up." Say both of those aloud and you'll hear it.

Which leads me to this: If you want to learn to write dialect (and if you do, trust me, less is more) practice mimicking your characters' speech patterns aloud. How they pronounce words, their intonations and rhythms.

When you speak your characters' lines aloud, you will hear the similarity, for example, between "whip" and "whup" and the complete dissimilarity between either of those words and "whoop." And if you can't hear it and discern that difference, my advice is Don't Write Dialect.

Characters are different. Like other real human beings, they're individuals and until you get to know them (and sometimes even after you get to know them) they display certain stereotypes. Among those stereotypes is their pattern of speech.

For example, Wes Crowley says nothing with the same intonations and rhythms that Joey "Bones" Salerno uses and vice versa. And neither Wes nor Joey could create even an adequate impersonation of the other. If they even tried, it would result in sheer comedy.

I, on the other hand, can imitate either of them. There *are* characters I'm not able to imitate, which means I can't write phonetically on their behalf. There are no phonetic markers for a high-pitched (think *Seinfeld*) voice, for example.

By the way, up above in the paragraph that starts with "Okay, so lemme ask you," that's Joey Bones talkin', a'right? So you gotta listen up. (Wes would have said "y'gotta" or "you really ought'a.")

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "The Cost of Starting Your Own Publishing Venture" at <https://www.youtube.com/live/JRYSi0j-ckE>. We talked about this back in late June, remember? See the next link.

See "Advice on Self-Publishing" at <https://hestanbrough.com/advice-on-self-publishing/>. And as long as I'm sharing refreshers, see the next link too.

See "The Essential Elements of a Story" at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-essential-elements-of-a-story/>.

See "Upping Your Word Count" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/07/upping-your-word-count.html>.

See "The Right Publisher for the Right Book" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-right-publisher-for-the-right-book/>. Bear in mind that YOU are always the perfect publisher for your book.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1050

Writing of "Marvin McTavish Decides"

Day 1..... 326 words. Total words to date..... 326
Day 2..... 346 words. Total words to date..... 672

Writing of “A Midnight Sketch”

Day 1..... 1341 words. Total words to date..... 1341

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283
Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246
Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709
Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for July..... 2013
Total fiction words for 2023..... 112035
Total nonfiction words for July... 9180
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 140730
Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 252765

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221
Short story collections..... 31

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Welcome, Writing Rich Settings, and A Story Idea

July 16, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Welcome
- * Bradbury Challenge Reminder
- * On Writing Rich Settings, and WITD
- * A Story Idea
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Spontaneity is true to life. Anything else is fake and a manipulation.” Me

“[T]rust your own writing and voice. Act like an artist instead of a doormat for heaven’s sake.”
Dean Wesley Smith

Welcome

to Nadini and the several other folks who have recently subscribed to the (almost) daily Journal. I hope you will find what you need, and I hope you will come to realize sooner rather than later to trust yourself and your characters and Just Write the Story.

You might check out the Archives and all the other free downloads at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives-gifts-dvds/>.

Bradbury Challenge Reminder

Those of you taking part in the Bradbury Challenge, remember to email me your story title(s), word count(s) and genre(s) before this Journal goes out tomorrow morning.

Anyone else who’d care to jump in, feel free. If necessary, [email me for details](#).

On Writing Rich Settings, and WITD

A friend emailed me about my story “Someone You Will Never Have to Be.”

He wrote in part, “You know, that story is exceptionally well-written. Your description of the natural surroundings puts us looking over the characters’ shoulders without coming off as showy prose. Was it pre-WITD?”

I was glad he enjoyed the story, and even more thrilled he asked that question. Here’s my response to him, greatly expanded:

No, the story wasn’t pre-WITD. In fact, it was so well-written and authentic specifically because I wrote it into the dark, without planning and without conscious-mind editing.

(I wrote a similar story several years ago, also WITD, titled “[Keep Calm & Carry On](#).” That’s the Amazon link, or you can email me to let me know which format you’d like and I’ll send it to you free.)

But back to the present. According to my Journal entry (see “Fiction Doesn’t Matter, and the Fun-to-Work Ratio” at <https://hestanbrough.com/fiction-doesnt-matter-and-the-fun-to-work-ratio/>), I actually wrote “Someone You Will Never Have to Be” on April 5, 2023.

I always report my writing in the Journal the following day. But I also always provide vivid descriptions of the setting. My readers most often comment that they felt as if they were in the story with the characters.

Here's the key: In any story or novel I write, if my POV character sees, hears, smells, tastes or feels something (physically or emotionally), it is therefore important and it goes into the story.

Only writers who do NOT WITD spend time fretting over whether they included “too much” or “not enough” description and other nonsense like that. I never even think about that stuff. As I keep saying, I simply race through the story with my characters, and as we go I write down what happens and what they say and do in response.

Micromanaging your characters and THEIR story is a complete waste of time, and only writers who are scared the story won't be good enough do it. Their fear forces them to try to “think” their way through a story, and that ruins it.

Life happens. Stories happen. Spontaneity is true to life. Anything else is fake and a manipulation.

As I wrote here a couple of days ago, “Nobody can consciously ‘think up’ anything spontaneous. Spontaneity is a characteristic of real, unscripted life and, in fiction, of the creative subconscious mind.”

Before each writing session, I cycle back over what I wrote during the previous writing session. I don't “look for” anything. Not my job. That time is to allow THE CHARACTERS (not myself, the writer) to touch the story. THEIR story. In this way, if I overlooked something, the characters get a second chance to add it. Nothing more, nothing less.

For the record, I started WITD in mid-April 2014. Before that, I'd written only a few short stories, a ton of poems, and one long-ass outline for a novel I still haven't written (and won't).

I'm tellin' you, folks, WITD works. I'm living proof.

But I do understand your reticence. You can't believe my experience because my experience isn't yours. At most, a few of you can bring yourselves to trust me enough to try WITD.

Many of you can't even go that far. The myths have been drilled into you so thoroughly that you think what I'm spouting is pure mushroom fertilizer. I regularly comment out of frustration and exasperation when the characters in otherwise good movies claim how very hard it is to write a novel.

Consider this: Even the writers who wrote the script for the movie don't know. That's how widely and thickly the manure has been spread.

Or maybe you have some weird notion that I'm trying to con you somehow, or maybe that if you give WITD an honest try, it won't work and I'll jerk back the curtain and laugh at you.

Nothing could be farther from the truth.

I was mired in the myths for decades, which is to say I was where many of you are. And as I reported, in all that time, I produced only a smattering of short stories and a long, very thorough outline.

When I finally tried WITD, all-out and honestly, I did so in an attempt to disprove it once and for all.

Instead, it actually worked, and now I wouldn't go back for any reason. Because I'm free of all the time-consuming BS. As a result, I'm writing pure, authentic stories with rich settings and real characters.

But again, none of that matters.

All I can do for you—and frankly, the BEST thing I can do for you—is urge you to try WITD for yourself, to take a chance to free yourself of the myths and simultaneously free yourself of the paralyzing and unreasoning fear.

Still, only you can actually try WITD and prove it for yourself. Or not. Completely up to you.

A Story Idea

Your spouse mentions an estate sale in a nearby town. S/he says, “Weird, but the listing shows a lot of the same exact stuff we have, brand names and all.”

Intriguing, right? But will you go? Might as well. If the decedent's taste in furnishings, art, etc. match your own that closely, there might be something there that you can't live without. So sure, you go.

What if you arrive only to find yourself at your own home, albeit now in control of a group of strangers who are selling off your belongings to dozens of other strangers who are looking over and pawing through everything you own? And it soon becomes apparent that somehow they can't see or hear you.

This happened to me a few days ago. As it turned out, it was pretty eerie. I'm not gonna write the story, but even if I did yours would be different. Write. Have fun.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “The Merch-ification of Book Publishing” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-merch-ification-of-book-publishing/>. I linked to this mostly for PG's take on the article.

See “3 Reasons Refrain in Poetry is Relevant to Freelance Writers” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/3-reasons-refrain-in-poetry-is-relevant-to-freelance-writers/>. I’ve long held that many techniques used in writing poetry are valuable to the fiction writer. I even have books and audio lectures on the topic.

See “Character Type and Trope Thesaurus: Grotesque” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/character-type-and-trope-thesaurus-grotesque/>. Take what feels right, leave the rest, and don’t think while you’re actually writing.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1230

Writing of “Marvin McTavish Decides”

Day 1..... 326 words. Total words to date..... 326

Day 2..... 346 words. Total words to date..... 672

Writing of “A Midnight Sketch”

Day 1..... 1341 words. Total words to date..... 1341

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283

Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246

Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709

Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date..... 12154

Total fiction words for July..... 2013

Total fiction words for 2023..... 112035

Total nonfiction words for July... 10410

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 141960

Total words for the year (fiction and this blog)..... 253995

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark, adherence to Heinlein’s Rules, and that following the myths of fiction writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

Speech Patterns, and When I Teach WITD

July 17, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * The Bradbury Challenge
- * More on Stereotypical Speech Patterns
- * When I Teach WITD
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Your job isn’t to find ideas but to recognize them when they show up.” Stephen King

“Amateurs sit and wait for inspiration, the rest of us just get up and go to work.” Stephen King

The Bradbury Challenge

Most of those who have joined in this challenge have written tens of thousands more words than they might have otherwise. You can still join in the challenge at any time. And if you’re a fiction writer, why not?

There’s no cost, and the challenge is a great way to increase your inventory and jumpstart your writing. Chances are you’ll have more fun than you’ve had in a long time. The challenge is also a great way to get more practice pushing down the critical voice.

During the past week, in addition to whatever other fiction they’re writing, the following writers reported their progress:

- Erin Donoho “Blind Spot” 3300 words historical fiction
- Balázs Jámor “Matter of Choice” 3600 words Psychological
- Loyd Jenkins “Plague of the Ice Troll” 2130 words Historical Fantasy
- George Kordonis “Sow The Wind...” 2673 words Psychological Horror
- Alexander Nakul “The Miraculous Book of Princess Serenia” 1921 words Erotic Fantasy
- Chynna Pace “The Lunch Lady Secre” 6515 words Mystery
- Christopher Ridge “No Hard Feelings” 1800 words Crime
- K.C. Riggs “The Third Omen” 1597 words General Fiction (A monsoon story)

More on Stereotypical Speech Patterns

A few days ago, by way of advice on writing dialect and phonetic spellings, I wrote, “If you want to learn to write dialect (and trust me, less is more) practice mimicking your characters’ speech patterns aloud.”

After you've done that a few to several times so you're speaking your character's dialect as fluidly as the character would, do this:

Carefully sound-out each words or phrase you want to spell phonetically. Then spell those words and phrases exactly as they are spoken. Put them on the screen or on paper, and then pronounce them again. If it isn't quite right, do it again.

Note: You won't always have to go to such lengths. Once you learn how to immerse yourself in the dialect and phonetic spellings, it becomes much easier. But if you aren't a natural, first you have to do the work.

If two words are combined, use an apostrophe to indicate the missing letters just as you do in a contraction. For example, "y'gotta" is pronounced differently than "you gotta." Likewise, "What are you doing?" is different than "What're you doing?" and "What you doin'?" and "Whattayou doin'?" and "What'cha doin'?".

I've personally heard one character say "You ain't gonna do that" and another say "Y'ain't gonna do that". Of course, a character with perfect diction might say, "You are not (or aren't) going to do that."

I am aware there are some writers who can't hear or sense the nuances in dialogue. I know one man who writes excellent fiction but is unable to discern the rhythm of words as the rhythm is established by the arrangement of accented and unaccented syllables.

As I wrote yesterday, if you are unable to sense those nuances, I strongly recommend you avoid writing dialect.

If you set a character well enough in a particular location, the reader will "hear" the dialect anyway, if it matters to him.

Characters are different from each other. Hence the Texan Wes Crowley will not sound anything like Joey Bones Salerno, a gentleman of Sicilian or Italian descent who was born and raised in Brooklyn, or like Juan Carlos Salazár, the proprietor and keeper of the stories at the cantina in Agua Perlado, Mexico.

Nor will any of them sound similar to the Stirchian (extraterrestrial alien) or the Tursec delegate (another extraterrestrial alien). Nor will the Stirchian and the Tursec sound similar to each other as they each learn to communicate in English in different ways.

And none of those characters will sound like any of the characters, from the female captain of the generation ship The Ark as it makes its way across the galaxy to the colonists living on the several decks below the bridge.

Like other actual beings, characters are individuals but they also display certain stereotypes, and those stereotypes extend to their speech patterns. And those stereotypical speech patterns work both ways: they both inform and are derived from the characters, their history, etc.

Dialect and speech patterns can wonderfully enhance your characters and their stories if you allow them to.

When I Teach WITD

Because so many new subscribers have joined us lately, I thought I'd explain what I mean by WITD: Writing Into the Dark, meaning don't plan, just trust your characters to tell the story that they, not you, are living. Be their factual recorder, or as Stephen King calls himself, their stenographer.

Just to be clear, when I teach WITD (writing into the dark) I don't teach a "technique." I teach that you don't need a technique. I teach that you trust yourself and don't allow anyone else to second guess you. Defend your work. Avidly. Zealously.

I do teach craft elements, the bits and pieces and best practices that go into creating inviting hooks, openings and cliffhangers and that keep the reader deeply and fully engaged in your story throughout.

But I never have, don't now, and never will tell you that you can't do all of that on your own. You don't need any input from any conscious, critical mind, even your own.

So you don't need to outline anything, or revise or rewrite, ever. Those are all functions of your own critical mind second-guessing your creative subconscious. And you don't need other critical minds: critique partners or critique groups or beta readers or anyone at all who is willing or even eager to say "I would have written it like this" or "I suggest you change this" etc. I think it was Mark Twain who wrote that no urge is stronger than the urge of a writer to change another writer's copy.

I mentioned that you don't need to outline, but you don't need to plan ahead in any other way either. I can't bring myself to use the word "plot" as a verb. Plot is a noun, a thing, defined by Bradbury as the "footprints left in the snow after your characters have run by on their way to incredible destinations." How can you plan that?

Then again, Bradbury was primarily a short story writer. So what could he know about outlining or planning ahead, right? He wrote his novels the same way.

And one of the more prolific novelists alive today, Stephen King, has written the same advice, albeit worded slightly differently. He wrote,

"I distrust plot for two reasons: first, because our lives are largely plotless, even when you add in all our reasonable precautions and careful planning; and second, because I believe plotting and the spontaneity of real creation aren't compatible."

How can you plan where children will run to when they're playing in a park? How can you plan where a kitten or puppy will go when it's set free in a yard full of fascinating things to explore?

As I wrote the other day,

“Life happens. Stories happen. Spontaneity is true to life. Anything else is fake and a manipulation. Nobody can consciously ‘think up’ anything spontaneous. Spontaneity is a characteristic of real, unscripted life and, in fiction, of the creative subconscious mind.”

So when I teach WITD, I don’t teach a technique. I teach letting go of shoulds and ought-tos and so-called have-tos like outlining and seeking critical input and revising and rewriting and polishing, whatever that is.

I teach letting go of whatever techniques others try to foist on you. Nobody else can possibly know the stories that are in your mind better than you do. You don’t need anyone else. Write to the best of your ability the first time through and then move on to the next story.

I teach that you should always be learning more about the craft with your conscious mind. After all, learning is the only valid purpose of the conscious mind in a fiction writer’s life.

But I also teach that when you sit down to write, you shut off the conscious, critical mind, trust your creative subconscious, and Just Write the Story. What you learned with the conscious mind will have seeped through into the subconscious, and your characters will use that knowledge as necessary. Trust your characters and your creative subconscious.

The creative subconscious (and the characters who reside there) only want to tell their story. They don’t care either way about all that critical mind stuff, and neither should you.

For a great deal more on this topic, key “WITD” or “cycling” into the search block in the sidebar at <https://hestanbrough.com>, then read everything that pops up.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “ChatGPT boosts writing productivity, finds new MIT study” at <https://interestingengineering.com/innovation/chatgpt-boosts-writing-productivity>. So does putting your butt in a chair, your fingers on a keyboard, and writing.

See “Authors Join the Brewing Legal Battle Over AI” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/authors-join-the-brewing-legal-battle-over-ai/>.

See “Pulphouse Going Monthly” at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/pulphouse-going-monthly/>. Shrug. Pulphouse is not open to submissions from outsiders unless you back the Kickstarter drive. If I have to bribe my way in, I don’t want to be there. Your attitude may differ.

See “How to Make a Cliché Work for You” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-to-make-a-cliche-work-for-you/>. Notice this is from a website named “Almost an Author.” How much value should you place on any advice from such a website?

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1600

Writing of “Marvin McTavish Decides”

Day 1..... 326 words. Total words to date..... 326

Day 2..... 346 words. Total words to date..... 672

Writing of “A Midnight Sketch”

Day 1..... 1341 words. Total words to date..... 1341

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283

Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246

Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709

Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for July..... 2013

Total fiction words for 2023..... 112035

Total nonfiction words for July... 12010

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 143560

Total words for the year (fiction and nonfiction)..... 255595

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221

Short story collections..... 31

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Story Ideas

July 19, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

* Quote of the Day

* Story Ideas

- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“It always seems impossible until it’s done.” Nelson Mandela

Story Ideas

Nothing much today. I was browsing my “Blueprint,” the Interesting Engineering newsletter I receive almost daily, and it struck me that the current issue is chock full of story ideas.

Many issues are. You don’t even have to read the articles, though I advise it. You can take one or more story ideas suitable for any (or all) of several genres from only the title of many of the articles.

For example, one title in this morning’s edition read, “Harvard scientist ‘obsessed’ with anti-aging creates a youth cocktail.” From that title alone you could write one or more stories in SF, Mystery, Crime, Thriller, Action-Adventure, Psychological Suspense, etc. The link is in today’s “Of Interest.”

You could even experiment, or challenge yourself. Write the same story in every genre in which you write. (If you write into the dark, it won’t really be the same story anyway.)

To subscribe to IE newsletters (it’s free) visit <https://interestingengineering.com/newsletters> and make your selection. And no, I get no consideration for this recommendation. IE is simply a great source I want to share.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “The Writer’s Life Mindset Course” at [https://vincentzandri.substack\[dot\]com/p/introduction-to-the-writers-life](https://vincentzandri.substack[dot]com/p/introduction-to-the-writers-life). I understand the first lecture is already “in the can.”

See “Using Books2Read as a Marketing Tool” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/07/using-books2read-as-a-marketing-tool.html>. A rare good post by Terry Odell.

See “Pulphouse Kickstarter Is Live” at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/pulphouse-kickstarter-is-live-3/>. Take a look at the courses you can get cheaply as stretch rewards.

See “Harvard scientist ‘obsessed’ with anti-aging creates a youth cocktail” at <https://interestingengineering.com/science/harvard-scientist-anti-aging-reverse-youth-chemical-cocktail>. There you go. Several story ideas that can be written in any (or all) of several genres.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 280

Writing of “Marvin McTavish Decides”

Day 1..... 326 words. Total words to date..... 326

Day 2..... 346 words. Total words to date..... 672

Writing of “A Midnight Sketch”

Day 1..... 1341 words. Total words to date..... 1341

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283

Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246

Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709

Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for July..... 2013

Total fiction words for 2023..... 112035

Total nonfiction words for July... 12290

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 143840

Total words for the year (fiction and nonfiction)..... 255875

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221

Short story collections..... 31

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Still Here, and A New Story

July 22, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

* Quote of the Day

* Still Here

- * A New Story
- * The Bradbury Challenge Reminder
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“I don’t spend any time whatsoever thinking about what might have been.” Alex Trebek

Still Here

I’m still here, still putting some things together mentally, emotionally and physically. I hope to be back before too long.

I feel like I’ve been saying that for the past 2 years, and it’s only kicked into high gear over the past three months.

It’ll all work out. In the meantime, I wanted to touch base and pass along the items in “Of interest.” If they weren’t so good, I wouldn’t have published this edition of the Journal, so be sure to take a few minutes to check them out.

A New Story

On Friday, my story “The Passing of Rosario” went live at [https://stanbroughwrites.substack\[dot\]com/p/the-passing-of-rosario](https://stanbroughwrites.substack[dot]com/p/the-passing-of-rosario). You can subscribe at the end of the story. It’s free.

Several folks have reported enjoying this story. Thank you. It’s one of my personal favorites.

The Bradbury Challenge Reminder

Just a reminder to participants in the ongoing Bradbury Challenge to get your titles, stories, and genres in to me before the Journal goes live on Monday.

And of course, anyone is welcome to jump in. It’s never too late to be ahead of where you would have been if you’d waited until next week. (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Got a Good Question” at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/got-a-good-question/>.

See “In The Country” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/07/in-the-country.html>. A good story.

See “The Right Publisher for the Right Book” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-right-publisher-for-the-right-book-2/>. See PG’s excellent take.

See “Blogging Ideas For Beginners” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/blogging-ideas-for-beginners/>. Ideas.

See “Not Dead Yet” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/not-dead-yet-6/>. See the comments, especially from Felix Torres if you’re a Mac user. Might work on Windows too, I don’t know.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 290

Writing of “Untitled Stern Talbot Mystery”

Day 1..... 190 words. Total words to date..... 190

Writing of “Marvin McTavish Decides”

Day 1..... 326 words. Total words to date..... 326

Day 2..... 346 words. Total words to date..... 672

Writing of “A Midnight Sketch”

Day 1..... 1341 words. Total words to date..... 1341

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283

Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246

Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709

Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for July..... 2203

Total fiction words for 2023..... 112225

Total nonfiction words for July... 12580

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 144130

Total words for the year (fiction and nonfiction)..... 256355

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221

Short story collections..... 31

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One Writer's Take

July 23, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * One Writer's Take on the Bradbury Challenge
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“No rules re grammar, punctuation, syntax, etc. really matter. You know, unless you actually WANT the greater number of readers to understand what you've written and take from it what you want them to take from it. In that case, you must learn the rules, not so you won't break them, but so you can break them intelligently and intentionally to create a certain effect in the reader.” Me in a comment on a Kill Zone post

“PG says social media requires work and some native talent, but is it that difficult to follow book influencers for a while to learn what works and what doesn't?” The Passive Guy commenting after a post on [The Passive Voice](#)

One Writer's Take on the Bradbury Challenge

I was going to wait and post this on Monday along with this week's results from the Bradbury Challenge participants themselves, but I thought better of it.

Reading it today might lead a new or returning participant to jump into the Challenge, and that would certainly be a win-win for both the writer and we who would be inspired by that writer. So here goes.

A writer friend of mine recently finished a novel that she's revisited off and on for several months, interrupted by other things. She shared with me her process regarding making a final pass over the novel, and I reminded her gently to be careful not to let her critical mind slip in and hijack what her creative subconscious gave her.

Below, with her permission, I'm reporting her gracious and valuable response:

“That's always the challenge—keep critical mind away. I appreciate the reminder and am always reminding myself. Well, not always. When I'm writing purely from creativity, there's no room

for critical mind and the story just flows and I sometimes have a hard time just keeping up with it.

“I’m so glad I jumped on your short story challenge. Eighteen stories in, I haven’t yet consistently written more on my novels, some weeks yes, some no. But part of that is where I was [with the novel I just finished], trying to knit together parts written at quite different times, and still stay in creative mode.

“But [the Challenge is] a great way to keep writing no matter what is going on around me, when writing on the novel might have been difficult—travel, family issues, other commitments.

“And all those things that might have distracted from a novel, added to ideas I was able to take advantage of with short stories. I’ve been surprised too at the different genres that my stories have been in, some that I never read and have never written before (horror).”

Thanks, KC, for allowing me to share your comments. I’m sure the other participants will concur.

I’ll just mention one more benefit of the Challenge that you alluded to: The more you use your story-idea muscle, the more easily story ideas come to you, and they come from all directions. You only need to trust yourself (and your characters) and write them.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Three links about the modern age” at [https://mattpmn.substack\[dot\]com/p/three-links-about-the-modern-age](https://mattpmn.substack[dot]com/p/three-links-about-the-modern-age). A very short post with three links and a brief description of each. Philosophy. Some good reads on this substack.

See “Know the Rules Before You Break Them” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/07/know-the-rules-before-you-break-them.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 570

Writing of “Untitled Stern Talbot Mystery”

Day 1..... 190 words. Total words to date..... 190

Writing of “Marvin McTavish Decides”

Day 1..... 326 words. Total words to date..... 326

Day 2..... 346 words. Total words to date..... 672

Writing of “A Midnight Sketch”

Day 1..... 1341 words. Total words to date..... 1341

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283

Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246

Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709

Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for July..... 2203

Total fiction words for 2023..... 112225

Total nonfiction words for July... 13150

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 144700

Total words for the year (fiction and nonfiction)..... 256925

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221

Short story collections..... 31

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Bradbury Challenge, and Thank You

July 24, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Bradbury Challenge
- * A Personal Thank You
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“The most difficult thing is the decision to act. The rest is merely tenacity.” Amelia Earhart

Bradbury Challenge

Most of those who have joined in this challenge have written tens of thousands more words than they might have otherwise. You can still join in the challenge at any time. And if you're a fiction writer, why not?

There's no cost, and the challenge is a great way to increase your inventory and jumpstart your writing. Chances are you'll have more fun than you've had in a long time. The challenge is also a great way to get more practice pushing down the critical voice.

During the past week, in addition to whatever other fiction they're writing, the following writers reported their progress:

- Erin Donoho "The Enchanted Castle 1500 words Children's Fiction
- Balázs Jámor "Tasks" 1200 words Literary Fiction
- Loyd Jenkins "Swimming and Monsters" 1410 words Historical Fantasy
- George Kordonis "...Reap The Whirlwind" 2234 words Psychological Horror
- Alexander Nakul "Fragrances of sacred beasts" 1137 words Erotic Fantasy
- Chynna Pace "Holly's Christmas Quest" 4606 words Fantasy
- Christopher Ridge "My Family" 1500 words Crime
- K.C. Riggs "El Viento" 1882 words Paranormal

A Personal Thank You

A personal thank you to the young fictionist who wrote, in a recent email,

"I've been getting so much out of the Journal posts from the past week. The ones about WITD have been great reminders and the ones about dialect are so fascinating. I'm learning so much. It's crazy to me how much I learn from your free posts, way more than I have from paid courses."

I very much appreciate such sentiments. For any subscribers or readers who are new to the Journal, you can also download the complete (free) Journal archives and/or several free articles and/or books at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives-gifts-dvds/>. On that page, only the DVDs are not free.

Thank you, too, to my patrons and donors, who help support this Journal. Should any of you find the Journal useful and would like to contribute, please click [My Donation Link](#).

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Critics are getting less cruel. Alas" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/critics-are-getting-less-cruel-alas/>. A delicious read regarding the (non-)importance of reviews.

See “A Little Group Help” at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/a-little-group-help/>.

See “The Rhetorical Triangle for Writers” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/07/the-rhetorical-triangle-for-writers.html>. Maybe interesting, but for fiction, just write the story.

See “Toyota’s Lunar Cruiser will be powered by regenerative fuel tech” at <https://interestingengineering.com/transportation/toyota-regenerative-fuel-tech-manned-lunar-rover>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 400

Writing of “Untitled Stern Talbot Mystery”

Day 1..... 190 words. Total words to date..... 190

Writing of “Marvin McTavish Decides”

Day 1..... 326 words. Total words to date..... 326

Day 2..... 346 words. Total words to date..... 672

Writing of “A Midnight Sketch”

Day 1..... 1341 words. Total words to date..... 1341

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283

Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246

Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709

Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date..... 12154

Total fiction words for July..... 2203

Total fiction words for 2023..... 112225

Total nonfiction words for July... 13550

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 145100

Total words for the year (fiction and nonfiction)..... 257325

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark, adherence to Heinlein's Rules, and that following the myths of fiction writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

A Thought, and on Cycling

July 26, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * A Thought
- * On Cycling
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

A Thought

Fully giving yourself over to Story—allowing your characters uncontrolled access to your creative subconscious and complete control of your fingers as you and they race through the story that they, not you, are living—is easily among the more sensual, intimate, and purely truthful acts you can ever perform as a writer.

On Cycling

I get questions on cycling, and especially cycling vs. editing, so let me be as absolutely clear as possible:

Like writing into the dark, cycling is a free-flowing function of the creative subconscious. It has NOTHING to do with conscious or critical thought, or with thinking, surmising, considering, trying or otherwise constructing. Ever. Under any circumstances.

Editing, revising, and rewriting by any name (revisiting, revamping, etc.) are functions of the conscious, critical, fear-ruled mind. Each revision, rewrite or editing pass will move what was your original, unique story further from what actually happened as the characters lived it.

Despite the freshest, steamiest possible mushroom fodder emanating from several sources on pretty much an hourly basis, going hybrid as a writer is impossible. You cannot serve both your creative subconscious (your unique, original story and voice) and your conscious, critical mind. You have to choose, and then you have to commit.

You cannot both write into the dark and plan or plot or “erect signposts along the way” or any of that other nonsense. You can convince yourself that’s what you’re doing—though deep down you know better—but you cannot actually do it.

Two rules apply—

1. You cannot create with the conscious, critical mind. You can only construct, block by logical, boring block. Nothing original ever came from the conscious, critical mind. It learns and regurgitates, nothing more.

2. You cannot construct with the creative subconscious. The instant you go critical or wonder why or think what if (or anything at all) or prioritize or sequence, you've switched to the conscious mind and wandered off the path of the unique, original story. Which throws you back to Rule 1.

If you feel a need to argue the point, I suggest you check in with yourself and re-read those two rules. That isn't to say you wouldn't rather construct than create. Many who haven't yet learned to trust in themselves would. If so, that's fine with me.

You can even tell others who are hungry for reaffirmation of the myths instead of actual useful knowledge that you're somehow doing both, but don't try peddling that around here. It won't float. It will sink and be flushed.

For a great deal more on cycling, please see the following two posts. I've written many, many other posts on writing into the dark and cycling as well. You can access them by keying "witd" or "cycling" into the search box in the sidebar at <https://hestanbrough.com/>.

- [The Difference Between Rewriting and Cycling](#)
- [A Little More on Cycling](#)

I'm finally starting to write again, little by little, which is to say I'm finally beginning to work out my new routine. Today I plan to finish at least two of the stories below in Numbers.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Dispatches From A Writers Conference" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/07/dispatches-from-a-writers-conference.html>.

See "Reminder" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/reminder/>.

See "Welcome Back" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/welcome-back/>.

See "Worldcoin Launches" at <https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2023/07/ready-for-your-eye-scan-worldcoin-launches-but-not-quite-worldwide/>. This includes a "proof-of-personhood system called WorldID." Ideas abound. SF and maybe end-times religious writers, go crazy.

See "Sharks on crack..." at <https://interestingengineering.com/science/sharks-on-crack-research>. I am not making this up.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 580

Writing of “Pretend Writer”

Day 1..... 2322 words. Total words to date..... 2322

Writing of “Untitled Stern Talbot Mystery”

Day 1..... 190 words. Total words to date..... 190

Writing of “Marvin McTavish Decides”

Day 1..... 326 words. Total words to date..... 326

Day 2..... 346 words. Total words to date..... 672

Writing of “A Midnight Sketch”

Day 1..... 1341 words. Total words to date..... 1341

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283

Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246

Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709

Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for July..... 4525

Total fiction words for 2023..... 143100

Total nonfiction words for July... 14130

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 145680

Total words for the year (fiction and nonfiction)..... 260227

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221

Short story collections..... 31

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The Sequence (Guest Post)

July 27, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * The Sequence (Guest Post)
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

The following is a guest post by [Dan Baldwin](#), copied from his weekly blog. The post is presented exactly as it appeared in my email. If you enjoy Dan's thoughts on writing, I strongly urge you to subscribe. To do so, email him at baldco@msn.com.

The Sequence

Screenplay writers often use the sequence technique in the mid portion of their work. The sequence involves a lot of shots of different people in different locations doing different things all related to the central theme. Once in editing, the sequence gets a fast-pace music bed to help move things along even faster. Think of any *Rocky* movie. Somewhere in the middle, Rocky is hesitating to get into or get back into the ring. Something happens – Adrienne from her hospital bed looks up and says “win” – and wham-bam-straight to the moon, Alice, Rocky is off and running.

The sequence not only solves the mid-section blahs some authors experience, but it covers a lot of events, compressing time into a manageable timeframe for the audience.

Novelists can employ the same technique to achieve the same results. I used the technique in one of my Western novels to compress several years of events into the size of a short story. The adventures covered would have made interesting reading, but I believe would also have slowed down the pace of the book. (That material will probably surface as a complete novel someday.) Yet, for the story to advance, reference had to be made to those “lost years” of my protagonist. Enter the sequence to the rescue.

The technique is an effective way to tell a short story, too. And it's really a lot of fun to write. Here's an example pulled from my collection *Princess Dodu and the Great Escape* in which I use the sequence technique to tell a single story from multiple perspectives.

The File on Johnny Ringo

Memo

TO: Sheriff Bodie

FROM: Deputy Stroud

RE: John "Johnny" Ringo File

I have reviewed the original reports, contemporaneous accounts, articles, stories and other materials (some of dubious value) relating to the John "Johnny" Ringo file. It is my opinion that the "cold case" should be reclassified from suicide to undetermined. A sampling of the materials I have studied is attached for your review. Note that some of the material is at best ludicrous while other materials are of legitimate value. Samples of each are included simply to demonstrate the kind of crap you have put me through.

L.E. Stroud

(You owe me more than one beer.)

###

Knowing that God and right were on my side, I called out the miscreant Ringo. My voice thundered with righteous wrath. "Coward! If you dare, face a man face-to-face, a man who fears neither you nor death, but only dishonor. Come forth!"

The Ringo Kid hid behind the boulder that would soon become his bloodied tombstone. Shaking, he bit his leathered lower lip. His hand, slippery with drops of fear, clasp the weapon that had lead-bludgeoned the life of many a good man.

I shouted again. "Justice is calling your name. It shouts 'coward!'"

At that moment the Kid jumped from behind his granite sanctuary, guns blazing. I fired but once. The bullet, guided by God's grace and a good aim, found its home in the man's breast where no Christian heart ever beat, for the man was truly heartless.

"Is he dead," someone asked.

"Yes, for I have killed him."

"You killed the Ringo Kid!"

"Yes, I have killed the Ringo Kid."

"Ringo dead."

"Yes, dead is Ringo."

Note to Sheriff Bodie: this is what I mean by "crap."

###

“I had stopped off at the Smith place to pass a few moments with old friends. We were enjoying coffee and cigars when we heard the shot. We didn’t think nothing of it at the time. The occasional shot along Turkey Creek is fairly common – hunters mostly, drunks sometimes. I spent the night and sometime after sunrise we noticed John Ringo... turned out it was his body... against a tree. We ran over and I could tell right away that something was way the hell wrong. First thing was his head and the way his....”

(From the Diary of J.W. Armstrong – the page is torn away at this point and no relevant information was recorded in the following pages.)

###

Turkey or Morse’s Hill Creek
14th July, 1882

Statement for the information of the Coroner and Sheriff of Cochise Co. A.T.

There was found by the undersigned John Yoast the body of a man in a clump of Oak trees about 20 yards north from the road leading to Morse’s mill and about a quarter of a mile west of the house of B.F. Smith The undersigned viewed the body and found it in a sitting posture, facing west, the head inclined to the right—There was a bullet hole in the right temple, the bullet coming out on top of the head on the left side. There is apparently a part of the scalp done including a small portion of the forehead and part of the hair, this looks as if cut out by a knife. (These are the only marks of violence visible on the body. Several of the undersigned identify the body as that of John Ringo, well known in Tombstone. He was dressed in light hat, blue shirt, vest, pants and drawers, on his feet were a pair of hose and undershirt torn up so as to protect his feet. He had evidently travelled but a short distance in this foot gear. His revolver he grasped in his right hand, his rifle rested against the tree close to him. He had on two cartridge belts, the belt for the revolver cartridges being buckled on the upside down....

The body of the deceased was buried close to where it was found. When found deceased had been dead about 24 hours.

Thomas White	James Morgan
John Blake	Robert Boller
John W. Bradfield	Frank McKinney
B.F. Smith	W. J. Darnal
W.W. Smith	J.C. McGrager
A.E. Lewis	John Yoast
A.S. Neighbors	Fred Ward

“ENDORSED”

Statement by citizens in regard the death of

John Ringo

Filed Nov. 12/82

1. H. Seamans, Clk.

By Louis A. Souc, Depy.

(Coroner's Report)

###

The somewhat contradictory reports on the demise of one Johnny Ringo leave us with a mystery. The suicide theory is backed by eyewitnesses who report that the man had become despondent in 1882, perhaps because of a rejection by his family when he paid them a visit in San Jose. Other witnesses report that his drinking, significant to say the least, had increased and that he was barely conscious due to heavy drink when seen the evening of his death. Others speculate murder. (Live History Online podcast, July 14, 2010)

###

“The Earps did it, I tell you.”

“Hell, no, Sam. I was Johnny Behind the Duce. He hated Ringo.”

“My money's on Leslie.”

(Conversation recorded for History TV's documentary *Old Timers of Tombstone*)

###

RINGO MASSACRED... REQUEST ARREST AND HOLD OF EARP AND HALLIDAY.
RESPOND IMMEDIATELY. SHERIFF, COCHISE COUNTY, A.T.

(Telegram found in possession of Mrs. Mildred Hyde of Bisbee, AZ. The document is disputed as a fake.)

###

DEATH OF JOHN RINGO

His Body Found in Morse' Canyon

Sunday evening intelligence reached this city of the finding of the dead body of John Ringo near the south of Morse's Canyon in the Chiracahua Mountains on Friday afternoon. There was few men in Cochise country, or southeastern Arizona better known. He was recognized by friends and foes as a recklessly brave man, who would go any distance or undergo any hardship to serve a friend or punish an enemy. While undoubtedly reckless, he was far from being a desperado, and we know of no murder being laid in his charge. Friends and foes are unanimous in the opinion that he was strictly honorable man in all his dealings, and that his word was as good as his bond.

(The Tombstone Epitaph, July, 1882)

###

The manner of Ringo's demise remains something of a mystery. He seems to have become despondent in 1882, perhaps because his family had treated him coldly when he had earlier visited them in San Jose. Witnesses reported that he began drinking even more heavily than usual. On this day in 1882, he was found dead in Turkey Creek Canyon outside of Tombstone. It looked as if Ringo had shot himself in the head and the official ruling was that he had committed suicide.

(*Johnny's Last Ride* by J.T. Spaulding, unpublished article)

###

RINGO DEAD

Murderous Career At An End At Last

Report from Our Special Correspondent

(Headline, *The Bisbee Bee*, July, 1882)

###

RINGO DEAD

Another Bright Light snuffed Out

Community Mourns Grave Loss of Leading Citizen

(Headline, *The Bisbee Banner*, July, 1882)

###

Sheriff Bodie – Perhaps the most cogent account of what could have happened and what probably did happen is found in this ASU Recording Our History program, taped sometime back

in the forties. The subject of the interview, Dwight Hullbertson, was a colorful local history buff who actually met Ringo when he – Hullbertson – was a kid. I transcribed a bit of it.

INTERVIEWER: What was meeting Johnny Ringo like?

HULLBERTSON: First off, sonny boy, didn't nobody call him "Johnny." At least not to his face. He hated that name.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think Wyatt Earp killed Ringo?

HULLBERTSON: Hell no. Can I say that?"

INTERVIEWER: It's your interview, Mr. Hullbertson.

HULLBERTSON: Wyatt and that Holliday friend of his were in Colorado when they got Ringo. It's documented. And John O'Roarke, Johnny-Behind-The-Duce they called, didn't do it either. He left Arizona a year 'for the shooting.

INTERVIEWER: You said "they" got Ringo. Who do you mean?

HULLBERTSON: Who the hell do you think! Old Buckskin Frank Leslie and Billy Claiborne... they're the ones who killed Ringo. Hell, everybody knew it. Especially after Frank dropped the Kid. That was right outside the Oriental. I was coming out of the Grand Hotel where I had a little job helping clean—

INTERVIEWER: Back to the Ringo killing. You're sure about Leslie and Claiborne?

HULLBERTSON: You know what Billy Claiborne's last words were, sonny?

INTERVIEWER: No, sir.

HULLBERTSON: He said, and I know it for a fact, he said "Frank Leslie killed John Ringo. I saw him do it." That's his exact words. If I'm lying I'm dying."

###

...Frank Leslie was to go with us and may yet, if he is not detained in killing matter of this morning, and he ought not to be. He shot and killed the notorious Kid Claiborne this A.M. at 7:30, making as pretty a center shot on the Kid as one could wish to.

The Kid threatened and laid for him near the Oriental with a Winchester, but Frank got the drop on him, being quick as lightning and used to killing men, and the Kid has gone to Hell."

(From the Diary of George Whitwill Parsons)

###

The most telling to me, Sheriff, and the one bit of information we can never use in a court of law comes from a couple of psychics – don't snarl – over in Huachuca City. They say they "chat" with Ringo at the grave site and have even recorded his voice. It's something they call EVPs or electronic voice phenomena. I include it just because it's interesting and in a way it kinda' give John Ringo the last word on all this. Their names are Don and Rolanda. And I swear, boss, that voice on the tape is not either one of them.

###

DON: Session Two. Ten-Fourteen a.m. Rolanda and I have moved to the John Ringo actual gravesite.

(Some material deleted here, Sheriff)

ROLANDA: Do you know who shot you, John?

EVP: (very faint but audible) Yes.

DON: Was it Leslie? Buckskin Frank Leslie?

Did you hear anything?

ROLANDA: No. Not a thing.

DON: Was it Billy Claiborne?

ROLANDA: Nothing.

DON: I don't think he wants to talk to us now.

ROLANDA: I'm picking up that he just wants to be left alone.

DON: Yeah. I get that.

ROLANDA: There's a lot of controversy about how you died, John... Mr. Ringo. Is there anything, anything at all you'd like to say before we go, John? Mr. Ringo?

EVP: F*** it!

Don: Er... maybe it's time we left.

End

#

This sequence involved some factual data pulled from newspapers published at the time mixed with my own fictitious accounts. FYI just for the kicks of it, the final episode in the sequence is based on a couple of real events. Ringo is covered in one of my paranormal books, [*Speaking with Spirits of the Old Southwest*](#).

Thanks for letting me reprint this, Dan.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “The Director General invites you to examine” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-director-general-invites-you-to-examine/>. Nothing short of chilling.

See “The Peril and Promise of Writing in First-Person POV” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-peril-and-promise-of-writing-in-first-person-pov/>. A reminder that if you write into the dark you will never bore the reader regardless of POV.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 120

Writing of “Pretend Writer”

Day 1..... 2322 words. Total words to date..... 2322

Writing of “Untitled Stern Talbot Mystery”

Day 1..... 190 words. Total words to date..... 190

Writing of “Marvin McTavish Decides”

Day 1..... 326 words. Total words to date..... 326

Day 2..... 346 words. Total words to date..... 672

Writing of “A Midnight Sketch”

Day 1..... 1341 words. Total words to date..... 1341

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283

Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246

Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709

Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for July.....	4525
Total fiction words for 2023.....	143100
Total nonfiction words for July...	14250
Total nonfiction words for the year.....	145800
Total words for the year (fiction and nonfiction).....	260347
Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date.....	2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date.....	4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	221
Short story collections.....	31

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Suffering for Your Art? Poor Baby

July 28, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Suffering for Your Art? Poor Baby
- * Grief, and Casting About
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“I’m going to go do this crazy thing. I’m going to start this company selling books online.” Jeff Bezos

Suffering for Your Art? Poor Baby

At The Passive Voice this morning I found this article: [“You Don’t Need to Suffer to Make Art—But It Can Help.”](#)

Folks, let me tell you something. All those writers out there who are “suffering” for their “art” are self-absorbed snots, and they wouldn’t know a unique, original story if it slipped up the back of their leg and bit them on the bum.

Here’s the comment I left on the article:

“Those who proclaim they ‘suffer’ for their art are either self-absorbed or too stupid to stop doing something that causes them mental, emotional or physical distress. What they’re promoting isn’t art, it’s artifice. It isn’t about suffering. It’s about making sure others are *aware* they’re suffering.

“The OP reminds me of every self-important author, forearm laid wistfully across forehead, who during a book launch says something like, ‘Oh, writing fiction is *such* terrible drudgery, but I have the calling, and so I suffer for my art’.

“Pure, still-steaming mushroom fodder.”

Or as one of my characters said in my mind as I read the article, “Whatta load’a crap.”

Don’t buy into it, folks. Don’t be self-absorbed. I suggest you don’t even see yourself as an “author.” Too haughty.

A writer is one who writes. An author is one who has written. Why would anyone want to place any importance at all on “having-written”? That’s like putting more importance on “having-lived” than on living.

Me? At the best of times, I’m only a writer and a storyteller.

I’m a person who is fortunate enough to serve as the conduit for my characters’ stories, nothing more. I have no idea where the characters came from, and I don’t know what will happen in any story in advance.

The story unfolds (and I write it down) as the characters and I run through it together. What could be more spontaneous and fun than that? More importantly, why in the world would anyone want to rob himself or herself of that exhilarating experience?

What must that thought process be? Well, you read my opinion in the comment I left on the OP.

I do feel sorry for those poor “authors,” but not because they’re forcing themselves to slog through the terrible drudgery of writing fiction. I feel sorry for them because they’ll probably spend their entire life succumbing to fear that has absolutely no basis in reality and zero consequences.

Still, to each his or her own.

You do you.

Grief, and Casting About

Okay, a personal update from my camp to yours—

Believe it or not, I’m still in mourning.

I know. I wouldn't have imagined the grief would have held on this long or to this depth either.

After all, April 11 happened almost four months ago. And to be completely honest, I haven't mourned half that long for any of the two-legs I've lost during my 70 years.

Anyway, the episodes of longing and anguish are waning in frequency if not in depth. I felt snapped in two last night for a little over a half-hour, but it's been days since the previous time.

I am of two minds, of course. I want the episodes to stop, but I never want them to stop. And either way, I never want to forget my little girl.

Anyway, enough of that boring stuff.

I really am aware that we all have problems and matters we have to deal with, whether physical, mental, or emotional. So thanks for letting me wonder aloud for a few moments what (the hell) is going on within myself.

On the other side of my life—the side that's available to me when I'm focused enough on other things to keep my thoughts from settling on the absence of that little angel—I'm still doing double duty:

- I'm still attempting to gentle myself into a new routine that will include at least 4 hours per day of fiction writing, and
- I'm casting about for a story or a set of characters who will pull me into their world and keep me there for the duration.

Auditions are ongoing at least once or twice per day in the form of either revisiting one of the story openings or partial openings I've written recently, or quickly scribbling down a new opening from a character or line of dialogue or situation that pops into my head from nowhere.

Even that little bit of writing is a great deal of fun and a considerable relief from the other side. I hope to be back to my version of normal sooner rather than later, of course, but it will be what it will be.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "The psychopathic path to success" at <https://knowablemagazine.org/article/mind/2023/psychopathic-path-to-success>. Goes to characterization, your honor.

See "Niche Marketing Part One" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/niche-marketing-part-one-2/>.

See "What to do when you're bored of everything" at [https://mattpmn.substack\[dot\]com/p/what-to-do-when-youre-bored-of-everything](https://mattpmn.substack[dot]com/p/what-to-do-when-youre-bored-of-everything).

The Numbers

The Journal..... 860

Writing of “Pretend Writer”

Day 1..... 2322 words. Total words to date..... 2322

Writing of “Untitled Stern Talbot Mystery”

Day 1..... 190 words. Total words to date..... 190

Writing of “Marvin McTavish Decides”

Day 1..... 326 words. Total words to date..... 326

Day 2..... 346 words. Total words to date..... 672

Writing of “A Midnight Sketch”

Day 1..... 1341 words. Total words to date..... 1341

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283

Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246

Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709

Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for July..... 4525

Total fiction words for 2023..... 143100

Total nonfiction words for July... 15110

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 146660

Total words for the year (fiction and nonfiction)..... 261207

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221

Short story collections..... 31

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Personas vs. Pen Names

July 29, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Personas vs. Pen Names
- * A New Story
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“If I can’t muster up the enthusiasm to care about my topic, I can bet you won’t.” Matt Perryman

“The ideas, philosophies, methods, techniques, tips, tactics, and perspectives I’m digging up will be of interest and value to anyone who writes, creates, or has any need to focus the mind on sustained creative work.” Matt Perryman

I’m personally very much looking forward to the new direction Matt is taking Meaningful Particulars. I urge you to visit <https://mattpmn.substack.com/> and look around for a subscribe button.

Personas vs. Pen Names

It’s been awhile since I talked about this, and I’ve had a new thought on it anyway, so here goes:

A pen name (pseudonym) is simply a fake name, a name you use to hide your identity, or at least to put an extra layer or two between the real you and the reader. Mark Twain was a pen name.

Such is the psyche of the reading public that Samuel Clemens was seldom or never harrassed or given much grief for some of the sweeping societal changes he advocated and/or illustrated in ***Tom Sawyer*** and ***Huckleberry Finn***. Most of the resulting fallout was directed to Mark Twain.

So that’s one good reason to have a pen name: relative anonymity. I say “relative” anonymity because thanks to the internet and now AI, no level of anonymity is complete these days.

Back in the golden age of pulp fiction, many prominent pulp writers wrote under as many as a dozen or more pen names. That was primarily because they wrote “too fast” (um, that means they put time in the chair because they had an actual work ethic, duh) and turned out far too much work far too quickly for any magazine publisher to take them on.

But those writers had a good grounding in grammar, punctuation and syntax (public schools were not simply money sumps and socialism training grounds), and they trusted themselves and

what they knew. They also wrote for money, not because they thought writing fiction was some hoity-toity elevated calling.

Ego and name recognition didn't enter into it. So to keep from saturating a particular market with sheer volume from one name, they invented other names, and readers were none the wiser. As it should be.

Many writers used a different pen name for each genre they wrote in. So they might have one name for science fiction, another for mystery, another for psychological suspense (today's ticking-bomb "thriller"), and so on.

Things have changed.

Today, in favor of discoverability, modern pulp writers—and again, by that I mean fiction writers who have an actual work ethic—are advised by professionals like Dean Wesley Smith to publish everything under their own name.

Owing largely to that advice, I myself have published western, SF, thriller, action-adventure, mystery, crime and magic realism short stories and novels and series under my own name.

But at one time, I wrote under my own name as well as one of four personas and I also used those as pen names. Here's the difference:

The persona is the originator of the actual story itself. Writing as a particular persona enabled me to write in a way that I could never write as myself. It enabled me to put on a different authorial voice.

When I wrote as a persona, I came to the keyboard with different strengths and weaknesses, a different history, level of education and experience, and different benefits and baggage.

By comparison, the pen name is nothing more than the name on the cover.

The persona is an actual personality. Each of my personas has a promo photo and a brief bio, both of which both spring from and inform his or her (yes, I had one female persona) personality. If you read the stories associated with my personas, you will "hear" a different tone, a different voice.

By way of intermission, I thought I would invite you to explore my personas. To do so, click a name below. The link will take you to a photo, a bio, and a short story written by that persona:

[Gervasio Arrancado](#)—Gervasio is the only persona whose name I still also use as a pseudonym. A little more on that later.

[Eric Stringer](#)—Eric is just Eric. Read about him. You won't regret it. Probably. Oh, Eric also wrote the somewhat biographical novel [*Confessions of a Professional Psychopath*](#), although later I changed the cover and slapped my name on it. (Sorry, Eric.)

[Nicolas Z Porter](#)—Nick Porter is deceased, as recorded in the short story “Death of a Persona.” We all believe Eric did him in.

[MJ François](#)—Because MJ’s stories are mildly erotic (by today’s standards), I didn’t post a story on her bio page. I also almost didn’t mention her, but she’s part of this story, so....

Back when I was writing under those personas all the time, I was also publishing under their names. You can still find stories online individually and in collections by Eric Stringer, Gervasio Arrancado, Nicolas Z Porter, and MJ François.

Gervasio also co-authored [South to Mexico](#), the sixth volume (chronologically) in the original Wes Crowley saga. And to be honest, he wrote 90%+ of [Keeper of the Promise](#) though his name doesn’t appear on the cover. That’s about the time I was worrying about putting all “my” stuff (and theirs) under my own name.

As you might have guessed from the tone of this post, that is no longer the case.

Now, if you only turn out a novel every few years or even every six months or if you’re writing in only one genre and/or one series, sure, it’s probably a really good idea to publish everything under your own name for discoverability. In fact, I’ll join Dean in recommending that you do just that.

Note: If I had turned out only two novels per year since I started writing the first one, I would have written 16 novels now instead of 73. But if you’re turning out six or more novels per year or one or more short stories every week and especially if you’re writing in more than one genre, then I say do what feels right.

Despite my current personal situation, I fully expect to get back (soon) to writing well over 100,000 words of publishable fiction per month. I fully expect to turn out at least one novel per month. If at all possible, I’ll get back to writing two per month.

And in light of the fact that my whole routine is undergoing a major overhaul anyway, I’ve decided to bring my personas out of retirement. Maybe not Nick Porter—he was basically me from day one anyway, and besides, he’s dead—but definitely Gervasio and Eric. Those two are pretty much polar opposites. Not allowing them to explore future possibilities would be a serious mistake. I suspect they will help me get back on pace.

Gervasio is the only persona/pen name I’ve never officially shut down. He will write any future magic realism stories (of any length) that we access through my creative subconscious.

I did sort of shut down Eric Stringer. I took over writing the stuff he came up with and that he would have originally written. But as odd as this might sound, I didn’t do as good a job at it as Eric did, and neither did I write as much as Eric did in his heyday and would have if I’d kept him around.

I won't hide behind my personas. My own name will appear in the front or back matter of every book even if it isn't on the cover, just as my name appears in my personas' bios. I won't have a problem with Gervasio—he doesn't really care either way—but Eric can be a stickler for such things. And of course I'll still write under my own name too.

So really, I just wanted to let you know that doing things like this—writing under a pen name or assuming a completely different personality to give yourself “permission” to write what you might not have written otherwise or to write it in a way than you would not have otherwise written it—is perfectly legitimate.

And just to spread a little butter and jelly on your toast, I'm gonna do it first. Again. (grin) I hope some of you will try this. It really is incredible to write under a completely different personality than the one you most often allow others to see. Try it. You'll like it.

Oh, and just in case you're wondering, MJ won't be back. She didn't want to write stories anymore when she can better spend her time living her life. She moved to a small island in the Carribean where she occasionally hangs out with Jimmy Buffet and other like-minded souls. Bless her heart.

A New Story

Oh, and another of Eric Stringer's stories, “The Reverse Lizard Move,” came out yesterday. You can see it (and subscribe, free) at [https://stanbroughwrites.substack\[dot\]com/p/the-reverse-lizard-move](https://stanbroughwrites.substack[dot]com/p/the-reverse-lizard-move). I always thought TRLM was among Eric's better stories. Enjoy.

Oh, and if you're in the Bradbury Challenge or want to be, remember to get your story title, word count and genre in to me before the Journal goes live on Monday.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Two Mentor Spots Open” at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/two-mentor-spots-open/>. Probably a good opportunity for some.

See “The Wrath of Goodreads” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-wrath-of-goodreads/>. It shouldn't be this way, but that's just how petty and controlling some people are.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1610

Writing of “Pretend Writer”

Day 1..... 2322 words. Total words to date..... 2322

Writing of “Untitled Stern Talbot Mystery”

Day 1..... 190 words. Total words to date..... 190

Writing of “Marvin McTavish Decides”

Day 1..... 326 words. Total words to date..... 326

Day 2..... 346 words. Total words to date..... 672

Writing of “A Midnight Sketch”

Day 1..... 1341 words. Total words to date..... 1341

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283

Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246

Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709

Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date..... 12154

Total fiction words for July..... 4525

Total fiction words for 2023..... 143100

Total nonfiction words for July... 16720

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 148270

Total words for the year (fiction and nonfiction)..... 262817

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221

Short story collections..... 31

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Bradbury Challenge and Goals

July 31, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

* Quotes of the Day

* End of July and Goals

- * Bradbury Challenge
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Optimism is a perfectly legitimate response to failure.” Stephen King

“Sometimes you have to go on when you don’t feel like it, and sometimes you’re doing good work when it feels like all you’re managing is to shovel sh*t from a sitting position.” Stephen King

“Amateurs sit and wait for inspiration, the rest of us just get up and go to work.” Stephen King

These quotes were part of my response to a post titled “Running and Writing and Competition.” See “Of Interest.”

End of July and Goals

Today is the last day of the month. It’s difficult for me to believe I’ve written so little this month, or for the past few months. Or for the past two years, really. More on that later.

I’m using August 1 as a firm restart date. Today will be a dry run and a prep day. Beginning tomorrow morning, I’ll sit in the Hovel at the keyboard of my writing ‘puter (with a brief break every hour) for at least four hours. I’ll either write or I’ll just sit there. No email, no games.

If a topic I deem important occurs to me for the Journal, I might write that, but otherwise it will be all fiction.

My daily word count goal will remain, or rather resume at, 3000 words per day. That won’t be easy for me because I let myself get out of the habit. So it will be difficult at first, but over time it will become easier. If I can’t write 3000 words of fiction in a day, I might as well retire and go fishing.

That’s 90,000 words per month. And I’m not going to guide the words or fret over where they’re going. They will go wherever they’re required, to write or finish vignettes or short stories, novellas or novels.

I don’t care what format the words go into, only that I produce them. Why? Because if I’m going to be a fiction writer again, what’s important is THAT I write, not WHAT I write. If you don’t understand that yet, keep working on it. You will. And it’s essential.

Also, that monthly goal of 90,000 words per month is For Now. A day or two ago I said I want to get back to my standard of writing over 100,000 words per month. That requires an average daily output of 3,333 words of publishable fiction. I can’t touch that yet. But I will.

Even at my lowest acceptable (for me) word count goal, that's at least 90,000 words per month for the rest of the year. That will be 450,000 additional new words of fiction by December 31.

To illustrate how far I've fallen, in the first seven months of this year, I wrote only 110,000 words, an overall average of 15,714 words per month, or about 524 words per day on average.

Yes, I didn't write at all for a lot of those days, but that doesn't matter. What matters are the averages.

For example, my total fiction for all of 2022 was only 284,661 (around 780 words per day on average). Ridiculous.

My total fiction for the first 7 months of 2021 was 616,349 (88,050 words per month or 2935 per day), BUT my total fiction production for the last five months of 2021 was only 20,400 words. That's 4080 words per month or 136 words per day.

I hope you can take something from the above that will motivate you or serve as a warning or otherwise help in your setting goals and accomplishing them.

Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting

Most of those who have joined in this challenge have written tens of thousands more words than they might have otherwise. You can still join in the challenge at any time. And if you're a fiction writer, why not?

There's no cost, and the challenge is a great way to increase your inventory and jumpstart your writing. Chances are you'll have more fun than you've had in a long time. The challenge is also a great way to get more practice pushing down the critical voice.

Plus, if you see yourself as a short story writer, what is the down side to engaging in this challenge? It isn't like I'm asking you to write a novel. Just write a stupid story, then publish it, then write another one. And dare to show off, letting others know what you're doing.

Anyway, during the past week, in addition to whatever other fiction they're writing, the following writers reported their progress:

- Erin Donoho "Committed Friends" 2000 words Historical Fiction
- Balázs Jámor "Life Reasercher" 2500 words Psychological
- George Kordonis "Little Things" 3485 words Supernatural Horror
- Alexander Nakul "Little She-Wolf, Thunderstorm and Layer Cake" 1473 words Erotic Fantasy
- Chynna Pace "Footprints in the Snow" 1987 words Fantasy
- Christopher Ridge "The Meatball Machine" 2000 words Crime
- K.C. Riggs "Believe Your Eyes" 4477 words Paranormal

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Decide Where You’re Standing in Time as You Write Your Memoir” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/decide-where-youre-standing-in-time-as-you-write-your-memoir/>. Be sure to see PG’s take.

See “Running and Writing and Competition” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/07/running-and-writing-and-competition.html>. Too silly for words.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 830

Writing of “Pretend Writer”

Day 1..... 2322 words. Total words to date..... 2322

Writing of “Untitled Stern Talbot Mystery”

Day 1..... 190 words. Total words to date..... 190

Writing of “Marvin McTavish Decides”

Day 1..... 326 words. Total words to date..... 326

Day 2..... 346 words. Total words to date..... 672

Writing of “A Midnight Sketch”

Day 1..... 1341 words. Total words to date..... 1341

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283

Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246

Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709

Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date..... 12154

Total fiction words for July..... 4525

Total fiction words for 2023..... 143100

Total nonfiction words for July... 18350

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 149900

Total words for the year (fiction and nonfiction)..... 264447

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	221
Short story collections.....	31

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Day Zero, Day One

August 1, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Day Zero
- * Day One
- * Not a Daily Report
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“The most difficult thing is the decision to act. The rest is merely tenacity.” Amelia Earhart

Thanks to Sam T for the quote of the day.

Day Zero

On July 31, after morning chores and breakfast, I got out to the Hovel before 7:30. That boded well for my practice day. I wasn't rushed at all.

I didn't do any writing, but I read over the current novel to find where it went bad. As part of the mess I was in, I let finishing the novel become important. I needed to finish it so I could get back to writing.

That caused me to force part of the story, which of course took me off the course of the authentic story. It spoiled everything after that and the story ground to a cold, dry halt. As I've said many times, what matters is THAT a writer writes, not WHAT s/he writes.

Honestly, with what I was going through, I didn't care that I couldn't write. I had to wait until I was ready.

So I'll re-read the last few chapters of the previous novel to get the situation back in my head. Then I'll probably toss out 6000 to 8000 words of the current novel. Then when the characters are ready, we'll dive back in and I'll finish the novel.

In the meantime, I have other stories to finish. That's what I'll work on today. We also have a scheduled trip to Sierra Vista later this morning, so when I woke early I took the opportunity to get out to the Hovel by 2:15. I'd forgotten how beautiful the predawn morning sky is out here.

I admit I thought yesterday about pushing my start date by one more day, but that's silly. Making excuses only makes it easier to make excuses. If you want something badly enough, you stop putting it off and find a way to just do it.

I wrote this little intro to get today's Journal entry going. It's almost 3, so I'm going to read my recent story starts, pick one that appeals to me, and finish it.

Day One

I looked around a bit in my files and found two other novel starts I'd forgotten about—both crime-thrillers, one of them in an established series—in addition to the new Stern Talbot mystery I started awhile back. But I didn't work on any novels today.

I did finish two short stories: "Pretend Writer" by me and "Marvin McTavish Decides" by my persona Eric Stringer.

At a little over 2500 words I fell a little short on word count, but I halfway expected I would. It will be hard to get there at least consistently while I'm feeling my way around and getting used to spending time in the chair again, so not a big deal.

Not a Daily Report

Don't worry. I won't turn the Journal into a day by day report of my comeback. Besides, that will be covered in the numbers below.

But I think I might hold off on posting the Journal until later in the day, as I did with today's edition. I hope it isn't too inconvenient for you, if at all.

The result will be that you'll receive the Journal a few hours later than you're used to, but the numbers section will be current instead of being a day behind. And of course, once I report a story finished, it will drop off the numbers report the following day.

I've noticed too that very few of you are clicking links that I include in "Of Interest." I'll keep it going for now for the few who seem to enjoy it. Even if I eventually get rid of it I would still insert links occasionally to items and articles that complement the current issue of the Journal.

Correction

For anyone who follows the numbers, yesterday somehow I reported my total fiction for teh year at 143100 words. That was not correct. I probably glanced at the wrong column. The correct number is shown below.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Why We Built an Artistic Cooperative” at <https://pulppipepoetry.substack.com/p/why-we-built-an-artistic-cooperative>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 710

Writing of “Pretend Writer”

Day 1..... 2322 words. Total words to date..... 2322

Day 2..... 0540 words. Total words to date..... 2862 done

Writing of “Marvin McTavish Decides”

Day 1..... 0326 words. Total words to date..... 0326

Day 2..... 0346 words. Total words to date..... 0672

Day 3..... 1997 words. Total words to date..... 2669 done

Writing of “A Midnight Sketch”

Day 1..... 1341 words. Total words to date..... 1341

Writing of “Untitled Stern Talbot Mystery”

Day 1..... 190 words. Total words to date..... 190

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283

Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246

Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709

Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for August..... 2537

Total fiction words for 2023..... 117084

Total nonfiction words for August... 710
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 150610
Total words for the year (fiction and nonfiction)..... 267694

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221
Short story collections..... 31

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The Days, WMG, and Publishing Stuff

August 3, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Day Two
- * If You Enjoy WMG Workshops
- * Day Three
- * Publishing Stuff
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“When the uncreative tell the creative what to do, it stops being art.” Tony Bennet

“I know writers who write with fear and thus write dull and writers who have managed to get past the fear and write amazing stuff.” Dean Wesley Smith

Day Two

Well, yesterday was such a mess right from the beginning that I finally gave up and marked it off as a loss. I won't bore you with details. It was just a continually frustrating, constantly annoying day. If I'd slept all day I wouldn't have missed anything.

I envy those who are able to relax and watch life go by, occasionally participating, often only observing, and sometimes not even noticing.

I've had an elevated sense of urgency since I was young. When a full day slouches past and I have nothing to show for it, I'm excruciatingly aware of the seconds ticking off, never to be reclaimed.

If You Enjoy WMG Workshops

you don't have much time. Then again, you probably visited Dean's site yesterday. If not, here's the scoop:

The current WMG Kickstarter ends at 7 p.m. on Thursday (so tonight) in case you want to check it out. I haven't looked at this one, but Dean usually offers a lot of neat-nifties for writers.

Day Three

I don't know what my "normal" schedule will look like by the time I'm fully back, but this morning I rolled out early again. I was in the Hovel before 3, then checked the internet and wrote this much of the Journal entry by 4.

As it turned out, I had an off and on day today. I ended up with just over 1800 words on the day, but I'll take it.

Publishing Stuff

I might have a new idea or two for you soon regarding an economical way to publish to paper. I'm looking into a new idea. Well, revisiting an old idea. I'll test it thoroughly to be sure it works before I share it with you.

For now my primary focus remains on getting back up to speed with my writing, but if this other thing works out it should be really exciting.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "How to Read a Book" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/08/how-to-read-a-book.html>. Yeah, I know. But this is actually a pretty good article.

See "Another Example (Niche Marketing Part 7)" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/another-example-niche-marketing-part-7/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 400

Writing of "A Midnight Sketch"

Day 1..... 1341 words. Total words to date..... 1341
Day 2..... 1823 words. Total words to date..... 3164

Writing of “Untitled Stern Talbot Mystery”

Day 1..... 190 words. Total words to date..... 190

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283
Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246
Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709
Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date..... 12154

Total fiction words for August..... 4360
Total fiction words for 2023..... 118907
Total nonfiction words for August... 1110
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 151010
Total words for the year (fiction and nonfiction)..... 269917

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221
Short story collections..... 31

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WMG Sale, Yesterday, Today

August 5, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Grand Opening Sale
- * Yesterday
- * Today
- * Reminder
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Any reviewer who expresses rage and loathing for a novel is preposterous. He or she is like a person who has put on full armor and attacked a hot fudge sundae.” Kurt Vonnegut

“[O]nly when we slow down, relax, and distract the busy chatter of the conscious ego—grounded in the left hemisphere—we experience the silence and space necessary for the right hemisphere to make itself known.” Matt Perryman

“[Rapid release of fiction is] just sitting your ass in a chair and writing new material every day. That’s all it takes.” Vin Zandri

The man knows what he’s talking about. H

Grand Opening Sale

Dean Wesley Smith is having a grand opening sale to celebrate his new Shopify store. The sale includes everything, including WMG workshops. Read all about it at these two links:

[https://deanwesleysmith\[dot\]com/grand-opening-sale/](https://deanwesleysmith[dot]com/grand-opening-sale/)

[https://deanwesleysmith\[dot\]com/questions-about-new-workshops-and-sale/](https://deanwesleysmith[dot]com/questions-about-new-workshops-and-sale/)

If you’d rather go straight to the sale, visit <https://pulphousemagazine.com/>.

Yesterday

I didn’t write much yesterday and didn’t even check my usual stops on the internet, but the “Midnight Sketch” story took an interesting turn when the secondary character took over as the primary character. Now it’s a race to the ending.

I feel like I’ll finish that one today. Then, unless “Sketch” runs longer than I expect it to, I’ll work on something else.

Today

Not that you can tell, but I haven’t quite gotten the hang of putting off writing the Journal until the end of the day. I wrote most of this early, and more during a break from fiction.

It still feels weird not to write and post the Journal first thing, then do everything else. But I still would rather publish same-day numbers, so I’ll try this way a bit longer.

As I hoped, I finished “The Substance of Shadows: A Midnight Sketch Story” (formerly “A Midnight Sketch”). I realized this is only the first of what might be many stories inspired by the

DeGrazia mixed-media picture titled “A midnight sketch 3AM Summer of 1972, Arizona, USA.”

Oddly enough, this story insisted on a slightly different process than my usual. It will be interesting to see whether other stories emanating from this picture require the same process.

Also (as often happens with my stories) the characters in this story hinted at some “off-stage” events and situations that interested me. This story might spur a novel to explore some of those events and situations.

Anyway, for now I’m moving on to something else. ‘Cause right now I’m just trying to get off the wall I slapped myself into two years ago.

Okay, as it turns out, I also wrote “Penance.” No idea where it came from. The numbers are below.

Since my official restart was on August 1, I’ve also decided to add another line to my cumulative numbers section. I’ll track my “Total fiction words since August 1” at least through the end of the year, and probably through July 31, 2024. Hey, a new year begins every day. (grin)

Oh, and listen—I always say this and nobody ever takes me up on it. If you would like to piggyback my personal challenge with one of your own, you’re more than welcome. Just set a daily word count goal (doesn’t have to mimic mine) and start.

Reminder

Bradbury Challenge participants, don’t forget to update me with your story titles, word counts and genres this week.

This format makes it easy for me to cut and paste (notice the lack of punctuation), but I’ll take it however you send it: Story Title xxxx words Genre

Thanks!

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “How you make writing hard on yourself (and what to do about it)” at [https://mattpmn.substack\[dot\]com/p/how-you-make-writing-hard-on-yourself](https://mattpmn.substack[dot]com/p/how-you-make-writing-hard-on-yourself). Extremely interesting post.

See “Making Your Books Stand Out” at [https://www.youtube\[dot\]com/watch?v=jeP9YSW15hI](https://www.youtube[dot]com/watch?v=jeP9YSW15hI). Of course, rapid release calls for actually spending time in the chair and writing a lot. (grin)

See “Friday Reader-Writer Connections” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/08/friday-reader-writer-connections.html>.

See “This Nazi-style megagun hopes to replace space rockets” at <https://interestingengineering.com/innovation/longshot-mega-gun-space-launch>. Despite the unfortunate title, this is an exciting prospect.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 630

Writing of “The Substance of Shadows: A Midnight Sketch Story”

Day 1..... 1341 words. Total words to date..... 1341
Day 2..... 1823 words. Total words to date..... 3164
Day 3..... 1084 words. Total words to date..... 4248
Day 4..... 1502 words. Total words to date..... 5750 done

Writing of “Penance” (short story)

Day 1..... 2147 words. Total words to date..... 2147 done

Writing of “Untitled Stern Talbot Mystery”

Day 1..... 190 words. Total words to date..... 190

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283
Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246
Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709
Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date..... 12154

Total fiction words for August..... 8009
Total fiction words for 2023..... 122556
Total nonfiction words for August... 1740
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 15160
Total fiction words since August 1..... 8009
Total words for the year (fiction and nonfiction)..... 274196

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark, adherence to Heinlein's Rules, and that following the myths of fiction writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

Free Writer Resources and More

August 6, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Free Writer Resources
- * Truly Free Stuff Has No Strings
- * The Writing
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Free Writer Resources

It's been quite a while since I mentioned this, so here it is, new for the folks who haven't been around the Journal very long, and a reminder for everyone else:

To explore a ton of free writer resources, visit my author site at HarveyStanbrough.com.

I suggest starting at **Writer Downloads** (<https://harveystanbrough.com/downloads/>) for some quick PDF freebies. Browse the list and download what you want. You can read it later. It's all free, most of it's fun, and some is enlightening.

At the next tab, **Writer Resources**, you will find hundreds of recommended listings for everything from reference and research sources (Conversion Tools, Dictionaries and translators, free stock images for covers, etc.) to advice from Helpful Organizations and Pro Writer Websites to specific topics, interviews, marketing and much, much more.

Everything on that page is also free except my audio lectures, which I offer for ridiculously low fees.

And most important of all for fiction writers who are serious about the craft, be sure to visit and download the Free Archives (in searchable PDF format) and the other free gifts at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives-gifts-dvds/>.

Truly Free Stuff Has No Strings

I only wish such freebies as those above had been available to me when I started out, either at the very beginning back in the 1960s or in 2014 when I started writing fiction in earnest.

I would have loved to have an archive of Dean Wesley Smith's posts back when he was posting regularly about writing, say 2014 to 2016 and earlier, instead of doing promotion. You can get a lot of info from him by buying his books or workshops, of course, but not free in downloadable, searchable archives.

Almost all of my own offerings are free, but please don't be stupid enough to equate "free" with a lack of quality or value.

There really are only two ways to write fiction:

- You can follow the herd and buy into the silly, unreasoning fears and the ridiculous, self-deprecating belief that you are incapable of writing so much as a quality short story all by yourself, or
- You can believe in yourself, learn new information to fill any gaps in your abilities or knowledge, and Just Write the Story.

In other words, you have choices:

- You can live in fear, or you can laugh at the fear-and-myth mongers and refuse to live in fear.
- You can make fiction writing drudgery and show everyone how very precious you are to have answered the "calling" to be a writer, or you can enjoy fiction writing as a fun release.
- You can write drab, boring stories in which the reader will know in advance what's about to happen all the way through (because if you can plan something, so can the reader), or you can write in your unique, original authorial voice—the very thing every publisher out there says they want. Ironic, isn't it? (grin)

If you want to stifle your original voice and sound exactly like everybody else, you can find the fear-based myths all over the internet and in literally hundreds of how-to books on writing. You can also take online courses, or even MFA programs in college.

They all teach generally the same thing: You the individual are not capable. You the individual cannot produce quality stories by yourself. Folks, that is unmitigated baloney.

Oddly, despite the glut of those books and courses on the market, they cover only about six topics: plotting, revising, soliciting critiques, rewriting, finding beta readers and/or editors, and polishing.

And the authors of those books and courses all copy each other, so they aren't even offering you an original OPINION. Think about that.

The people who sell those books will also charge you an arm and a leg to sell you exactly the same bullsh*t in courses and lectures and "developmental" edits or book-doctor services. Exactly the same hot, steamy mushroom fertilizer that all the others are selling.

By comparison, what I teach is a non-process, a Zen-like letting go. You don't need to plot or plan or outline. You don't need to revise, rewrite or polish. You DON'T need critical input from anyone, and best of all, it costs you NOTHING.

You don't even have to buy my books. Email me (harveystanbrough@gmail.com) and ask your questions. Or just download the Journal archives and read through them. Or download them and enter your search terms. The only way I can make it easier for you is to unscrew the top of your head and pour the stuff in, and that ain't gonna happen.

Just be positive and believe in yourself, that's all. All you're doing is telling a story. Nothing more earth-shattering than that. Trust me, you can do it.

Sit down and open a document, put your fingers on the keyboard, and write whatever comes. Trust your characters to convey through you the story that they, not you, are living.

Then spell check it, maybe let a trusted friend read over it for wrong words and other silly errors (no writing advice or "I would have done it this way" allowed), and then publish it and write the next story.

Along the way, learn. Read the work of big-deal writers you admire. Read for fun first. Then go back and study how they used all of the POV character's physical and emotional senses to pull you into the story.

Learn how to ground the reader and keep him in the story.

Learn how shorter and longer sentences and paragraphs affect the reader emotionally.

Learn pacing, for goodness' sake.

But above all, learn to trust yourself and your creative subconscious. Learn that you, all by yourself, are a capable entity.

Now, I am not altruistic. I simply like to pass along what I have learned and maybe help others cut their learning curve and shorten their journey to writing without unreasoning fear. Because why not?

Is my knowledge valuable?

To some folks it is, sure. I have a few patrons, and I've published a few how-to books. Absolutely none of my how-tos spout the same myths and BS that the hundreds of other how-to books spout. I even cut through all the unnecessary garbage in a thin volume called [*Punctuation for Writers \(2nd edition\)*](#). Yup. Even mechanics can be simplified and made easy to understand.

Yet thousands or even millions still rush out to buy Strunk & Whites flat-out regurgitation of the same rules of grammar and punctuation that can be found in literally ANY high school or college English textbook.

And get this: NOWHERE in Strunk & Whites or in ANY of those textbooks do the authors tell you, the writer, WHY and HOW punctuation works as it does. Wouldn't it be helpful to know that? Why do readers react to the various punctuation marks the way they do? How can you as a writer wield punctuation as a tool to direct the reading of your work?

They don't tell you any of that stuff, probably because they don't know it themselves. They're all just mimicking each other. They want you to memorize rules, nothing more.

Well, I'm not a robot. In *Punctuation for Writers (2nd edition)* I tell you all of that stuff, and even in that slim volume, there's also a refresher on grammar and syntax.

But Strunk & White's regurgitation is on almost every writer's shelf. Oh well. Shrug. Their loss.

I really hope you will download whatever you can get from my sites. It isn't the typical self-serving garbage you'll find all over the internet, and as I wrote above, almost all of it is free.

As I also wrote above, that's strictly because I want to help ease the learning curve for anyone who's serious about learning the craft of writing.

But hey, if you'd rather, feel free to give your friends that knowing wink and assume that because I'm trying to help and am not charging you an arm and a leg, either

- the information I'm passing along is worthless, or
- I'm trying to scam or con you (somehow, without charging you so much as a penny), or
- I'm trying to take advantage of you in some other way.

Your prerogative. It's still a free country (well, sort of), so if you think I'm trying to lead you astray, by all means go back to outlining, revising, rewriting, etc. And if it matters, go with my blessing.

Then, at the end of 2023 when I've added another 4 or 5 or 8 novels and who knows how many short stories to my totals—and all of that in my unique, original voice instead of planned, revised, rewritten, edited and “polished” to look like everything else in the slush pile—we'll compare notes and you can tell me how your “process” is working out for you.

The Writing

Wow. I checked my usual internet rounds and wrote a little on this Journal early, and when the sun came up I got out my new cordless electric mower and mowed probably 4/5ths of the yard.

Someone out on the highway hit a power pole so we lost electricity for about an hour. (It's always valuable to remember that everything other than food, water, and shelter is a luxury.)

When the electricity came back on I set up a new sprinkler in the back yard and turned it on, then ate a few grilled tortillas for breakfast.

A little later I mowed the rest of the yard, put the mower away, and finished this Journal entry except for the numbers stuff below. So it's all ready to go.

So I finally turned to the writing 'puter at around 11 a.m. I was thinking I might explore some of the stuff from the Midnight Sketch story I finished yesterday. Better to look at stuff like that while it's fresh in my mind, especially because some of it really intrigued me.

Whatever the case, I'll be writing whatever I write today for the purest possible reason: to find out what happens.

Actually, I changed my mind. I didn't feel like going into something I've already written or started, so I went back to my old formula for a story starter: character with a problem (not "the" problem of the story, just something to get the writing started) in a setting.

I picked Matthew Selim, a young, slender businessman. I was *going* to have him step out onto the front porch of his house to go to work and realize the lace of one of his shoes was untied. From there I was going to just write whatever came. Um, but—

His wife, Ariel, had other ideas. She took over right from the start, and when I stopped writing due to another obligation I had barely gotten out of the opening.

So we'll see what happens tomorrow. No pressure, just fun.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Character Type & Trope Thesaurus: Snob" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/character-type-trope-thesaurus-snob/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1830

Writing of "Penthouse Bound"

Day 1..... 1485 words. Total words to date..... 1485

Writing of "Untitled Stern Talbot Mystery"

Day 1..... 190 words. Total words to date..... 190

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283

Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246

Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709
Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for August..... 9494
Total fiction words for 2023..... 124041
Total nonfiction words for August... 3570
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 153470
Total fiction words since August 1..... 9494
Total words for the year (fiction and nonfiction)..... 277511

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221
Short story collections..... 31

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Topics for Discussion, and Bradbury Challenge

August 7, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Back to the Future
- * Topics for Discussion?
- * Bradbury Challenge
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“If in the first act you have hung a pistol on the wall, then in the following one it should be fired. Otherwise don't put it there.” Anton Chekhov

“A cyberattack on US hospitals and clinics disrupts their computer systems and emergency services, forcing them to use paper records and human intervention.” teaser for an article in Interesting Engineering (see “Of Interest”)

“Paper records and human intervention?” Wow. If one rude boot kicks the plug out of the wall, whatever will we do?

Back to the Future

As you can see, I decided to go back to posting the Journal in the morning. Old habits and all that. Plus once it's gone, I won't be tempted to mess with it all day. So starting today, my nonfiction numbers will be current but I'll report my fiction numbers one day late.

This is more timely too for me to get links out to you in "Of Interest." Time-sensitive ones don't pop up very often, but when they do I like to post them as early as possible.

Plus by the end of the day I'm too tired to much care whether I post an edition of the Journal. So I'll knock that out first thing and then get on with the writing. Like I did successfully for so many years. Duh.

Topics for Discussion?

Just a reminder, if any of you have any particular topics you would like me to discuss in the Journal, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com and let me know. Or if you have questions to ask, knock yourself out. Often when I receive a question it turns into a Journal topic. Of course, I won't use your name unless you specify that you want me to.

Yesterday a writer who just finished her first book (congrats!) said her editor suggested she print some ARCs (Advanced Review Copies) and sent them out to advanced readers. She asked my advice.

A few things—

An advanced reader is not the same thing as a first reader. For me, my first reader replaces what a copyeditor would do. He catches any wrong words, typos, and inconsistencies that pop out at him as he reads. And unlike a "beta reader" (always a bad idea), he never critiques or offers an opinion on how he would have written the story.

If you have a good copyeditor (punctuation, pacing, and other mechanics) you shouldn't need a first reader. If you're well versed in grammar, punctuation and syntax (basically, if you have a feel for the nuances of the language), you can get by with a first reader instead of a copyeditor.

ARCs—Back in the old days of traditional publishing, publishers sent out ARCs to select readers to garner advanced reviews. Those would not be first readers, just advanced readers, meaning they would read the book for the purpose of writing a review of it before the official publication or release date. The release date often coincided with book launches and all that.

But putting the thought in your mind that when you finish your novel it will go to advanced readers for reviews might make the novel "important" to you, and if it does, it will stop you cold.

Don't get me wrong. It's perfectly all right if you want to print ARCs, set up release dates and launch parties, and all that. I know one writer who wrote a novel, had a launch party both

physically and online, and then stopped writing (intentionally!) for two years while she promoted that novel. Then she wrote her second novel and did the same thing.

I don't know whether she ever wrote a third, but I suspect she didn't. I suspect she watched sales, saw that she wasn't making a ton of money, and everything suddenly seemed like too much work for too little return, which of course it was.

Imagine how many more novels she could have written while her first novel was slowly being discovered by readers. And with more titles out there, she would have been more and more discoverable.

Personally, I don't do ARCs. And IMHO, if releasing a book is special enough to warrant a launch party, you aren't writing nearly as much as you should. If I held a launch party for every novel, in the first half of 2021 I'd have had to have a launch party every two weeks. I wouldn't have time to write. And isn't WRITING the point of being a writer?

I also don't see stories of any length as important at all. They're just what they are: stories. Each one will be special to some, enjoyed by many, and disliked by a few, and that's fine. In fact, my stories are so UNimportant that I can remember only the vaguest details of any individual novel or short story I've written, and I don't even remember that much about many of them.

Rather than worry about who likes or dislikes my work and why, I prefer to write the best story I can, publish it, then start the next one. If you do your best, what others think doesn't matter.

I just enjoy looking in on my characters. When something they're doing interests me, I write it to find out what happens. I'm the first human ever to see that story unfold. How exciting is that?

Bradbury Challenge

Most of those who have joined in this challenge have written tens of thousands more words than they might have otherwise. You can still join in the challenge at any time. And if you're a fiction writer, why not?

During the past week, in addition to whatever other fiction they're writing, the following writers reported their progress:

- Erin Donoho "The Magic of Being" 3800 words YA
- Balázs Jám bor "Fragments" 2500 words Sci Fi
- George Kordonis "Cult of Youth" 4514 words Horror
- Alexander Nakul "Royal ball and gazebo" 1720 words Erotic Fantasy
- Chynna Pace "Hidden Magic" 1664 words Fantasy
- Christopher Ridge "I Wanna Cut Somebody for Christmas" 3100 words Horror
Crime
- K.C. Riggs "Rain" 2728 words General Fiction

Congrats to all participants for hanging in there.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Writers, have you fired “Chekhov’s Gun”?” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/08/writers-have-you-fired-chekhovs-gun.html>. Grain of salt. Read, absorb, but forget it while you’re writing.

See “Remember What It Was Like to Travel Pre-Smartphone?” at <https://slate.com/technology/2023/08/travel-pre-smartphone-no-internet-lost.html>. Maybe good for research, or just for nostalgia.

See “Cyberattack hits US hospitals...” at <https://interestingengineering.com/health/cyberattack-hits-us-hospitals>. Story ideas abound.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1080

Writing of “Penthouse Bound”

Day 1..... 1485 words. Total words to date..... 1485

Writing of “Untitled Stern Talbot Mystery”

Day 1..... 190 words. Total words to date..... 190

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283

Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246

Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709

Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for August..... 9494

Total fiction words for 2023..... 124041

Total nonfiction words for August... 4650

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 154550

Total fiction words since August 1..... 9494

Total words for the year (fiction and nonfiction)..... 278591

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221
Short story collections..... 31

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Monday, and a Lesson

August 8, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Monday Was Monday, and a Lesson
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Monday Was Monday, and a Lesson

Well, I finished “Penthouse Bound.” Whatever. I’m not happy with it at all. To be honest, after flying through the opening I struggled with the story, and when I finished it, it felt flat to me. Like I just wanted to get it over with and off my plate. Which is probably true.

Okay, so even after 73 novels and all the rest, I’m not immune to the problems I faced and overcame at the very beginning. Probably because I’m at the very beginning again. The thing is, I cleared out critical voice and the myths once, so I know I can do it again. I have the tools and the awareness and the knowledge.

A Lesson—At this point, frankly, writing just isn’t as much fun as it was (and should be).

But I’m still compelled to write stories, so the lack of fun is only because I haven’t settled into a story yet that I really want to write. I will. I just haven’t yet.

Later, when I’m deep into a story and it inevitably slows, I’ll get through by reminding myself to trust the characters and just write the next sentence, whatever it is, then the next and the next until the story’s flowing again.

But for now I have to find the story I want to write, the one that’s fun for me. And the only way to do that is to keep poking around and writing different things until I get into one that grabs me.

After I finished “Penthouse Bound” I took a short break, then opened a file that I thought was the first chapter or two (opening) I wrote long ago for another Blackwell Ops novel. I remembered it was a good opening, but somehow the files were mixed up.

But what I opened wasn’t the Blackwell Ops opening at all. It’s the first chapter of a “body on the beach” crime/mystery opening. I’ll read over it again this morning to see whether it grabs me.

I also happened across an old Stern Talbot mystery start, a different (and much longer) one than the one that was listed under Numbers below. (That one was only 190 words, so I dropped it.) If the body on the beach story doesn't grab me, I'll read over the Talbot PI story start to see whether it grabs me.

I remember just enough about that old Blackwell Ops start to remember that I really liked it.

Early morning, a guy was walking on a white beach in an exotic location and near a beach house. Three helicopters, at first just loud dots against the sky, came around a point in the jungle up the coast. The choppers drew nearer and nearer, then began strafing him.

He escaped, of course, but the house was demolished. He soon figured out the who and why behind the attack and went on the offensive. (If that start grabs you, feel free to write it. Your story will be different from mine anyway.)

I spent a couple of hours looking for that start but I never did find it. I guess it's gone. I hate when that happens. I don't mind tossing out words if it's my choice, but I hate simply losing them. That's just annoying.

If I happen across it someday I probably will write it, but I probably won't try to reconstitute it. That would be like writing from an outline (conscious, critical mind) and that's a death knell for originality in a story.

Anyway, by the time all of that was over it was almost noon, and I took the rest of the day off to reset my brain.

This restart is going more slowly than I hoped it would. I sort of expected this, but I have to admit I hoped I would be up to speed more quickly.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "The Course is Completed...Sort Of (video)" at <https://www.youtube.com/live/z83QLbadpD4>. Listen to this video. Some good recommendations re writing.

See "Some Copyright Value" at <https://deanwesleymith.com/some-copyright-value/>.

See "Disconnecting From The World So You Can Create Your Own" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/08/disconnecting-from-the-worldso-you-can-create-your-own.html>. A helpful article.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 700

Writing of “Penthouse Bound”

Day 1..... 1485 words. Total words to date..... 1485
Day 2..... 1109 words. Total words to date..... 2594 done

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283
Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246
Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709
Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for August..... 10603
Total fiction words for 2023..... 125150
Total nonfiction words for August... 5350
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 155250
Total fiction words since August 1..... 10603
Total words for the year (fiction and nonfiction)..... 280400

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221
Short story collections..... 31

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How to Start or Start Again

August 9, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * How to Start or Start Again
- * I Found It!
- * Bradbury Challenge Information
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“You must have a room, or a certain hour or so a day, where you don’t know what was in the newspapers that morning, you don’t know who your friends are, you don’t know what you owe anybody, you don’t know what anybody owes to you. This is a place where you can simply experience and bring forth what you are and what you might be. This is the place of creative incubation. At first you may find that nothing happens there. But if you have a sacred place and use it, something eventually will happen.” Joseph Campbell in *The Power of Myth*, as reported in the Kill Zone post yesterday

“You have to believe in the long term plan you have but you need the short term goals to motivate and inspire you.” Roger Federer

“I’ve been struggling over a rewrite for a chapter for 3 WEEKS now, and I don’t understand why I can’t finish it.” Azali, in a comment on the Kill Zone post I mention below

Me, hand raised: “Um, I do.”

“I’ve proven everything that I set out to prove—if not to others, then to myself ... [but] I continue to play with my imaginary friends whenever I can. Maybe it’s not as exciting as it used to be, but it’s still the best job in the world.” John Gilstrap, echoing my recent sentiments

How to Start or Start Again

In her post in the Kill Zone blog yesterday, one half of the two-sister team that form author PJ Parrish, wrote, “I’ve been having a bad time of late trying to get in a writing mood.”

As you all know, I resemble that remark, so I read her post a couple of times.

A little later in the article, she wrote, “I need to re-find quietude and solitude.”

Well, no. By her own admission, she’s “in my Michigan home now, far from the heat waves. It’s 70 degrees and the only thing I can hear is birdsong and the sweet wheeze of my dog Archie snoring at my side.” If that isn’t quietude and solitude, I don’t know what is.

She also wrote, “I need my hurly-burly brain to calm down before something creative can start growing there again.”

Do you recognize the critical mind making excuses to stop the creative mind from writing? That’s when I thought, No, you need to sit down, put your fingers on the keyboard, and write something, anything.

The creative mind can’t play if it doesn’t have a conduit.

I’m not being mean here, and I’m not picking on PJ. In an effort to help, I left the following as a comment:

“I’ve been going through something similar for some time. I won’t go into details, but I’ve found the only solution (for me) is in two parts.

“Part 1, I sit down, drop a character with a problem into a setting, and start writing.

“I write whatever comes, to the best of my ability, but just for fun. Just to find out what happens in the character’s story.

“The problem doesn’t have to be ‘the’ problem of the story. That will come when it’s time. But just to get started, to get the fingers moving over the keyboard, a character with a problem in a setting works every time.

“Part 2 is keep doing that until an opening grabs you so that you get lost in it....”

I hope none of you need this particular kind of help. It really is a kind of hell.

But if you do, I hope PJ’s post and/or my comment helps in some way.

I Found It!

About a half-hour after I filed yesterday’s Journal I had the brilliant idea (snicker) of searching for the unique name of the POV character of that *Blackwell Ops* start I thought I had lost.

I did that search, and TWO files popped up. One was the misnamed file I found yesterday. The character name was still in the title. But the other had his name in the body text, along with the unique name of the “bad guy” target and the rest of the opening I’d written.

And when I opened it, I found that I had written more than I’d originally thought, so it’s all good.

For the next few hours I poked around with a couple of other starts. I wrote a little on the others, but nothing to talk about. Then thunderstorms started (yay!) and I headed up to the house.

There I wrote two chapters for *Blackwell Ops 9: Cameron Stance* and added the title to my Numbers below. I think this is my new major project.

I need to have fun right now, so I’ll play with it for a day or two and see whether it runs as well as I think (and hope) it will.

Bradbury Challenge Information

Yesterday one of the challenge participants asked me when the challenge started. To find out, I went to <https://hestanbrough.com>. In the Search box, I keyed in “Bradbury Challenge”. Then I looked for the earliest examples.

You guys can use the search box too. That’s why I put one in the sidebar. (grin) Anyway, as it turns out, I posted [“A New Personal Challenge”](#) on March 22.

Then I wrote [“Fears About the Challenge”](#) on March 23.

Finally, I wrote [“One More Post on the Bradbury Challenge”](#) on March 24. Then I finally shut up about it, I think. (grin)

[I first reported the progress](#) of the challenge participants on Monday, March 27.

So for those of you who have been in the challenge all along, you have written at least 20 short stories. The next will be at least your 21st.

Of course if you skipped a week or longer or if you wrote more than one story in one or more weeks, your total will differ.

I’ve also had a question about how to organize files. I wrote a post awhile back on how I organize my novels, novellas, series, collections and short stories. Maybe it’s time to do that again since I have a lot of subscribers now that I didn’t have back then.

I’ll do that soon. Stay tuned. I’ll also talk about what documents, photos, etc. I have in the folder for each novel/collection/story.

And any other topics you’d like to hear about, let me know.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Not Writing Is Easier Than It Used To Be” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/08/not-writing-is-easier-than-it-used-to-be.html>. A post I really needed to see.

See “Matt Stevens Digitally Conjures Acclaimed Movies Into Hyperrealistic Vintage Paperbacks” at <https://www.thiscolossal.com/2023/08/matt-stevens-good-movies-as-old-books/>. Interesting.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1120

Writing of Blackwell Ops 9: Cameron Stance (novel)
Brought forward from earlier start..... 4087 words

Day 1..... 1595 words. Total words to date..... 5682

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283

Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246

Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709
Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for August..... 12198
Total fiction words for 2023..... 126745
Total nonfiction words for August... 6470
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 156370
Total fiction words since August 1..... 12198
Total words for the year (fiction and nonfiction)..... 283115

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark, adherence to Heinlein's Rules, and that following the myths of fiction writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

Organizing Saves Time

August 10, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Neobook?
- * Organizing Saves Time
- * Pre-Publication Organization
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Neobook?

Anyone out there ever heard of Neobook? Seems to me this might be a viable marketing option for pretty much anyone who has more energy than I do. Something to look into. You can check it out at <https://neobook.org/>. (I am not affiliated in any way.)

I would be wary of that “get feedback” BS though. You don't need feedback. Anything one reader would recommend another reader would be against.

Organizing Saves Time

I recently promised a post on organization. I was going to bring forward an older post. But when I looked back, I realized the current article would require an updated combination of two earlier posts, both from November 2019.

So rather than publish the whole thing today and run long, I decided to publish it in two parts.

Today I'll put up part one, "Pre-Publication Organization." This has to do with creating and maintaining a file system so you don't have to duplicate work when it comes time to publish.

Tomorrow, I'll post part two, "Post-Publication Organization (The Inventory Spreadsheet)." It's both easier and far more important than you know.

Pre-Publication Organization

The following is updated from November 17, 2019. when I posted "Preparation Saves Time and Prevents Typos." I've updated it where necessary.

Is your filing system lacking? Do you currently reinvent the wheel each time you upload a new work to a different store or distributor?

Can you quickly access the sales copy, ASIN, ISBN, appropriately sized book cover, and the original file for any of your works? How about the .mobi, .epub, and .pdf files?

I currently upload directly only to Draft2Digital and Amazon. I know others also upload directly to Apple and Kobo and all that, but I'd rather let D2D handle that for me. Of course, it's up to you.

For those who remember Smashwords, if you don't know it was absorbed by D2D.

I also used to upload to a bundling service called Bundle Rabbit. It has now become PubShare. I recommend uploading your work to them. Being included in bundles with other authors can only increase your own audience. Find PubShare at <https://pubshare.com>.

The Value of Folders—Even uploading to only a few places, I find having a folder for each new title a huge time saver. Here's what I do for each title, often before the story or novel is even finished.

Create a new file folder. The name of the folder is the same as the title of the work. (Not even a shortened version. This saves time later when you have a few hundred titles.)

In that folder, in addition to many other files I'll talk about below, I put the original Word document (.doc or .docx). Again, the Word file is named the same as the title of the work.

That document also is already formatted and has front and back matter already included. In other words, it's ready to upload.

- I actually have a format I'd be happy to share with you if you like. It includes front matter, book title in the appropriate size, chapter heads in the appropriate size so you only have to copy/paste, body text with first line indent, and back matter. You can easily replace my information with your own, then Save As whatever file name you like.
- The front matter consists of the title followed by my name or pen name, then a space, then "a novel (short story, whatever) from StoneThread Publishing". After that comes this statement: "To give the reader more of a sample, the front matter appears at the end." (This lets the reader know you're trying to omit front matter from the sample offered by various vendors.)

Photos—I also put relevant photos in the folder:

- first is the original photo I used for the cover. It's titled Title of Book Base.jpg.
- Then the finished cover itself in four sizes for longer works and three sizes for short stories:
 1. Title of Book.jpg (the original huge file at 6250 x 9375 pixels),
 2. Title of Book 2000.jpg (2000×3000, this is the one I upload to vendors and distributors),
 3. Title of Book 300.jpg (300×450, the one that will go on the individual book page on my publisher site for longer works only), and
 4. Title of Book 180.jpg (180×270, the "thumbnail" that will go on the genre page on the publisher site).

The Promo Doc—Next in the folder is the promo doc. For me, this is text document. I'm a PC guy so I use Notepad. The promo doc contains

- the title of the work,
- my author name (can be my name or pseudonym) to copy/paste,
- my publisher name (StoneThread Publishing) to copy/paste,
- the book/story description (sales copy)
- seven Internet search terms (Amazon allows seven—for my Blackwell Ops series, for example, the search terms are thriller, psychological suspense, mystery, crime, murder, assassin, and novel series), and
- the universal book link (from Books2Read, via Draft2Digital) and the Amazon buy link.

I think it might also be useful to add the word count somewhere in the promo doc, but I haven't gotten into that habit yet. (grin)

See what I mean about organizing on the pre-pub side of things?

Now when I'm ready to publish the work, all I have to do is open the promo doc and copy-paste everything from it to the appropriate spaces on the platform.

Uploading and Downloading—I upload to Draft2Digital first. A few steps into that process, I download the .mobi and .epub files. Those go into the book's individual folder too along with the original .doc or .docx. I don't download the D2D-generated PDF file because it doesn't include the cover.

But because some readers prefer PDF, I also copy the 2000×3000 cover pic (see above), paste it into the original Word doc as the first page in my novel or story, then click “Save as PDF.” Of course, that file goes into the folder too.

So when I’m finished, the folder contains the .doc or .docx, PDF, .mobi and .epub files for the book or story.

Then when it comes time to send a file to a reader for a direct sale, I simply open the folder, drag the appropriate file to an email, and hit Send.

If you upload to PubShare, you will have to upload either an .epub file or a zipped Vellum file. (At least that’s what was required for BundleRabbit). Again, I can open the folder, upload the .epub file that I downloaded from D2D, and I’m done.

My individual book folders, each of which takes only a few minutes to create between finishing the story and uploading it, are what make it possible for me to publish a new work to D2D in about 2 minutes and to Amazon in about 3. Seriously.

Not only do I not have the hassle of rewriting everything at each vendor or distribution platform, but the ability to copy/paste negates the chance of typos in what I’m uploading.

Try it, you’ll like it. (grin)

I hope this helps. Any questions on any of this, just email me.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Rejections Happen to Us All” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/08/rejections-happen-to-us-all.html>. No reason for rejections anymore, but this is a fun read.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1210

Writing of Blackwell Ops 9: Cameron Stance (novel)

Brought forward from earlier start..... 4087 words

Day 1..... 1595 words. Total words to date..... 5682

Day 2..... 2101 words. Total words to date..... 7783

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283

Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246

Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709
Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for August..... 14299
Total fiction words for 2023..... 128846
Total nonfiction words for August... 7680
Total nonfiction words for the year..... 157580
Total fiction words since August 1..... 14299
Total words for the year (fiction and nonfiction)..... 286426

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2
Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark, adherence to Heinlein's Rules, and that following the myths of fiction writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

Organization Saves Time, Part Two

August 11, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Organization Saves Time
- * Part Two: Post-Publication Organization
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

” In order to go on living one must try to escape the death involved in perfectionism.” Hannah Arendt

“Perfectionism is the voice of the oppressor.” Anne Lamott

Both quotations as reported at The Passive Voice

“Give the reader no reason to put down your novel.” Kathryn Craft of Writer Unboxed

Organization Saves Time

Yesterday I posted “Part One: Pre-Publication Organization” of this two-part post. If you haven’t read it, [I suggest you do so now](#).

Although these two kinds of organization are not dependent on each other, they do complement each other. For just one thing, if you have your pre-publication files organized, they will feed directly into your post-publication files, which is mostly your inventory spreadsheet.

So here’s part two. Take it from me, doing this is both a lot easier and a lot more important than you know.

Post-Publication Organization (The Inventory Spreadsheet)

If you haven’t set up your inventory spreadsheet yet, just bite the bullet and do it already. And if you don’t have very many works yet, count yourself smart for starting early. It’s much more time consuming to add everything after the fact.

But if you do have more than a few dozen bits of IP floating around—novels, novellas, short stories, articles, essays, poems, collections, blog posts and so on—it’s never too late. You just might need to take a few days off from everything else in order to get everything organized.

But trust me, after you’ve done it, you’ll sleep better.

Okay, before I forget, the original version of this post is a follow-up I wrote to Dean Wesley Smith’s “The Power of Having Inventory” at <https://www.deanwesleysmith.com/the-power-of-having-inventory/>. I recommend you read his post first. He will have a slightly different take on what to do and how to do it.

The rest of this post is all about my own experience and what I recommend.

My own inventory is incomplete, but it’s as complete as it’s going to get other than adding new IP as I write it.

In my original post, I wrote that it’s “mostly complete” and that “I started keeping it from the very beginning.” That isn’t strictly true.

Actually I only started keeping track of my IP from early 2014 when I started writing fiction in earnest. But the articles and essays I wrote for *The Writer*, *Writer’s Digest*, *The Explicator*, the now-defunct *ByLine Magazine* and many others are not listed on my IP inventory. And of course they should be.

Also missing are blog posts I wrote in the years before 2014 (I started blogging about the language back in the mid-1990s) and all of my individual poems. Over the years, I’ve written thousands of poems. Some were award-winning, some were later set to music by others, and

most are included in one collection or another. The poetry collections (though not the individual poems) are now included on my inventory spreadsheet.

So a lot of my stuff remains unaccounted for. Which is fine. Maybe one or more of my heirs will want to track it all down and get it organized, but at this point I really don't care.

I do at least have the archives of this Journal as well as all of my nonfiction books and audio lectures on a separate spreadsheet. It's all IP.

I offer all of this as a cautionary tale: Especially if you're just starting out, learn from my mistake and list everything. And do so with an eye toward licensing it someday: all of it.

My own inventory spreadsheet was practically an accident. Many people have an "I love me" wall or shelf, a place where they keep their plaques or trophies or other marks of achievement.

My inventory spreadsheet was originally only that, a kind of "I love me" wall. It was a place where I could see at a glance not only what I'd written, but when I'd finished it, the publication date, the Amazon Standard Identification Numbers (ASINs), ISBNs, etc. It was a quick glimpse of accomplishments.

That initial master spreadsheet also encouraged me to create my Annual Production spreadsheets. I've kept one of those also for every year since 2014. But whereas I update the inventory spreadsheet after each publication, I update the production spreadsheet every day.

In my inventory spreadsheet I don't use any formulas. Not one.

In my annual production spreadsheet, I use formulas to let the software perform the ongoing calculations.

On it, at a glance, I can see what I wrote in a given month, what dates I started and finished a piece of writing, and my word count totals for the day and month and year. And of course, all of that motivates me to write even more.

It's partly because of the catalyst of that production spreadsheet that today I've written 73 novels, 9 novellas, and over 230 short stories.

All of those are on my master inventory spreadsheet. I also have a separate spreadsheet for novels and another for short stories, but those aren't essential. I update the master every time I finish a work. I update the others when I think about it or want to do a count.

I still haven't added my individual vignettes or flash fiction stories to my spreadsheet either, and I probably won't. I encourage you to do so with your own work though.

Once it's set up, an inventory spreadsheet is a massive time saver. What goes into a spreadsheet? Look at Dean's post to see what goes into his. His and mine are different.

My overall master inventory spreadsheet includes

- the fiction or nonfiction or collection title,
- the author name (for when I use pen names),
- the genre and series (if applicable),
- the word count,
- date finished,
- publication date,
- the D2D (Books2Read) universal link,
- the eprice and paper price (where applicable),
- the ASINs and ISBNs (ebook and paper, again where applicable), and
- other distributor and purchase links.

For publication of short stories or articles through traditional mags, all of that information is included (as applicable) plus the date rights revert, how much I earned on the license, etc.

Sounds like a lot, doesn't it? Yet it takes only a few seconds to hop over to my inventory spreadsheet and add another piece of IP when I finish it.

Finally, it's also a good idea to glance over your inventory from time to time. The title of a poem or other work might lead to another new short story or novel. That has happened to me several times.

As you probably know, most of Hemingway's catchy titles came either from the bible or from other people's poetry.

So even if at the moment you see yourself as a hobby writer, I suggest you create and maintain an inventory spreadsheet. You never know what a catalyst it might become for you and how much it might help simplify things when you become rich and famous.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Taylor Swift announces..." at <https://apnews.com/article/taylor-swift-eras-tour-611d9cc54aed258fc7d9e071e97868aa>. Want a free master class about managing and licensing your IP? Study Taylor Swift.

See "Follow the Energy of Denial" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/follow-the-energy-of-denial/>. It isn't what you say, it's how you say it.

See "Citigroup Center Stilts" at <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/citigroup-center-stilts>. From friend KC Riggs, who writes "Ideas are everywhere."

See "Ecuador's Lasso declares state of emergency..." at <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20230810-ecuadorian-presidential-candidate-fernando-villavicencio-assassinated-at-campaign-event>. Political turmoil with a dash of organized crime. Ideas are everywhere.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1240

Writing of Blackwell Ops 9: Cameron Stance (novel)

Brought forward from earlier start..... 4087 words

Day 1..... 1595 words. Total words to date..... 5682

Day 2..... 2101 words. Total words to date..... 7783

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. Total words to date..... 4283

Day 2..... 3963 words. Total words to date..... 8246

Day 3..... 1463 words. Total words to date..... 9709

Day 4..... 2445 words. Total words to date.....12154

Total fiction words for August..... 14299

Total fiction words for 2023..... 128846

Total nonfiction words for August... 8920

Total nonfiction words for the year..... 158820

Total fiction words since August 1..... 14299

Total words for the year (fiction and nonfiction)..... 287666

Calendar Year 2023 Novels to Date..... 2

Calendar Year 2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

Calendar Year 2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 221

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark, adherence to Heinlein's Rules, and that following the myths of fiction writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

A Great Question Answered

August 12, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Another Short Story
- * A Great Question Answered
- * Dean Wesley Smith

- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Imagination is the highest kite one can fly.” Lauren Bacall

“I tend to splurge for convenience. I’ll pay a lot to not waste time.” Tom Anderson

Another Short Story

“Real Characters” went out to subscribers yesterday. To read it , click [https://stanbroughwrites.substack\[dot\]com/p/real-characters](https://stanbroughwrites.substack[dot]com/p/real-characters). If you want to subscribe, when you finish the story scroll down and click the button. It’s free.

A Great Question

When I’m teaching something I’ve been doing for a long time, sometimes I unintentionally skip over things I take for granted as routine. That’s exactly why I encourage folks to ask questions.

In a comment on yesterday’s post, Peggy asked a great question regarding organization:

“Do you separate your story folders by category, length, or similar? Like all your shorter works in a ‘Short Fiction’ folder, or maybe a ‘Western’ or ‘Thriller’ folder? Or are they all lumped in under ‘Fiction’?”

Thank you, Peggy. As I said, it’s a great question. And thanks for waiting until today for the answer so I could do it justice in a full blog post.

In my HarveyStanbrough.com folder I have the following folders in this order:

- 0 Novels
- 0 Unpublished
- 1 Short Fiction
- 2 Collections
- 3 Nonfiction
- 4 Poetry
- 5 Lecture Series Stuff

Then some other folders that have nothing to do with my writing.

The numeric prefixes are only to keep the folders in the order that I usually access them. Everything is nested.

Inside the 0 (zero) Novels folder are

- Action-Adventure and Thriller
- Crime Detective PI
- Science Fiction Fantasy
- Western

I lump the first five genres together in two folders because I don't have enough individual novels in any of them to justify a separate folder. That will change later. I also include my one magic realism novel in my SFF folder.

Inside the Action-Adventure-Thriller folder are

- AA A Rough New World
- AA Jobs Like That
- Blackwell Ops Series (8 novels)
- Cazadores Lounge & Lonely Place
- Jonah Peach
- Nick Spalding Series (4 novels)
- No Kind'a Time
- Nothing for Nothing

The AA designates a novella vs. a novel

The Blackwell Ops Series folder contains folders for Blackwell Ops books 1 – 8, the Blackwell Ops Bible, and a few other folders.

Same for the Nick Spalding series, except there are only 4 novels.

The others in Action-Adventure-Thriller are stand-alone novels.

Inside each individual book folder, as I mentioned in an earlier post, is the original document for the book as well as the .mobi, .epub and .pdf files, the cover art and covers, the all-important promo doc, etc. That remains the same through all of these.

The nested structure is the same for Crime Detective PI, Science Fiction Fantasy, and Western genre folders. Each contains a folder for each stand-alone novel as well as a folder for each series, which in turn contains folders for the individual books.

In the Crime Detective PI folder, there are

one novella, five stand-alone novels, and a folder for the Pulp PI series. Inside that one are three novellas and seven stand-alones, all featuring my PI character, Stern Talbot.

In the Science Fiction Fantasy folder, there are

- Galaxy Series (only 2 novels so far)
- Journey Home Series (10 novels plus a bible file)
- an SF novel and its sequel, and
- 8 more stand-alone SF novels

In the Western folder, there are three novellas, Crowley Series, then Rider Jones and Two Old Gringos (both stand-alone novels).

Inside Crowley Series are Crowley Gap Series, Crowley Original Saga, and Wes Crowley Series Other (contains notes, maps, the series bible, etc.).

Going back to the top, the Unpublished folder under Novels is for unpublished novels and is currently (and happily) empty. I used it back when I was turning out a novel every two weeks but releasing them once each month.

That's all for the novels and novellas.

Still back at the top level, in 1 Short Fiction, there are

- Eric Stringer
- François
- Gervasio Arrancado
- Harvey Stanbrough
- Nick Porter
- Unpublished

Four of those are my personas. The name folders contain the stories written under those names.

Unpublished contains short stories I hadn't published before. (Many of those are now published through my free story of the week at substack, though most are still not published wide either individually or in collections.)

Back to the top again, in 2 Collections are folders for

- Anthologies (I published three anthologies of other writers awhile back, results of a contest)
- Arrancado
- Harvey
- Porter
- Stringer

Each folder contains the short story collections published under those names.

Arrancado, for example, had only two collections:

- Ramon Collection and
- Stories from the Cantina.

Each of those folders contains the master document for the collection (plus the cover art, covers, etc. as I discussed earlier) as well as one copy of each original story that went into the collection.

The Harvey folder contains 16 collections. (I didn't record how many stories were in each, either 5 or 10, except one. *The Six Years in May* collection contains 13 short stories, but it also

contains a vignette that is not listed in the TOC after each story. Taken together, the 12 or 13 vignettes form another story. That was fun to do.)

The Porter folder contains 6 collections (four 5-story and two 10-story)

The Stringer folder contains 8 collections (five 5-story and three 10-story)

The 3 Nonfiction folder contains folders and all files for 19 nonfiction titles, some of which are available free to readers of the Journal on the Archives page.

Back to the top again, the 4 Poetry folder contains folders and all files for four poetry collections, including the first-ever book-length poetry collection published as an ebook (*Lessons for a Barren Population*, HardShell Word Factory, 1996 and my Pulitzer nominated (but not short-listed) *Beyond the Masks* (1998).

There is also a retelling of Little Red Riding Hood (or Little Red Cap) in iambic pentameter in “The Magic Cakes”; *Residua* (a long poem); and a still-in-progress poem on the '60s. There are also two folders titled Poems and All Poems, but I know they aren't all there.

If you'd like a copy of “The Magic Cakes,” email me at harveysanbrough@gmail.com. Nothing wrong with curiosity. (grin)

The Lecture Series Stuff folder contains the .mp3 files and document handouts that I send out when anyone buys an audio lecture.

So that's my way of organizing my files. You're welcome to borrow anything from this structure that will make things easier for you in the long run.

YouTube Channel

My YouTube channel is still there. I'm in the midst of rebuilding my writing practice, and I'm seriously considering redoing my author website.

Once those two projects have smoothed out and become more or less routine, I'll think about YouTube again.

Dean Wesley Smith

There are two days left on the current 50% sale. For details, see <https://deanwesleymith.com/two-new-stretch-rewards-posted/>.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Pulp Fiction All Over Again” at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Scrg1rF6ZQ>. Hang in there. It gets good.

See “Amazon Reverses Course...” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/amazon-reverses-course-on-garbage-books-after-public-uproar/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1150

Writing of Blackwell Ops 9: Cameron Stance (novel)

Brought forward..... 4087

Day 1..... 1595 words. To date..... 5682

Day 2..... 2101 words. To date..... 7783

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. To date..... 4283

Day 2..... 3963 words. To date..... 8246

Day 3..... 1463 words. To date..... 9709

Day 4..... 2445 words. To date.....12154

Fiction for August..... 14299

Fiction for 2023..... 128846

Fiction since August 1..... 14299

Nonfiction for August..... 10070

Nonfiction for the year..... 159970

Annual consumable words..... 288816

2023 Novels to Date..... 2

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)... 221

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark and adherence to Heinlein’s Rules. Following the myths of writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

One More Question, and the Writing

August 13, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * One More Question
- * Bradbury Challenge Reminder
- * The Writing
- * How to Make Writing Hard Work
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

One More Question

In a comment on “Organizing Saves Time,” Sebastian asked the purpose of “Title of Book.jpg” in such a huge file size: 6250 x 9375 pixels. He wrote “I assume this is for POD pdf or maybe just an archive?”

My response:

“Title of Book.jpg” would be a master cover file, saved as a .jpg (photo) file by the program with which I created the cover. I also save the file in three reduced sizes: 2000 x 3000 (to upload), 300 x 450 for the main book page of larger works like novels and collections, and 180 x 270 for thumbnail applications.

I keep the original file because it’s the highest resolution, largest and clearest, so I can always make other sizes or copies if I need to.

You could use the file (or the 2000 x 3000 file) as the front cover of a POD book, but you would still have to create the back cover and spine. The easiest way to do that is probably through either Amazon or Draft2Digital. I haven’t checked them out because I don’t currently put my books in paper.

I create covers with with Serif PagePlus 6, 7, or 9. Serif products are no longer available except used. I now recommend Affinity Publisher (the next step up from Serif). It’s as good or better than Adobe products, and instead of paying for a subscription, you purchase it outright. But no matter what program you use to create covers, you can save them as .jpg files to use for various reasons.

Bradbury Challenge Reminder

Today ends week 21 of the Bradbury Challenge for those who have been along the whole time. Get your stories in before the Journal goes live tomorrow morning.

Of course, you can jump in at any time and begin your own challenge. How difficult could it be to write one short story per week? (grin)

Really, if you write into the dark and trust your creative subconscious, it's pretty much a snap. And if you start this week, you'll be ahead of where you would have been if you'd waited and started next week, or next.

Also a good idea to write the story early in the week. Takes the pressure off.

The Writing

When I don't feel like writing or too much other life stuff is in the way, I just don't write. (This is not what I recommend but what I have to do right now.) But on days when I can and do write, things are finally starting to turn around. Radically, in the current novel.

It's kind of neat. The current novel, though I thought it was a Blackwell Ops novel and thought it was about Cameron Stance (isn't that a cool name?), might not be.

It might actually be a B Ops novel about a different character (a woman who is either an operative or a future operative) or it might be a novel that isn't actually in the B Ops universe at all.

I'm giving the characters free rein, and they're telling their story. Not what I thought would happen or could have planned to happen but what actually happened. And as you might have guessed, it's actually fun.

If I can keep this up through this novel and one or two more, I will consider myself finally back from the hinterlands.

How to Make Writing Hard Work

or How to Squelch the Creative Voice

I am not being facetious. I am being truthful.

If you'd like to read preaching from that authorial ivory tower I talk about now and then, read James Scott Bell's "[The Basic Formula of Fiction](#)" in today's Kill Zone blog. Just to be crystal clear, I am not recommending it.

The article has nothing to do with a formula. It lays out step by menacing step ways to stop your creative voice cold, beginning with the notion that "Many writers are not content merely to write a good story. They want to 'say something.'"

Actually, that's the sort of thought at the root of "advocacy journalism," reporting heavily biased opinions rather than facts. Can you say "fake news"? And um, people who have a point to

make or a position to represent and are not content merely writing a good story should not be fiction writers.

Then he goes into how writing is a “calling,” and it all goes downhill from there, ticking off the myth checkboxes as it goes. I’m amazed people still buy into crap like this. But by all means, to each his or her own.

I am not amazed, however, that some long-term writers sell this particular bill of goods. After all, the more would-be writers are dependent on the myths, the larger the audience for “how-to” books on writing that say exactly the same thing all the other how-to books on writing say.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Netflix Making a Murderer – Brendan Dassey’s Confession” at <http://dyingwords.net/netflix-making-a-murderer-brendan-dasseys-confession/>. I strongly urge you to subscribe to Garry’s free dyingwords.net blog. Garry is also a regular contributor over at the Kill Zone blog, but this is different.

See “The rise of BookTok titles...” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-rise-of-booktok-titles-has-meant-less-visibility-for-other-titles-whether-theyre-longstanding-authors-or-debuts/>. Read PG’s take. Are you on BookTok?

The Numbers

The Journal..... 880

Writing of Blackwell Ops 9: Cameron Stance (novel)

Brought forward..... 4087

Day 1..... 1595 words. To date..... 5682

Day 2..... 2101 words. To date..... 7783

Day 3..... 2573 words. To date..... 10356

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. To date..... 4283

Day 2..... 3963 words. To date..... 8246

Day 3..... 1463 words. To date..... 9709

Day 4..... 2445 words. To date.....12154

Fiction for August..... 16872

Fiction for 2023..... 131419

Fiction since August 1..... 16872

Nonfiction for August..... 10950

Nonfiction for the year.....	160850
Annual consumable words.....	292269
2023 Novels to Date.....	2
2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
2023 Short Stories to Date.....	4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)...	221
Short story collections.....	31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark and adherence to Heinlein’s Rules. Following the myths of writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

My Take on Kindle Unlimited, and the Bradbury Challenge

August 14, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Kindle Unlimited?
- * Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Kindle Unlimited?

Writer George K asked my thoughts about Kindle Unlimited, Amazon’s exclusive publishing program. If you enroll a book in KU, it’s can’t be sold anywhere else, including your own website, for a period of 3 months.

DW Smith and KK Rusch have always advised against going exclusive, but... even though Dean is always quick to point out that he started from scratch with the advent of the new self-publishing boom, that isn’t exactly the case. Or maybe his idea of “starting from scratch” differs widely from mine.

The fact is, Amazon is by far the largest seller of ebooks and a lot of other products, probably including print books.

That doesn’t mean they’re the only seller by any means, and I would never want to deny my books to readers who shop elsewhere or who don’t like Amazon for whatever reason.

So since George asked, here’s my take: I have always gone wide, period. I probably will continue to do so because that’s the habit I’ve created. Plus it appeases my lazy bone to get whatever I’ve finished off my desk and into the hands of readers.

I'm also not good at putting something up, waiting a specific period of time, then relaunching.

But speaking of that, DW Smith also strongly recommends running any short stories past however many print magazine markets you can in hopes of publication and a quick payday. That process can easily take much longer than the 3 months required by Amazon's KU exclusivity program. It often takes at least 6 months after publication for rights to revert so you can "go wide" with your story.

So I'm just saying, letting KU have a novel for 3 months before releasing it to the wider reading public probably is not the earth-shakingly bad idea DWS and KKR and I (previously) crack it up to be.

I know several professional writers, many of whom I personally admire, who use KU first for three months and then go wide.

And frankly, if I were doing it all over again, that's exactly what I would do as well, and yes, it's what I recommend. If some things change for me I might well go to KU with new releases first myself.

Of course, you will need to be attentive and probably construct some sort of warning to let you know when the period of KU exclusivity ends so you would know when to re-launch your book wide. For those of you who are well-versed in electronic calendars, this should be a no-worry no-brainer.

"KU first" might be the best way to go to really get your books noticed in the first place.

Of course, don't forget the attention-grabbing, genre-appropriate cover and the right sales copy (no plot, etc.). For that, I still recommend Dean's [How to Write Fiction Sales Copy](#).

You can buy the book (\$10 for a soon-to-be-dogearred paperback), or you can slide back in time and read his blog sequence on the topic, beginning at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/how-to-write-fiction-sales-copy-introduction-and-chapter-one/>.

Hope this helps.

Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting

I gave you my spiel on the advantages of the Bradbury Challenge in yesterday's post. If you want to jump in, probably the best way to do so is write your story right now, today. Then report it to me and you don't have to think about it until next Monday.

During the past week, in addition to whatever other fiction they're writing, the following writers reported their progress:

- Erin Donoho "A Black Peaceful Space" 900 words YA
- Balázs Jámbor "Taking down the gods" 4500 words Space Fantasy

- George Kordonis “A Presidential Malfunction” 1678 words, Science Fiction
- Alexander Nakul “Blackcoin: the cryptocurrency of a new era” 1122 words Humor
- Chynna Pace “Estate Sale” 4873 words Sci-fi
- Christopher Ridge “It’s Family 1800 words Suspense Crime
- K.C. Riggs “Dung Beetle Blues” 933 words

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Some Updates” at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/some-updates-5/>. Sale still open until around noon today, Pacific Time.

See “Devastation left behind by Lahaina wildfire” at <https://www.staradvertiser.com/2023/08/12/photo-gallery/devastation-left-behind-by-lahaina-wildfire/>.

See “Three links for 2023-08-14” at <https://mattpmn.substack.com/p/three-links-for-2023-08-14>. Always interesting.

See “Getting Cozy” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/08/getting-cozy.html>. What is a cozy mystery, answered.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 680

Writing of Blackwell Ops 9: Cameron Stance (novel)

Brought forward..... 4087

Day 1..... 1595 words. To date..... 5682

Day 2..... 2101 words. To date..... 7783

Day 3..... 2573 words. To date..... 10356

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. To date..... 4283

Day 2..... 3963 words. To date..... 8246

Day 3..... 1463 words. To date..... 9709

Day 4..... 2445 words. To date.....12154

Fiction for August..... 16872

Fiction for 2023..... 131419

Fiction since August 1..... 16872

Nonfiction for August..... 11630

Nonfiction for the year.....	161530
Annual consumable words.....	292949
2023 Novels to Date.....	2
2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
2023 Short Stories to Date.....	4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)...	221
Short story collections.....	31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark and adherence to Heinlein’s Rules. Following the myths of writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

On Amazon Kindle Unlimited, and a Question of Backup

August 15, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Bestselling Authors Opine on Amazon Kindle Unlimited
- * Speaking of Vin Zandri and Productivity
- * A Question of Backup
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Bestselling Authors Opine on Amazon Kindle Unlimited

[Bestselling Thriller Author Vincent Zandri](#)—

New York Times and USA Today bestselling author and indie publisher Vin Zandri left this comment on the Substack version of yesterday’s post on Kindle Unlimited:

“I’ve been doing the pub first in KU for three months just to get on the hot new release and bestseller lists and to take advantage of the free days and the KU Deals.

“On occasion I’ll run the book for 6 months before going wide. I don’t bother with submitting to whatever paying mags are left since it takes too much time and effort, and in most cases I make more in KU than what a paying Mag will offer.

“Dean has a very good ‘in’ with several Mag editors so it’s a little easier on his end, God bless him. But if you haven’t been submitting to the magazine circuit for years it’s not easy breaking in. But not impossible. Personally I believe you’re better off in KU for three months and then running promos.”

Thanks, Vin. I was hoping you would comment.

[Bestselling Romance Author Diane Darcy](#)—

On the website version of the same post, USA Today bestselling romance author Diane Darcy also wrote in support of Kindle Unlimited:

“Just an FYI, Amazon is really good about releasing you from the three month period whenever you want. You just have to email or call them and ask.”

And she added a note in support of using ChatGPT to revise blurbs:

“Also, ChatGPT is awesome for running your finished blurbs through. I’ve been really happy with the results. I also know a lot of authors who have taken their entire catalogs and run their blurbs back through ChatGPT. It just really seems to shine at rewriting blurbs.”

My response to Diane: “As for blurbs (sales copy) I’ll stick with my old standby, Dean’s book. I’d rather do it myself than allow any machine input beyond a contextual spell check. But then, I’m roughly 140 years old.”

So more power to those who want to include AI in their authorship or marketing.

Please take a moment to visit Vin’s and Diane’s websites at the links (their names) above.

Speaking of Vin Zandri and Productivity

Most of you know from January 1 to July 31 of 2021 (so two years ago) I was on a roll. I wrote 14 novels during that time, so a novel every 14 days.

Then I stopped smoking cigars, screwed up my neural pathways, and I’m still trying to claw my way back to productivity.

My friend Vin Zandri posted this yesterday: “15 Books in 2023 Thus Far.” You can read the intro and watch the video at https://www.youtube.com/live/K1WIj0r_pYE. And you should, really.

I’m sure Vin would be the first to agree that if he can do it and if I can do it, so can you. You just have to trust yourself, put your butt in the chair and your fingers on the keyboard, and write. Quality? Oh, yes. And if you trust yourself, the quality will be there. It’s a zen thing.

A Question of Backup

Writer Gary V asks, “If you’re writing along merrily and there’s a power failure or surge or, God forbid, your computer throws ace-deuce, what do you have for backup? Thumb drive? Carbonite? Cloud? Word’s Auto-save?”

I write with Microsoft Word 365. (I'm currently also testing the free version of WPS Office, including WPS word. I check it every couple of years.) So yes, I definitely use Word's auto-save feature and it's saved me more than once. I have mine set to save every five minutes.

Those few times when I choose to go back and change something I've written, I also rename the file by clicking Save As and adding a numeral to the end of the file name. That way I still have both the original and the changed file. Fortunately that doesn't happen very often, but critical mind still sneaks in at times. That too has saved me several times.

Dropbox is my go-to. I have the Internet on my writing computer specifically so I can have Dropbox on it. I have Dropbox on all my computers, and all of my files are saved in my Dropbox folder.

On my writing 'puter, I see only the files I need for that computer. The others are available at Dropbox.com. The files I see locally on my business computer are different than those I see on my writing 'puter.

All of that said, Dropbox costs a hefty annual fee. I'm going to investigate OneDrive, the cloud storage feature that comes free with any Microsoft account. (I'll also be looking to see whether a similar feature comes with WPS Office).

If it is large enough to hold all my files—and if it gives me the convenience of a per-computer local file system—I might save myself some money and switch to it.

A thumb drive (or flash drive) is always a good alternative for a backup if you can get in the habit of saving your work to it at the end of every day, you don't lose it, etc. Well, and if you aren't too lazy to go through the mechanics of keeping track of it, inserting and saving to it, etc. every day. Which I am.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "11 Years Plus" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/11-years-plus/>.

See "What Are Plot Devices? (Why You Should Be Cautious)" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/what-are-plot-devices-why-you-should-be-cautious/>. One more thing we who WITD do not have to worry about.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 940

Writing of Blackwell Ops 9: Cameron Stance (novel)
Brought forward..... 4087

Day 1..... 1595 words. To date..... 5682
Day 2..... 2101 words. To date..... 7783
Day 3..... 2573 words. To date..... 10356
Day 4..... 1588 words. To date..... 11944

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. To date..... 4283
Day 2..... 3963 words. To date..... 8246
Day 3..... 1463 words. To date..... 9709
Day 4..... 2445 words. To date.....12154

Fiction for August..... 18460
Fiction for 2023..... 133007
Fiction since August 1..... 18460
Nonfiction for August..... 12570
Nonfiction for the year..... 162470
Annual consumable words..... 295477

2023 Novels to Date..... 2
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)... 221
Short story collections..... 31

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Not Tag Line Verbs and More on Backups

August 16, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Not Tag Line Verbs
- * More on Ways to Backup Your Files
- * Testing Office 365 Alternatives
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“What progress we are making. In the Middle Ages they would have burned me. Now they are content with burning my books.” Sigmund Freud

“Every standalone is a new shot at discoverability.” Chuck Wendig <https://terribleminds.com/>

“Just because some corporate drone is familiar with what books sell doesn’t make them an expert on what children should be reading. It does, however, represent virtue signaling to other members of the NYC hive mind.” The Passive Guy

Not Tag Line Verbs

In today’s Kill Zone blog, Terry Odell wrote a rare good post titled “How Are They Talking?” You can find it at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/08/how-are-they-talking.html>.

I thought the comment I left there would make a good topic for today here as well.

As I’ve written in this Journal more than once,

Any tag line verb should indicate a form of utterance. In other words, you can’t “smile” a line of dialogue. As [Odell] indicated, “said” is the best tag line verb out there, precisely because it is invisible.

However, there are many horrible so-called instructors who teach writing students their tag lines should be interesting. Of course, that defeats the purpose of the tag line, which is to let the reader know which character is talking, but unobtrusively.

As a former editor, I’ve kept a list for several years of inane tag line verbs I’ve seen in manuscripts, everything from “ejaculated” to “sentenced” to “trotted out.”

The list currently contains around 200 verbs, none of which indicate a form of utterance. Anyone who would like a copy should email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

If you’ve encountered any odd verbs in tag lines, please also email me. If the verb (or verbs) you offer isn’t on the list, I’ll add it and give you the [non-fiction ebook of your choice](#) as a reward.

For the record, a “tag line” is a bit of narrative that can’t stand alone (doesn’t make sense by itself). For example, “She chuckled” is a brief descriptive narrative that makes sense by itself, not a tag line. “She said,” however, requires something else in order to make sense.

If it were erroneously used as a tag line, “She chuckled” would look like this:

“Let’s have fun tonight,” she chuckled.

Um, nope. You can't chuckle a line of dialogue. The correct construction with the same words would look like this:

She chuckled. "Let's have fun tonight."

If you believe this topic is boring, maybe focus for a moment on being a professional and learning the tools of your trade. If that doesn't do it for you, consider how many times using tag lines correctly will keep readers from hurling your books across the room. (grin)

More on Ways to Backup Your Files

Re yesterday's post on ways to backup your files, Russ Jones left an excellent comment:

"To save myself the hassle of keeping up with/plugging in/unplugging a thumbdrive/flashdrive to back up my critical files, I use a 1 TB, 1000 MB/s external SSD that I keep more-or-less permanently connected to a USB port on the back of my computer. I paid \$120 for it on Amazon a couple of years ago, but since then the price has dropped to only \$70."

You can find the same solid state drive (SSD) at https://www.amazon.com/ADATA-SE800-IP68-Rugged-ASE800-1TU32G2-CBK/dp/B07V1H939C/ref=sr_1_3.

You can also find a 1TB USB C Flash Drive for only \$31.97 (20% off) at https://www.amazon.com/WANSISEN-MacBook-Storage-Android-Computers/dp/B09DX76WD5/ref=sr_1_7_sspa.

For my own purposes I split the difference and bought a Netac 250GB Portable SSD (https://www.amazon.com/dp/B088BS3BDD/ref=sspa_dk_detail_9) for \$26.39 (41% off). The read, write, and transfer speeds were important to me, and I only want to back up my writing (not photos, videoa, etc.).

My entire HarveyStanbrough.com folder is currently less than 19GB, and it contains all my writing plus other things, so I don't think I'll outgrow this device anytime soon. (grin)

But key in "portable SSD," select the size you want in megabytes or gigabytes from the dropdown list, and go exploring for yourself.

All of this brings up another point, too. The external hard drive (or thumb or flash drives) are a great option for those who don't trust the cloud or who understand (as I do) that the cloud can be gone in an instant.

All it would take is for a rude sboot to kick a plug out of the wall, figuratively speaking. And with constantly increasing cyber-threats (at least as presented by "news" organizations), that is a distinct possibility. Can you say "a world without the internet?"

In the final analysis, I decided it's better (for me) to set up and maintain a redundant combination of cloud and mechanical storage, which is why I just bought the Netac 250GB Portable SSD.

I personally recommend plugging in the SSD at the beginning of each day and unplugging it at the end. For connectivity and risk if your computer gets fried from a surge (but of course, you have an appropriately resistant surge protector, right?), the external SSD is no different than a thumb drive.

Probably it wouldn't hurt to have a paper copy of everything too, but that's a step too far for me, aside from the products that are already published in paper.

As always, your path will probably differ, and that's perfectly fine.

Testing Office 365 Alternatives

I recently downloaded both WPS Office and LibreOffice, two viable alternatives to Microsoft Office 365. (Apache OpenOffice was last updated back in 2014.)

I learned from my wife that we just renewed our annual subscription to Office 365 in June. So I have the better part of a year to decide which office program I want to use in the future.

Since I have that safety net, I'll be writing with LibreOffice Writer and WPS Office, maybe bouncing back and forth, maybe writing one story with one and the next with the other. May the better program win.

That should give both of them a real, practical test, at least for my requirements. When I've decided how to rank them and why, I'll report back here.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Why Do Streaks?" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/why-do-streaks/>.

See "Series vs Standalone: Cage Match" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/series-vs-standalone-cage-match/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1030

Writing of Blackwell Ops 9: Cameron Stance

Brought forward..... 4087

Day 1..... 1595 words. To date..... 5682

Day 2..... 2101 words. To date..... 7783

Day 3..... 2573 words. To date..... 10356

Day 4..... 1588 words. To date..... 11944

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4283 words. To date..... 4283
Day 2..... 3963 words. To date..... 8246
Day 3..... 1463 words. To date..... 9709
Day 4..... 2445 words. To date.....12154

Fiction for August..... 18460
Fiction for 2023..... 133007
Fiction since August 1..... 18460
Nonfiction for August..... 13600
Nonfiction for the year..... 163500
Annual consumable words..... 296507

2023 Novels to Date..... 2
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)... 221
Short story collections..... 31

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LibreOffice Pros and Cons

August 17, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * LibreOffice Pros and Cons
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“You only live once, but if you do it right, once is enough.” Mae West

LibreOffice Pros and Cons

Sorry I'm a little late this morning. I had to go fasting for labs this morning. Strictly routine.

Also, I thought I would post reviews (pros and cons) for both LibreOffice and WPS Office in the same post a day or two from now, but that is not to be. The post would be far too long.

So here's my review of LibreOffice. And frankly, thanks to the first two Pros, I was pulling for it.

Yesterday I wrote a little over 2000 words on my current novel, and I did so with LibreWriter, part of LibreOffice. Here's what I learned:

PROS

LibreOffice is always completely free, an open-source program developed by The Document Foundation, which is headquartered in Germany. There are offices and support staff in the United States.

LibreOffice can export to .pdf as well as .epub. For a prolific writer and independent publisher, I see this as a good thing.

That said, I have not verified whether an .epub file generated with LibreOffice would pass the EPUBCheck validation process, and the LibreOffice help forum says nothing about it that I could find.

If I end up using LibreOffice full time, I will generate an .epub file as a test, then run it through the EPUBCheck validator. To check your own .epubs, visit <https://www.w3.org/publishing/epubcheck/>.)

Libre Calc, the spreadsheet program of LibreOffice, seemed to handle everything just as Office 365 Excel does.

CONS

It's a little difficult to set up the menus and toolbars, the latter serving as the equivalent to the Quick Access toolbar in Office 365. Once you find Settings it goes a little easier, but it's still clunky at best.

LibreOffice does not automatically adjust spacing when you select and move or delete a word or words. You have to be attentive. Or maybe after you've finished the story, run the Find & Replace tool to find all double and triple spaces and replace them with single spaces. This is not a huge problem, but it is annoying.

Another, more annoying spacing issue—I prefer to eliminate the chunk of white space between pages. You can do that with a double-click, just as in Office 365.

But when the pages are scrunched together in Office 365, there is still a small space after the last line of the previous page and before the first line of the current page.

In LibreOffice, there is *zero space* after the last line of the previous page. In fact, the line that marks the end of the page actually cuts off any descenders from the line of text above it. As with every other problem I had with LibreOffice, there was no mention of how to adjust that space in the online Help program.

LibreOffice has no shortcut keys for inserting symbols or special characters.

I thought I had a work-around for this one, but (and this is big) LibreOffice also has no auto-correct or auto-format feature. Nor does LibreOffice Help recognize either term.

So (for example) you can't set the word processor to replace two hypens with an em dash with auto correct. For me, this is huge.

As an aside, at the bottom of the boilerplate for the Journal, I have a set of characters I need from time to time. In case you're interested, here they are:

em dash —
en dash –
degree symbol °
é ñ á í ó ç © ì ¶ ¡ ÿ
● ■

When I need a special character, I simply copy and paste it. But I don't want to include something like this in a fiction I'm writing or have to interrupt the flow to hunt-up a special character from the Insert Symbol dialogue box and insert it manually.

The Find & Replace dialogue box doesn't adjust to show more or fewer options. There is only the larger size. This isn't a deal breaker, but it's annoying.

LibreOffice does not have a "Return to where you left off" feature. This is at least an annoying inconvenience.

I can either scroll to the white space at the end of a document or, if I left off somewhere in the middle, I can remember to highlight a few lines of text and return there at the next session. But the auto-return feature is awfully handy. It's the one reason I eventually preferred Office 365 over Office 2010.

Okay, that's it. I will make recommendations to the LibreOffice folks and hope one of the next few releases improves these issues. Against that possibility, I will keep LibreOffice in my computer.

Today, I'll open the current novel again and pick up where I left off yesterday, but today I'll test WPS Office.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “The Pareto Principle for Writers” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/08/the-pareto-principle-for-writers.html>. Garry’s posts are always good.

See “How to Escape Imposter Syndrome in Your Writing Life” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-to-escape-imposter-syndrome-in-your-writing-life/>.

See “Book Family Tree: A New Way to Think About Your Book” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/book-family-tree-a-new-way-to-think-about-your-book/>. About selecting genres, I believe.

See “Best Fantasy Book Covers Of 2023: 7 Tips To Inspire” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/best-fantasy-book-covers-of-2023-7-tips-to-inspire/>.

See “Difficult Empathies” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/difficult-empathies/>. Some of the books below the post looked interesting.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 870

I removed the stats for Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5) until I resume writing it again.

Writing of Blackwell Ops 9: Cameron Stance

Brought forward..... 4087

Day 1..... 1595 words. To date..... 5682

Day 2..... 2101 words. To date..... 7783

Day 3..... 2573 words. To date..... 10356

Day 4..... 1588 words. To date..... 11944

Day 5..... 2135 words. To date..... 14079

Fiction for August..... 20595

Fiction for 2023..... 135142

Fiction since August 1..... 20595

Nonfiction for August..... 14470

Nonfiction for the year..... 164370

Annual consumable words..... 299512

2023 Novels to Date..... 2

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)... 221
Short story collections..... 31

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Characters, and Still Testing WPS Office

August 18, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Still Testing WPS Office
- * Where Do My Characters Come From?
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“We fluff them and fold them and nudge them and enhance them and bind them and break them and embellish them beyond measure; then, as we drive them up to the college interviews that they’ve heard since birth are the gateway to the lives they were destined to lead based on nothing more than our own need for it to be true, we tell them, with a smile so tight it would crack nuts, ‘Just be yourself.’” Heather Choate Davis

Still Testing WPS Office

I had hoped to offer my opinion of WPS Office today, but it will have to wait. I did write a little yesterday, but I also went down a few rabbit holes while doing some “quick” research. (grin) By the time I surfaced, my writing time had all but evaporated.

As a result, I didn’t get much more done on the story. I’ll fold the few hundred words I did get done into today’s writing. With any luck I’ll have a review of WPS Office for you tomorrow.

I *will* stick my neck out and say it’s looking pretty good as a successor to Microsoft Office 365, at least in my computer.

Where Do My Characters Come From?

Back in the day when I presented sessions on writing at a lot of different writers’ conferences, sometimes I also took part in panel discussions. (Most writers didn’t like sitting on panels, but it was understood to be an unspoken requirement if you wanted to be invited back.)

To form a panel, several presenters would sit behind a long table on a stage or at the front of a large room. The audience members would be parked in chairs on the floor, and the panel members would field questions from the audience.

Over on Vin Zandri's YouTube channel today, he's answering the question "How Do You Come Up With Your Characters?" [To hear his response, click here.](#)

As Vin indicated has been the case with him, after "Where do you get your ideas?" the most often asked question of the panels I was on was "How do you come up with your characters?" or the alternative, "Where do your characters come from?"

The question was always directed to "the whole panel" instead of a particular member, and most of the writers on the panel would respond.

So hoping Vin won't mind, today he and I are on a panel together and answering the question. Please listen to Vin's response at the link above.

If he were also on the panel, I suspect Harlan Ellison would have said he gets his characters from the same place he gets his ideas: "I get 'em from a little shop in Schenectady."

My own response?

Most of the time, my characters just pop into my head, usually while delivering a line of dialogue. For example, on our way back from a trip to Tucson one time, I burst out laughing.

My wife looked at me. "What's going on?"

"A Brooklyn character just popped into my head. A wise guy. You don't want to know."

But she did want to know.

Still chuckling, I told her. "The guy's fully formed, big, looks like something out of a Godfather movie. His name is Joe 'Joey Bones' Salerno. He just pointed at someone off-camera in my head and said, 'Oh, I didn't tell you? Must'a been none'a your f***in' business.'"

Later, Joey Bones starred in several short stories and a novella. Oddly enough, he never uttered that line in a story as far as I can remember.

In another of hundreds of similar occurrences, I "saw" a lean 1880s Texas Ranger crouching at the edge of a small campfire in a wooded area. His name was Wes Crowley.

As I watched, he 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?"

And my first novel was off and running.

Sometimes, as Vin mentions, the characters that occur to me are bits of “real” people I’ve met. Other times they might be bits of characters I’ve met in other books or in films. But I don’t choose them or concoct them. They always take the first step and introduce themselves.

Even when I’m performing that “story starter” idea of a character with a problem in a setting, I wait a few seconds and a character pops into my head. Sometimes saying something, sometimes doing something. But he or she always comes to me. I don’t have to go looking or construct anything.

I consider the characters as real (or moreso) than most humans. After all, even when you’ve been acquainted with a flesh-and-blood human being for years or even decades, you still don’t really know him or her. I know most of my characters almost intimately. But just like “real” humans, my characters still occasionally reveal something I didn’t know.

Often the new information surprises me, and not always pleasantly. Like Wes’ Ranger contemporary who revealed, as he lay dying, that years before he joined the Rangers he was an outlaw who had escaped jail. (Yes, I let him tell that story right in the middle of a Crowley Saga novel.)

I believe my characters actually exist somewhere, maybe in a different dimension or whatever. The location doesn’t really matter. And when I access my creative subconscious it enables me to open a door or draw aside a curtain and look in on whatever story they’re living at the time.

Usually they invite me to drop into the story and run through it with them. Then I just write what happens as it happens and what the characters say and do in response. Easy peasy.

The belief that the characters exist somewhere enables me to remember what I’m putting on the screen is THEIR story, not mine.

In my story, I’m sitting at a laptop, my fingers busily moving over the keyboard. In THEIR story, they (and I when they invite me along) are experiencing places I’ll never physically go and events I’ll never physically experience.

And wow am I grateful they let me come along!

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Advertising and Building Fans” at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/advertising-and-building-fans/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1110

Writing of Blackwell Ops 9: Cameron Stance

Brought forward..... 4087

Day 1..... 1595 words. To date..... 5682

Day 2..... 2101 words. To date..... 7783

Day 3..... 2573 words. To date..... 10356

Day 4..... 1588 words. To date..... 11944

Day 5..... 2135 words. To date..... 14079

Fiction for August..... 20595

Fiction for 2023..... 135142

Fiction since August 1..... 20595

Nonfiction for August..... 15580

Nonfiction for the year..... 165480

Annual consumable words..... 300622

2023 Novels to Date..... 2

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)... 221

Short story collections..... 31

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“Layers,” and WPS Office Set Aside

August 19, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * A New Story
- * WPS Office Set Aside
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

A New Story

Yesterday a new story went out via my substack. If you aren't subscribed and would like to read it, [click “Layers”](#). Afterward if you want to subscribe, click the button at the end of the post.

I noticed one kind of strange thing, and I hadn't noticed it before. The POV character of the story is a guy named Thomas Pilsen. A character by the same name stars in one or two other stories and/or novellas as well, in different genres.

Kind'a cool if you think about it. My subconscious must like that name.

WPS Office Set Aside

As I mentioned at the beginning of this test, my current subscription to Microsoft Office 365 is good until sometime in June 2024.

Therefore, I've decided the few glitches I found in WPS Office are enough to warrant setting it aside for now. I look forward to testing both it and LibreOffice again several months from now.

I do very much like that all of the applications in WPS Office open in one window but in different tabs. That is ridiculously convenient. I kind of wish Microsoft Office and LibreOffice would do the same thing.

I also noticed WPS Office does have a "continue where you left off" feature, very similar to that in Office 365.

Oh, you can also install the paid version of WPS Office on as many as nine devices, though only three laptops or desktop computers. (You can install one subscription of Office 365 on up to five computers.)

Before I begin with the Cons, WPS Office is also free. If you want extended functionality, it costs about \$40 per year, still a substantial drop from the cost of Office 365. (That functionality does not address any of the issues I mention below.)

If you're only writing fiction, you probably don't need the extended stuff. You can see a feature comparison at <https://www.wps.com/pricing/>. From what I could see, none of the extra functionality has anything to do with word processing.

Here are the reasons I'm not going to switch to it right now:

Word count—When I opened the same document in all three programs, somehow it had 72 fewer words in WPS Office than in Office 365 or LibreOffice. I thought that was very odd.

Selecting Text—The program seems determined to select a line of text at a time. You can select only a word or even a few letters, but you have to be very careful or it will select a whole line.

Highlighting—Sometimes I find it useful to highlight a few lines of text. WPS Office offers several highlighting tools in its menu and in the Quick Access Toolbar. However, none of them actually highlight the text. When I select text and then click a color in the tool, the text remains the same.

No Shortcut Keys—Like LibreOffice, WPS Office also does not offer shortcut keys to insert symbols. BUT...

Options—Unlike LibreOffice, WPS Office has an Options section. Click the Menu tab in the upper left corner of WPS Office, scroll to the very bottom and click Options. Then click Edit and “Replace text as you type.” Now you can cause the program to replace — (or whatever) with an em dash. So it’s a little clunky, but that helps.

Options 2—There are not nearly as many options in WPS Office as are available in Office 365, but from what I saw there are enough to suit my purposes.

Options 3—Some of the features in Options seem to reset themselves if you close the program. For example, yesterday I unchecked “Check spelling as you type” and clicked Save. But today when I opened the program again, it was checking spelling as I typed and underlining the words in red. Annoying.

What I might call “cursor management” is a little choppy or clunky and awkward too. Say I’ve inadvertently selected a line of text. If I release the mouse, then attempt to place the cursor elsewhere, it takes a moment for the program to “release” the selected text. Very odd.

Maybe the program runs on something other than electrons. Shrug. I dunno.

Anyway, I’ll see whether there are any improvements in both programs before I renew my subscription to Office 365 next June. But don’t worry. I probably won’t report on those tests in the Journal unless the programs have made significant advances.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Booksellers Want Justice Department to Investigate Amazon” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/booksellers-want-justice-department-to-investigate-amazon/>. Yawn. Again? See PG’s take.

See “Trademark Silliness” at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/trademark-silliness/>.

See “The Classics” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/08/the-classics.html>. Fun to think about.

See “New York Times considers legal action against OpenAI...” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/new-york-times-considers-legal-action-against-openai-as-copyright-tensions-swirl/>. See PG’s take.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 790

Writing of Blackwell Ops 9: Cameron Stance

Brought forward..... 4087

Day 1..... 1595 words. To date..... 5682

Day 2..... 2101 words. To date..... 7783

Day 3..... 2573 words. To date..... 10356

Day 4..... 1588 words. To date..... 11944

Day 5..... 2135 words. To date..... 14079

Day 6..... 2019 words. To date..... 16098

Fiction for August..... 22614

Fiction for 2023..... 137161

Fiction since August 1..... 22614

Nonfiction for August..... 16370

Nonfiction for the year..... 166270

Annual consumable words..... 303431

2023 Novels to Date..... 2

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)... 221

Short story collections..... 31

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A Few Thoughts on Craft

August 20, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * A Few Thoughts on Craft
- * No Writing Yesterday
- * Bradbury Challenge Reminder
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“[T]he asymmetry in the city’s response can’t but make some residents suspicious, and such suspicion is clearly a wider phenomenon at this moment. In episodes of government by crisis,

some interests find themselves more aligned with officialdom than others.” Matthew Crawford from “The danger of safetyism” (Thanks to Matt P. for the link)

“[W]e would do well to remember that bureaucracies have their own interests, quite apart from the public interest that is their official brief and warrant. They are very much in the business of tending and feeding the narratives that justify their existence.” Matthew Crawford

Story ideas abound. You could easily write another version of Orwell’s 1984 by just looking around and writing what you see.

A Few Thoughts on Craft

Thanks to my friend KC for many of these thoughts...

The natural voice of narrative is past tense, and the natural voice of “present” stuff (so dialogue, internal thought) is present tense.

Just as hitting the Enter key more often is good for pacing, using a period followed by a space and a capital letter is better for pacing (and tension and suspense) than a comma followed by and or but. Two or three shorter sentences are almost always better (and less boring and less tiring) than one very long sentence.

However, if they’re written intentionally to create a particular response in the reader, longer sentences convey stronger emotion and shorter sentences (and sentence fragments) evoke a stronger sense of drama. Seriously. They do.

When they’re used to set off parenthetical information, commas and em dashes (just like parentheses) should always be nested: whatever you open with, you close with that too. Information is parenthetical if the sentence would still make sense without that information.

If you want to write authentic, original stories, don’t think. Remind yourself every time you sit down to just write whatever comes. In every case, “whatever comes” is coming directly from the POV character of the story as he or she is living it. You can’t get more authentic or original than that.

On “giving” your characters memories (see “Of Interest”)—I recommend you do as I do: Trust your characters and let the story unfold as they live it. As a result, they will bring their own memories to the story. Always a surprise, and always something the reader can’t anticipate because even you won’t anticipate it.

No Writing Yesterday

I seem to be in a cycle recently of writing one day, then skipping the next. That’s all been down to coincidence, but after several days of the pattern repeating I’m starting to wonder.

Yesterday I didn't write because I spent a lot of time mowing the taller grass in my yard (while it wasn't wet from our recent rains) and my neighbors' (on vacay at the moment) full lawn.

Bradbury Challenge Reminder

It strikes me that a large number of folks, including some Challenge participants, do not read the Journal every day, and therefore these reminders are ludicrous.

Anyway, since I already started, if you're in the Challenge or would like to be, get your story titles and word counts in to me before the Journal goes live on Sunday morning.

The best way to approach such a challenge is to get it done early in the week so there's no "pressure" to write. (Pressure often invokes fear and the critical mind.) I keep repeating this, yet as of today only two Challenge participants have filed their story details with me. Go figure. Shows you what I know, huh?

Of course, you can participate in the challenge and never tell me a word about it. If you're a writer, what matters is that you write.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "The danger of safetyism" at <https://unherd.com/2020/05/the-hypocrisy-of-safetyism/>. Matthew also writes Archedelia, a substack blog "Toward a political theory of the present."

See "The Archedelia Project" (Archedelia: "rule-revealing" (by analogy with psychedelia, "soul-revealing") at [https://mcrawford.substack\[dot\]com/p/welcome-to-archedelia](https://mcrawford.substack[dot]com/p/welcome-to-archedelia). Reading this will tell you whether you want to subscribe.

See "Three links for 2023-08-21" at [https://mattpmn.substack\[dot\]com/p/three-links-for-2023-08-21](https://mattpmn.substack[dot]com/p/three-links-for-2023-08-21).

See "AI Not Protected Under Copyright" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/ai-not-protected-under-copyright/>.

See "Character Type and Trope Thesaurus: Pessimist" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/character-type-and-trope-thesaurus-pessimist/>. Read, absorb, fuggidaboutit.

See "Give Your Characters Memories" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/08/give-your-characters-memories.html>. Oh. My. God.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 730

Writing of Blackwell Ops 9: Cameron Stance

Brought forward..... 4087

Day 1..... 1595 words. To date..... 5682

Day 2..... 2101 words. To date..... 7783

Day 3..... 2573 words. To date..... 10356

Day 4..... 1588 words. To date..... 11944

Day 5..... 2135 words. To date..... 14079

Day 6..... 2019 words. To date..... 16098

Fiction for August..... 22614

Fiction for 2023..... 137161

Fiction since August 1..... 22614

Nonfiction for August..... 17090

Nonfiction for the year..... 166990

Annual consumable words..... 304151

2023 Novels to Date..... 2

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)... 221

Short story collections..... 31

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Gold Find, and the Quandary of the Sagging Middle

August 21, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Correction
- * I Found Gold
- * The Quandary of the Sagging Middle
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“The difference between stupidity and genius is that genius has its limits.” Albert Einstein

Correction

Yesterday I wrote that I would report on the Challenge on Sunday. Um, nope. Mental typo. I’ll report each week on Monday until this thing is over.

Sorry for any confusion.

I Found Gold

You all know how relatively thorough and meticulous I am with my filing system. I talked about it in [“Organizing Saves Time”](#) and maybe a little more in the post before or after that one.

Well, apparently I’m not quite as organized as I gave myself credit for being. (grin)

I happened across a short story title that sounded familiar: “By His Own Bad Mind.” I thought I remembered writing that story, but I couldn’t be sure until I found it in my files. It was possible someone else had written the story, and I’d only read and remembered the title.

So I searched my short story files. Nothing. I looked under my own name as well as the names of Eric Stringer, Nick Porter, and even that of Ms. François. Finally, desperate, I looked under Gervasio Arrancado. Still nothing.

So I used File Explorer to search Dropbox for it. And I found it. I clicked the “Open file location” link. Duh.

It was in a folder marked Shorts inside the novel folder for *Two Old Gringos Waiting for a Train...* um, along with 10 other short stories I had written and forgotten about.

I hadn’t even added them to my inventory spreadsheet or to my numbers below. After I corrected that error, I thought how cool it would be to release them as a collection of 11 short stories. I could title it *Lost Tales from the Gila Wilderness* or some such thing.

Here are the eleven short stories, including one by the same name as the novel:

“A Matter of Survival”

“Avoidance”

“By His Own Bad Mind”

“Excesses”

“Jimmy the Dope”

“Mr. Sloan and the Crone”

“Practical Purposes”

“The Interview”
“The Old 710”
“Two Old Gringos Waiting for a Train”
“Yates Briscoe and the Beauty of Britain”

Hmm. The stories were never published individually because I “lost” them for awhile in that folder for that novel. But why had I never published them as a collection before?

As I contemplated that, I thought I’d refresh my memory about the novel itself. It was about my buddy and me, so it would be a nice trip down memory lane anyway.

But guess what? I *had* published all of those short stories, just not in a collection... well, not exactly in a collection.

They were all integral parts of the novel, *Two Old Gringos Waiting for a Train*. Somehow I’d forgotten.

Anyway, the cover I pieced together for that novel is atrocious. So I figure I’ll create a new cover, then release the book again, but with a dual title. Yep, you guessed it:

Lost Tales from the Gila Wilderness
or *Two Old Gringos Waiting for a Train*

Should be fun. 😊

The Quandary of the Sagging Middle

well, and some other stuff...

How many times have we seen or heard writers complain that they’ve reached the “sagging middle” of their novel? Or how many times do we see the topic discussed on websites, always with ways to fix it.

The complaint is repeated regularly over at The Kill Zone blog, where all the contributors, by the way, are bestselling thriller or mystery writers. I’m sure it’s repeated equally as often or even more often at thousands of other “instructional” blogs around the internet.

Yet the “sagging middle” is a ridiculous concept that doesn’t stand up to scrutiny. My friend Dan Baldwin pointed that out more succinctly than anyone in his recent weekly blog.

Here’s an excerpt from “The Sagging Middle—Perception vs. Reality,” with permission from Dan:

— The infamous “sagging middle” haunts writers who seem to believe that their work suddenly begins to drag. Movement and character development slow down and the writer (and presumably, the reader) is trapped in a morass of wandering paragraphs, chapters and sections.

— The danger is that the reader, sucked into said morass, will put down the book and never return.

— Wait a minute! How is the sagging middle even possible?

— Plotters—those who plot their novels—have no excuse for a sagging middle.

— If the writer has invested so much time and energy into developing the plot and the characters and the plot twists, the middle should not sag. It's all laid out before s/he writes the first word.

— Any potential sagging should be obvious simply by going over the outline. Any stumbling blocks to story development should be obvious and easy to correct before the actual writing even starts.

— Pansters—those who write “by the seat of their pants”—shouldn't experience the problem at all.

— Those of us who practice Writing Into the Dark are led by our characters who are continually throwing literary curve balls at us. We're always surprised by what happens next because we haven't a clue as to what's coming next. ...

This is absolutely great, Dan. You might consider posting some of this in a comment over on The Kill Zone blog the next time they start weeping about their stories having a sagging middle.

And while we're on the topic of wondering what's going on, why do plotters need to revise, much less rewrite? Think about it.

As Dan wrote above, everything—the storyline, plot twists, characters, etc.—is planned to the nth degree, so why is revision necessary?

I can hear some plotters out there saying “Wull, I don't plan out *everything*, blah blah blah.”

Yeah? Well why not? If you're going to the trouble of pre-writing the story in an outline of any sort (guideposts, signposts, phaselines, etc.) why not commit and plan it all out?

But that's your business, not mine. By all means, if you're unsure, revise. And then do a thorough rewrite if you want to. Or two or three. Or fifteen.

But that's another topic, isn't it? If the thing is all meticulously planned out, why rewrite? And again, if it *isn't* planned out and you're a ~~plodder~~—oops, I mean a plotter—why isn't it planned out?

And if you DO choose to rewrite to make everything that much closer to “perfect,” then why do you need to rewrite again? And again? And again? And then polish?

A couple of decades ago, I witnessed the utmost in pre-emptory editorial meddling. The submission guidelines of (the now-defunct, I believe) Rose & Thorn magazine required no fewer than 15 rewrites.

1. How would they know? I never wrote to ask whether they had to actually see all 15 rewrites.
2. I have to wonder too, how many writers did those editors (there were two, both also writers and both acquaintances of mine) force to lie to them?

No matter. I respect myself too much to ever submit anything to any editor who “requires” any rewrites at all, much less a specific number. How insanely control-freakish is that?

But I do have a work-around if I was that much of a mook. If I was desperate enough to submit any of my writing to such an editor in the first place, I would do the 15th rewrite during the first (and only) draft, run a quick spell check, and turn that in.

Because I’m a writer. I’m too busy with the next story to stop and hover and revise and rewrite the same story over and over and over. And frankly, I can’t think of anything more boring than rewriting or “polishing” something when I already know how the story ends.

Rewriting a story 15 times is eerily like making 15 two-foot trips with a wheel barrow full of gravel to move the load 30 feet to where it’s needed on the work site.

And if the editors rejected my story, I’d send it to the next magazine on my list. Life’s far, far, FAR too short to put up with that kind of game-playing bullsnot.

But that’s just me.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Direct Sales” at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/direct-sales/>.

See “Do You Have Dirty Links?” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/08/do-you-have-dirty-links.html>. A good reminder of a topic we’ve talked about before.

See “The Latest Writing Scams Authors Need to Watch out For” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-latest-writing-scams-authors-need-to-watch-out-for/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1400

Writing of Blackwell Ops 9: Cameron Stance
Brought forward..... 4087

Day 1.....	1595 words. To date.....	5682
Day 2.....	2101 words. To date.....	7783
Day 3.....	2573 words. To date.....	10356
Day 4.....	1588 words. To date.....	11944
Day 5.....	2135 words. To date.....	14079
Day 6.....	2019 words. To date.....	16098
Fiction for August.....		22614
Fiction for 2023.....		137161
Fiction since August 1.....		22614
Nonfiction for August.....		18490
Nonfiction for the year.....		168390
Annual consumable words.....		305551
2023 Novels to Date.....		2
2023 Novellas to Date.....		0
2023 Short Stories to Date.....		4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....		73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....		9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)...		232
Short story collections.....		31

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Bradbury Challenge Participants

August 21, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Correction #2
- * Bradbury Challenge Participants

Correction #2

Well, crap. I won't go into a long-winded explanation, but somewhere or other I lost a day. I was thinking today was Sunday. Only the arrival of the trash truck convinced me otherwise.

Apologies to George, Balázs and KC, who tried to tell me.

Anyway, in an extremely rare second post in one day, here are the Challenge results for the past week. Yeah, I could've waited until tomorrow, but this should get everything back on track.

Bradbury Challenge Participants

During the past week, in addition to whatever other fiction they're writing, the following writers reported their progress:

- Erin Donoho “A Friend of the Heart” 4500 words Historical Fiction
- Balázs Jámber (Ended streak and dropped out to work on his novel.)
- George Kordonis “Chloe’s Story” 26786 words, Sweet Romance
- Alexander Nakul “The Secret of the Heretic Ebion” 1731 words Historical
- Chynna Pace “Last Minute Madness” 2479 words Humorous Fiction
- Christopher Ridge “Squeal Like a Pig” Horror 2800 words
- K.C. Riggs “The Empty Swing” 2475 words Paranormal

Thanks, everyone, for your seemingly endless patience with a tired old man. Wes and I appreciate it.

No “Of Interest” or “Numbers” on this extra post.

Talk with you again soon.

Harvey

An Old Review, and Draft2Digital

August 22, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Sentence Length
- * An Old Review Is New Again
- * You DO Know About Draft2Digital, Right?
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“For whatever weird reason my mind wanted to write a ‘sweet romance’ genre story and it grew into a [short novel of 26786 words] of all things. Go figure. I stayed the hell out of the way and let this character tell her story.... I’ve never written romance and I don’t write romance—I’m strictly a speculative fiction guy—but there you go.” George Kordonis

I love testimony like this. Thanks, George.

“I must think I get paid by the ‘and’. I’ll work on that.” Anonymous (a writer friend’s response after I mentioned how breaking up longer sentences can help with pacing)

Sentence Length

Remembering that

- longer and less-punctuated sentences convey more and stronger emotion, that
- shorter sentences evoke a sense of drama, and that
- overdoing either one will dilute the effect,
- shorter sentences, like shorter paragraphs and shorter chapters, enhance pacing.

An Old Review Is New Again

I've long held that real poetry is nothing special, meaning it isn't something the reader must work to understand. It isn't something that must be "interpreted," for example.

Through the words the poet chooses and the arrangement of the poetic lines, the poet strives to convey a message.

What a poem "means" is whatever the words convey, altered slightly by the experiences of the reader. So one poem, read by 100 different people, probably will have 100 different meanings, or at least 100 different shades of meaning.

With all of that in mind, when my *Intimations of the Shapes of Things* was released by WMJ Press in Chadd's Ford, PA back in the 1990s, one of the reviewers we sent it to was Professor Joseph S. Salemi, PhD.

Dr. Salemi was known as a tough critic, one more likely to do a hatchet job than to offer even the slightest bit of praise. But that's what we (the publisher and I) wanted: a true test. And we got it.

My wife recently found the review among some other old papers, scanned it to PDF and sent it to me. I thought I'd offer it on the Free Archives page. I hope you'll download it and read it.

If you are one who stopped reading poetry because you believe you "can't understand it," I hope you'll try some of mine. It is neither boring nor haughty nor pretentious. And as such, it's accessible, not obscure.

Good poetry is written for people who are interested in seeing the best possible words put in the best possible order to convey a message.

Dr. Salemi wrote a great review. [To download and read it, click here.](#)

You can also find the review in a centered link below the Other Gifts on the [Free Archives page](#), and then click on the centered link below the Other Gifts.

And if you'd like to read the collection, [Intimations of the Shapes of Things](#), email me and let me know which eformat you'd like. I'll send it out. Free.

You DO Know About Draft2Digital, Right?

I was browsing the Kill Zone blog comments this morning, and ran across professional writers who still don't use (or apparently even know about) D2D as a distributor. Of course, that also means they aren't using Book2Read's universal link. Frankly, I was amazed.

Unless you're enrolling your books in Amazon Kindle Unlimited (a program that requires exclusivity for 3 months), you should be distributing through Draft2Digital, period.

If I had it to do over again, here's what I would do, and this is what I strongly recommend:

1. Enroll every novel, as it is completed, in Amazon KU.
2. When the 3-month exclusivity period is over, pull the novel from KU (not from Amazon completely) and upload it to D2D for extended worldwide distribution through other sellers in addition to Amazon.
3. For short stories, I would offer them only in five- and ten-story collections (either, not both), and yes, I would also go with them to KU first, then D2D. I wasted a ton of time publishing my stories individually.

Hint: If you do upload separately to Amazon, after your book is listed on D2D, click the universal book link (UBL) provided by D2D to be sure it also points to Amazon. If it doesn't, you can manually add the Amazon link for your book to the B2R universal link.

Hint: If you have that kind of mindset and can WITD, you might also serialize your novel and upload segments to Amazon Kindle Vella. I haven't done this yet, so I don't know whether it requires exclusivity or how it would work with Amazon KU. Once I'm writing again the way I used to, I intend to serialize via Kindle Vella.

I suspect my friend Vin Zandri knows. Maybe he can enlighten me.

Any questions about D2D? Please don't just skip over this broad distribution avenue. Ask me your questions (or ask D2D directly) so one or the other of us can ease your concerns.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "How AI-Generated Books Could Hurt Self-Publishing Authors" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-ai-generated-books-could-hurt-self-publishing-authors/>. Check out the comments.

See "AI Training Permission" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/ai-training-permission/>.

See “I Hear A Symphony” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/08/i-hear-a-symphony.html>. All about structure. Read, absorb, forget.

See “Kurt Vonnegut explains stories” at https://www.linkedin.com/posts/nathan-baugh_in-4-minutes-kurt-vonnegut-explains-stories-ugcPost-7099399500183597056-iruG. My son sent me this.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 900

Writing of Blackwell Ops 9: Cameron Stance

Brought forward..... 4087

Day 1..... 1595 words. To date..... 5682

Day 2..... 2101 words. To date..... 7783

Day 3..... 2573 words. To date..... 10356

Day 4..... 1588 words. To date..... 11944

Day 5..... 2135 words. To date..... 14079

Day 6..... 2019 words. To date..... 16098

Fiction for August..... 22614

Fiction for 2023..... 137161

Fiction since August 1..... 22614

Nonfiction for August..... 19380

Nonfiction for the year..... 169280

Annual consumable words..... 306441

2023 Novels to Date..... 2

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)... 232

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark and adherence to Heinlein’s Rules. Unreasoning fear and the myths of writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

Kindle Vella

August 23, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * More on Kindle Vella
- * Vin Zandri on Vella
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

More on Kindle Vella

Since I talked about Vella briefly yesterday, I poked around a little. To learn more about it, I recommend “Kindle Vella: What Is It?” at <https://prowritingaid.com/kindle-vella>. (Note also this is ProWritingAid touting their own services.)

You can also check out “Kindle Vella: Description, Features, and Tips for Authors” direct from KindlePreneur, a great source of information on all things Kindle, at <https://kindlepreneur.com/kindle-vella/>.

Finally there's “Kindle Vella – Start a Story” at https://kdp.amazon.com/en_US/help/topic/GKWM7L5U6ESNFT5X. See the “Contents” section for pointers.

Vin Zandri on Vella

Vin Zandri also responded in a comment to yesterday's post:

— My process for the past year is to write the first draft of the story, novella, or novel on Kindle Vella, and then after 30 days turn it into a book and publish it on KU for 30-90 days depending on how it's doing. Then I go wide with it via D2D. Seems to work Okay.

— The good thing about Vella is you can still leave your story posted either way. The bad thing about Vella is they don't pay nearly what they were in bonus money. But it's one of those things I fully expected to happen.

— Free money never lasts, let's face it. But they still offer at least some sort of bonus. Vella is also useful as a writing tool if you plan on posting an episode or two every day, 7 days a week, which I do.

Thanks, Vin. Folks, check out that last sentence. “Vella is also useful as a writing tool if you plan on posting an episode or two every day, 7 days a week, which I do.”

Like I wrote in yesterday's Journal, “If you have that kind of mindset and can WITD, you might also serialize your novel and upload segments to Amazon Kindle Vella. ... Once I'm writing again the way I used to, I intend to [do exactly that].”

So use Vella as your writing laxative of choice. It will help keep you regular. (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Got Behind... So A Product...” at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/got-behind-so-a-product/>.
Be sure to read the comments.

See “22 people are enough to build and sustain Martian colony” at <https://interestingengineering.com/science/22-people-are-enough-to-build-and-sustain-martian-colony>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 370

Writing of Blackwell Ops 9: Cameron Stance

Brought forward..... 4087

Day 1..... 1595 words. To date..... 5682

Day 2..... 2101 words. To date..... 7783

Day 3..... 2573 words. To date..... 10356

Day 4..... 1588 words. To date..... 11944

Day 5..... 2135 words. To date..... 14079

Day 6..... 2019 words. To date..... 16098

Fiction for August..... 22614

Fiction for 2023..... 137161

Fiction since August 1..... 22614

Nonfiction for August..... 19750

Nonfiction for the year..... 169650

Annual consumable words..... 306811

2023 Novels to Date..... 2

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)... 232

Short story collections..... 31

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Just Catching Up

August 24, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Finally a Great Writing Day
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Writers, we are so flipping weird.” Dean Wesley Smith

Finally a Great Writing Day

After a few days layoff while I was dealing with some medical issues, I had a great day of writing on yesterday. For the first time on this novel, I cleared 3000 words. Barely, but I cleared it.

Then some interruptions occurred. Today I have an appointment with my heart guy (the plumber, not the electrician) in the early afternoon. I wrote a little this morning, but I found myself unable to concentrate very well. So I figured I'd put out this slightly late edition of the Journal and call it a day.

The appointment is routine, so nothing serious, but I'm working through a few almost superficial issues that I have to discuss with the guy.

And then tomorrow we're off to an estate sale that looks particularly promising, and Monday (if I remember correctly) I have another doc appointment, this time with my primary care guy.

So I wrote well yesterday, wrote very little today and will probably not write at all tomorrow. When I'm able to settle in and go back to the story (probably Saturday) I'll try to get the flow going again.

If the writing starts to flow again like I believe it will, I'll go ahead and try the Kindle Vella thing. I have 12 chapters finished, each hovering around 1000 words. From what I've read that's a good length to upload to Vella.

Once I start, I'll probably upload one chapter per day. I might adjust that once I see what's involved. But I probably won't upload more than one per day, at least not until I'm nearing the end of the story.

Once I start, I don't want to skip any days either. Maybe I can use Vella to help me get my mojo back. I hope the writing's going well for all of you too.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Weird Feeling" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/weird-feeling/>. Funny but true.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 350

Writing of Blackwell Ops 9: Cameron Stance

Brought forward..... 4087

Day 1..... 1595 words. To date..... 5682

Day 2..... 2101 words. To date..... 7783

Day 3..... 2573 words. To date..... 10356

Day 4..... 1588 words. To date..... 11944

Day 5..... 2135 words. To date..... 14079

Day 6..... 2019 words. To date..... 16098

Day 7..... 3067 words. To date..... 19165

Fiction for August..... 25681

Fiction for 2023..... 140228

Fiction since August 1..... 25681

Nonfiction for August..... 20100

Nonfiction for the year..... 170000

Annual consumable words..... 306811

2023 Novels to Date..... 2

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)... 232

Short story collections..... 31

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AI Writing Fiction

August 26, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * A New Story
- * Stephen King on AI writing fiction
- * The Writing
- * A Reminder and Two New ePulp Magazines
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“I decided I didn’t want to waste any more time.... I revisited my favorite stories and writers, listened to Bradbury’s lectures at UCLA on YouTube, and even looked through your Journal Archives to give myself a hard reset. I did this for a few days before showing up at my writing desk. I’m throwing my hat back into the Bradbury Challenge.” Frank Theodat

Take heart, folks. It's never too late until suddenly it is.

“You’ve been making women feel bad about themselves since you were invented.” Sasha to Barbie (see the second item in “Of Interest”)

Vin, I thought you might like this quote. (grin)

A New Story

I’m not sure why I never remember to announce these in advance, but I had a new story go out yesterday over on the Stanbrough Writes substack. See “Pearlized” at <https://stanbroughwrites.substack.com/p/pearlized>.

If you want, you can also subscribe just after the story. It’s free.

Stephen King (and me) on AI writing fiction

My friend Gary V. sent this along a couple days ago. King’s reaction is pretty much what I would have assumed (and hoped, frankly) but not quite as gruff as my own thoughts. Click <https://mashable.com/article/stephen-king-ai-fiction>.

In sharing my own thoughts, originally I went on at some length, but I decided to pare it back. Because really, what possible difference could it make? To some, cheating is a palatable or even desirable option, and nothing I say will change that. So here I am.

When people use AI to generate fiction and then call it their own,

- they aren't actually writers no matter what they call themselves, and
- they are cheating the reading public, plain and simple, even if they warn them in advance they are being cheated.

Of course, some say, "But really AI is only another tool to help me create original work."

Okay, snicker. Whatever you have to tell yourself. But you wouldn't be saying crap like that if you didn't know you were cheating. And you know it.

Yeah, yeah, I know, the times have changed.

But one thing has never changed or even wavered: the knowledge you hold within yourself of what is right and what is wrong.

Rich or poor, ill or able-bodied, male or female, your personal integrity is down to you.

As my buddy Wes Crowley would say, "Upright is not a matter of degree."

The Writing

Surprise! The estate sale was so huge and so busy, we curtailed our visit. We plan to go back tomorrow when we hope things will be a little less hectic.

So I got to write a bit on the novel yesterday. Not a stellar day, but I should still get to write more today too. The story is flowing well.

A Reminder and Two New ePulp Magazines

I think I'm back on the right day again, so you who are in the Bradbury Challenge, get your story titles, word counts and genres in to me before the Journal goes live on Monday if you want me to report them.

The quote of the Day today is from Frank Theodat, who has rejoined the challenge. Welcome back, Frank!

According to the editor of online magazine [Soaring Twenties](#), Frank "now presides over the fantastic [Pulp, Pipe, & Poetry substack](#)."

You guys are writers, so I suggest you check out both of those magazines. And good luck.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Red Herrings, Foreshadows and Creating a Mystery” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/08/red-herrings-foreshadows-and-creating-a-mystery.html>.

See “Over The Decades (Niche Marketing Part 9)” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/over-the-decades-niche-marketing-part-9/>.

See “The death of storytelling” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-death-of-storytelling/>.
People who are not writers who use AI to generate stories will not affect storytelling to any great degree. Only writers using AI can do that.

See “France hopes to force Microsoft Edge and others to censor...” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/france-hopes-to-force-microsoft-edge-and-others-to-censor-websites-at-a-browser-level/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 640

Writing of Blackwell Ops 9: Cameron Stance

Brought forward..... 4087

Day 1..... 1595 words. To date..... 5682

Day 2..... 2101 words. To date..... 7783

Day 3..... 2573 words. To date..... 10356

Day 4..... 1588 words. To date..... 11944

Day 5..... 2135 words. To date..... 14079

Day 6..... 2019 words. To date..... 16098

Day 7..... 3067 words. To date..... 19165

Day 8..... 1562 words. To date..... 20727

Fiction for August..... 27243

Fiction for 2023..... 141790

Fiction since August 1..... 27243

Nonfiction for August..... 20740

Nonfiction for the year..... 170640

Annual consumable words..... 312430

2023 Novels to Date..... 2

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)... 232

Short story collections..... 31

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Abandoning Amazon, Saturday, and a Homerun from Dean

August 27, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Dean Hits One Out of the Park
- * A Thought on Abandoning Amazon et al for Direct Sales
- * Saturday
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Writers are desperate people and when they stop being desperate, they stop being writers.”
Charles Bukowski

“I sit alone, in a room, and make stuff up. That’s my job description. I have, without a doubt, the easiest and best job in the world. It is a giant myth that my job is hard work.” Dean Wesley Smith

“[W]hen we are really creating art, we are doing it from the back of our brains, typing fast, buried in the story.” Dean Wesley Smith

“In quickness is truth. 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....” Ray Bradbury

Dean Hits One Out of the Park

For those like me, who long for the days when Dean Wesley Smith actually talked about writing, you’re in luck.

Today he brought forward an old post he first wrote back in 2009. (I remember that it later became part of his [Killing the Sacred Cows books](#).)

Read the rest of this Journal post or not, but don’t miss Dean’s post. See “The Myth That Writing is Hard” at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/the-myth-that-writing-is-hard/>.

Then print it out. Then bookmark it. Then go buy Dean’s *Killing the Sacred Cows* books if you don’t already have them.

A Thought on Abandoning Amazon et al for Direct Sales

There is a lot of talk recently about the benefits of direct sales. To my mind, Dean Wesley Smith started the talk. To be clear, nobody advises an all or nothing approach to selling from your own site, but I'm sure some will go that way, or think they should.

Direct sales are wonderful. You can charge less and put more money in your pocket. I've been selling (yeah, I know, licensing, not selling) books direct from StoneThreadPublishing.com (with discounts) for a few years now.

So by all means, set up a Shopify store (or whatever storefront you want to use) if you can afford to do so.

But keep selling through Amazon, and keep selling through every other venue available to you.

The daily traffic on even Dean Wesley Smith's and Kristine Kathryn Rusch's websites combined isn't a drop in a thousand-gallon tank compared to the traffic Amazon gets every half-hour.

I suspect even Kobo, Apple, B&N and even the much smaller ones get far more traffic than the Dean & Kris show gets.

Not to mention, for every one person who's marching against Amazon because it's, you know, huge and successful and treats workers well, there are an untold number who shop there almost every single day. I'm one of them. I have absolutely nothing against people or companies who succeed.

Chances are, buyers who are loyal to Amazon or to Kobo or Apple or (bless their hearts) B&N or the others will continue to shop in those venues whether or not your books are there.

Also, chances are those buyers will have a much better chance of "discovering" you and finding your books at their favorite store than they will ever have of finding them on your website.

So by all means, set up your personal store on your own website. Or on a publisher website, like <https://StoneThreadPublishing.com>.

But don't quit the successful "day job" that is you selling your stories through the massive retailers. Even after your own site takes off, however you define that term. Cutting off all those other sales venues would just be silly.

Saturday

We returned to the expansive estate sale. It was as wonderful as I noted last time. I almost bought two boxes of S&W .32 caliber ammo, but then I noticed the boxes were marked "wad cutters." Uh, nope.

For any beginners out there, wad cutters are relatively inexpensive ammunition. There is the brass casing, and there is a soft lead projectile, cut off flat at the top of the casing.

Wad cutters have long been lauded as good practice ammo, and I guess some shooters swear by them. I am not one of those. Problem is, they'll leave lead residue in your barrel. It affects the lands and grooves (rifling) in the barrel and it's difficult to clean out. You have to use a wire brush, repeatedly. The problems they cause are not worth the cheaper price, and I advise strongly against buying them.

Anyway, we bought a bunch of other stuff, including a piece of art masquerading as a small rectangular table with two kinds of inlaid wood making up the top. An absolute gem.

It will eventually become my new writing table, dedicated to my writing 'puter and my propensity for living other lives through my fiction.

We were back home by 10:30, and I headed out to the Hovel to write. Didn't get much done, though. I allowed too many other concerns (the new table, etc.) to interfere. I'll get back on the story today.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "If American States Were Real People" at <https://dyingwords.net/if-american-states-were-real-people-as-generated-by-ai/>. Garry likes playing with AI, but never to generate fiction.

See "A Risk Worth Taking" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/08/a-risk-worth-taking.html>. A fun article (aside from the stupid "kill your darlings" bullshit), plus a good question.

See "Character Type & Trope Thesaurus: Doomsday Prepper" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/character-type-trope-thesaurus-doomsday-prepper/>. And how stupid will the rest of us look when it happens?

The Numbers

The Journal..... 910

Writing of Blackwell Ops 9: Cameron Stance

Brought forward..... 4087

Day 1..... 1595 words. To date..... 5682

Day 2..... 2101 words. To date..... 7783

Day 3..... 2573 words. To date..... 10356

Day 4..... 1588 words. To date..... 11944

Day 5..... 2135 words. To date..... 14079

Day 6..... 2019 words. To date..... 16098

Day 7..... 3067 words. To date..... 19165
Day 8..... 1562 words. To date..... 20727

Fiction for August..... 27243
Fiction for 2023..... 141790
Fiction since August 1..... 27243
Nonfiction for August..... 21650
Nonfiction for the year..... 171550
Annual consumable words..... 313340

2023 Novels to Date..... 2
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)... 232
Short story collections..... 31

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Expanding the Challenge, and Amazon Kindle Revisited

August 28, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Expanding the Bradbury Challenge
- * Why Amazon Kindle Unlimited?
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“I'm Larry Niven, and I daydream for a living.” Larry Niven, at a conference, as reported by Peggy K.

“That myth (writing is hard) seems to come back every now and then. I blame all the English teachers I had who fawned over published writing and made us go ever word of say Shakespeare's Hamlet as if it was magic. The guy sat on his butt and wrote. Thats all.” George K.

“Take advantage, because, once your book is published, your time is up, and you will have no more opportunities to fix, tinker, fluff, or polish.” Ruth Harris (see the second item in “Of Interest”)

Well, unless you're a self-published author. Always do your best the first time through, but yes, if you want to change anything, change it and upload a new document.

Expanding the Bradbury Challenge

As I've mentioned here before, and as several of you have attested, the Bradbury Challenge is a great way to jumpstart your writing.

But it dawns on me that short stories aren't everyone's cup of whatever. I am a prime example. I enjoy writing short fiction, but I prefer writing novels. Some of you do too.

First and foremost, you should write what you want to write, what you enjoy writing. So I've decided to expand the Challenge, or rather my reporting of it.

If you're working on a novella or novel and would like to use the Journal to help keep you going, please feel free to jump into the Challenge. Just send me the title of your work, your word count for the week, and the genre (if you want). Same deadline—Monday morning before the Journal goes live.

If you're serializing via Wattpad or Kindle Vella or some other format of which I'm not aware, feel free to send a link along with your information. I'll add the link so others can visit and read, give you feedback (if you want it) and so on.

From now on, I'll break the Challenge Report into two sections: Short Fiction and Longer Works. And yes, you can file a progress report in both Challenges if you want to.

During the past week, in addition to whatever other fiction they're writing, the following Short Fiction writers reported their progress:

Short Fiction

- Erin Donoho “Different” 3800 words Historical YA
- George Kordonis “Claude's Final Hour” 2355 words Science Fiction
- Alexander Nakul “And the zucchini was fried” 1001 words Horror
- Chynna Pace “The Magic Typewriter” 6057 words Fantasy
- Christopher Ridge “The Good Samaritan” 3000 words Crime
- K.C. Riggs “A Break in the Storm Clouds” 3161 words Fantasy
- Frank Theodat [“Feast”](#) 3300 words Horror

I look very forward to celebrating with you a new start in your writing.

And congratulations to KC Riggs for having finished another novel, the sequel to [The Widow's Circle](#) series. Available in ebook and paper.

Why Amazon Kindle Unlimited?

In addition to a comment from which I stole the first Quote of the Day above, in a separate comment Peggy K. also asked an excellent question: "What's the rationale for going exclusive to KU for 3 months? Why not go directly to D2D?"

For years, I've gone directly to D2D myself, and I've recommended it. Now I've switched gears a bit and recommended going first through Amazon KU.

That's based on glowing recommendations from other professional writers, especially bestselling author Vin Zandri, who also trusts his creative subconscious and writes into the dark. To me there can be no greater source.

To catch up (and so I don't cheat by plagiarizing my own earlier post, please read, ["On Amazon Kindle Unlimited, and a Question of Backup"](#).

Specifically, under **"Bestselling Authors Opine on Amazon Kindle Unlimited,"** read what Vin Zandri and bestselling Romance author Diane Darcy had to say about Amazon KU.

Those two comments, more than any other reason, are why I plan to take my current novel, via posting to Vella first, to KU before taking it to D2D. And why I recommend you do the same.

And if you want further motivation for writing fast and rapid release, read **"Speaking of Vin Zandri and Productivity"** a little farther down that page.

If you're able to write every day or most days, I also recommend using Kindle Vella. You can see my take on that by reading the second **"Hint"** below ["You DO Know About Draft2Digital, Right?"](#) and then reading the next post, **"Kindle Vella"** at <https://hestanbrough.com/kindle-vella/>.

Seriously, click through to those links. There's a lot of information there. Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Google sunsets Domains business..." at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/google-sunsets-domains-business-and-shovels-it-off-to-squarespace/>.

See "The 3 R's of a Successful Professional Writing Career" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-3-rs-of-a-successful-professional-writing-career/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 790

Writing of Blackwell Ops 9: Cameron Stance

Brought forward..... 4087

Day 1..... 1595 words. To date..... 5682
Day 2..... 2101 words. To date..... 7783
Day 3..... 2573 words. To date..... 10356
Day 4..... 1588 words. To date..... 11944
Day 5..... 2135 words. To date..... 14079
Day 6..... 2019 words. To date..... 16098
Day 7..... 3067 words. To date..... 19165
Day 8..... 1562 words. To date..... 20727
Day 9..... 2616 words. To date..... 23343

Fiction for August..... 29859
Fiction for 2023..... 144406
Fiction since August 1..... 27243
Nonfiction for August..... 22440
Nonfiction for the year..... 172340
Annual consumable words..... 316746

2023 Novels to Date..... 2
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)... 232
Short story collections..... 31

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Cyberpunk?

August 29, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Cyberpunk?
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Be yourself. The world worships the original.” Ingrid Bergman

“[I]f you use one of the AI writing services, you are taking other writer’s work ... and secondly you don’t own the copyright.” Dean Wesley Smith

“[A]bsent a book’s creator admitting she/he used artificial intelligence to write a book, how is anyone going to know for certain whether the author used AI to assist in the creation of a book or parts of a book?” The Passive Guy

More on AI in “Of Interest”

Cyberpunk?

For those of you who grew up with or enjoy “cyberpunk,” Matt Perryman posted an excellent retrospective yesterday. See [“On the 40th anniversary of Cyberpunk”](#).

Notably, to me, Matt mentions Bruce Bethke, who coined the term “cyberpunk” in his short story of the same name around 40 years ago. From his bio, “Bruce Bethke is best known either for his 1980 short story, ‘Cyberpunk,’ his Philip K. Dick Award-winning novel, *Headcrash*, or as the editor and publisher of *Stupefying Stories*.” [Here’s Bruce’s article](#).

Now Bruce is “putting together a special anniversary issue of *Stupefying Stories* for the 40th anniversary of his short-story. And he’s seeking submissions for a few issues of the magazine. Visit <https://stupefyingstories.blogspot.com/p/late-summer-fall-2023-open-submissions.html>.

Of particular interest to me in Bruce’s article, he mentioned Rocketbook. When I first found Rocketbook, it was the earliest e-reader, a bulky precursor to the Kindle and other dedicated e-readers.

In fact, my book-length poetry collection, *Lessons for a Barren Population*—which was also the first-ever book length poetry collection published as an ebook (HardShell Word Factory, 1996)—was available to read in Rocketbook. I still have that old machine around somewhere.

Today, Rocketbook is not bulky. It has morphed into a slim note-taking application. Per the description, today it’s “an ultramodern, tech-savvy reusable notebook built for the professional who likes to stay organized and on-trend.”

Per the description of one of the alternatives, Notebook OS, it’s a “powerful and aesthetic notetaking system that centralizes all your notes into your digital workspace.” You probably get the gist.

I thought that might interest some of you. The Rocketbook is available for around \$55 to \$60 [directly from the company](#) or [via Amazon](#).

The first link in “Of Interest” lists alternatives. So if you’re one who might find a note-taking application of use, check it out.

For a great deal more information, key “Rocketbook Pro” into your search engine. It’s a sizeable rabbit hole, but one that will be worthwhile if you’re interested.

And if you have or want to write an appropriate story for Stupefying Stories, by all means read the submission guidelines at <https://stupefyingstories.blogspot.com/p/late-summer-fall-2023-open-submissions.html> and submit something already.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Best Rocketbook Alternatives – 2023” at <https://www.producthunt.com/products/rocketbook/alternatives>.

See “Stories We Buy At WMG” at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/stories-we-buy-at-wmg/>. No AI.

See ““AI Will Never Be Good Enough to Replace Real Authors’ Is the Wrong Conversation” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/ai-will-never-be-good-enough-to-replace-real-authors-is-the-wrong-conversation/>. See PG’s take.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 490

Writing of Blackwell Ops 9: Cameron Stance

Brought forward..... 4087

Day 1..... 1595 words. To date..... 5682

Day 2..... 2101 words. To date..... 7783

Day 3..... 2573 words. To date..... 10356

Day 4..... 1588 words. To date..... 11944

Day 5..... 2135 words. To date..... 14079

Day 6..... 2019 words. To date..... 16098

Day 7..... 3067 words. To date..... 19165

Day 8..... 1562 words. To date..... 20727

Day 9..... 2616 words. To date..... 23343

Fiction for August..... 29859

Fiction for 2023..... 144406

Fiction since August 1..... 27243

Nonfiction for August..... 22930

Nonfiction for the year..... 172830

Annual consumable words..... 317236

2023 Novels to Date.....	2
2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
2023 Short Stories to Date.....	4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)...	232
Short story collections.....	31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark and adherence to Heinlein's Rules. Unreasoning fear and the myths of writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

Selling Direct, and an Invitation to a Challenge

August 30, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * More on Selling Direct
- * Invitation to a Challenge
- * On Earning with Substack
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“In two more weeks (after this one), the challenge will have been going half a year! Pretty amazing.” KC Riggs

“Always read something that will make you look good if you die in the middle of it.” (grin) P.J. O'Rourke

Selling Direct, from Vin Zandri

For more on selling direct to readers, please watch Vin Zandri's YouTube recording. You can find it at <https://www.youtube.com/live/qh-bPT8bebU>.

Invitation to a Challenge

When I first started this Journal way back in 2014, I did so to pass along to other writers what I knew, what I was testing, and the results of my experiments.

But I also started the Journal for one selfish reason: to help hold my own feet to the fire. When you report your writing numbers to someone else, it motivates you to keep going. In turn, the

writing itself becomes a streak, and that also keeps you going. Ever since then, I've reported my progress in the "Numbers" section below.

I've said before I wouldn't be a professional fiction writer today if it weren't for what I learned from Dean Wesley Smith. That's true.

But I also wouldn't be a pro if I hadn't taken a deep breath and dived into the three main things I learned from him: Heinlein's Rules, that it was perfectly all right to trust myself, and Writing Into the Dark.

He and his blog are also the reasons I started the Journal. I wanted to pass along the golden key: believing in yourself.

All these years later, to help you—other writers and would-be writers—trust yourselves and take that plunge, I issued the Bradbury Challenge: to write a complete short story once a week. To help motivate you, I also offered to report the title and word count of your stories here in the Journal every Monday morning.

That's been almost six months ago. Yep, it's already been almost six months! In that time, KC Riggs just turned in her 24th short story. She's also the one who reminded me that in two more weeks (after this week) the Challenge will have run for six months. Pretty impressive.

KC isn't the only one, of course. A few other writers are keeping pace, either from the beginning or after having jumped into the Challenge later. One writer just rejoined the Challenge this past reporting period. So the whole thing has been a huge success so far.

Now, as I reported a few days ago, I'm opening up the Challenge to all fiction writers. You might look at it as an ongoing NaNoWriMo, but without the "intentionally write sloppy" part. Do your best the first time through, spell check it, and then move on to the next story or novel.

Reporting your numbers is important. For one thing, the numbers build up very quickly when you're motivated to write. For another, and maybe more importantly, engaging in a challenge and reporting your numbers gives you a reason to write.

How much farther ahead will you be if you start reporting your numbers this coming Monday than if you wait to start at some later date?

Also, I'm a pretty good cheerleader if I do say so myself. (grin)

To repeat the information from [my original post](#),

I'll continue reporting short story titles and word counts, of course. But if you're working on a novella or novel and would like to use the Journal to help keep you going, please feel free to jump into the Challenge.

Just send me the title of your work, your word count for the week, and the genre (if you want).

Same deadline—Monday morning before the Journal goes live. As for your weekly numbers, approximations are fine.

If you're serializing via Wattpad or Kindle Vella or some other format of which I'm not aware, feel free to send a link along with your information. I'll add the link so others can visit, read what you've written, and give you feedback (if you want it).

From now on, I'll break the weekly Challenge Report into two sections: Short Fiction and Longer Works. And yes, you can file a progress report in both Challenges if you want to.

When you're ready, welcome aboard.

On Earning with Substack

This was a good article and important enough that I moved it up here from the "Of Interest" section. I strongly recommend you read it. It's important and timeless. I even added it to my Writer Resources over on HarveyStanbrough.com.

See "On moving from Patreon and earning a steady income" at [https://on.substack\[dot\]com/p/grow-31-laura-kennedy](https://on.substack[dot]com/p/grow-31-laura-kennedy).

From the summary—"Instead of creating distinct, ongoing series for paid subscribers, Laura adds paid perks to her free posts, including voiceovers and Chats. This offers paid readers a richer experience around Laura's best work."

Got my mental wheels turning.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Bulwer Lytton 2023" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/08/bulwer-lytton-2023.html>.

See "Doctors pull out a 3 inch live worm from woman's brain" at <https://interestingengineering.com/science/3-inch-live-worm-from-womans-brain>. Any horror or suspense writers out there?

See "US Pentagon's 'Replicator' will churn out thousands of drones" at <https://interestingengineering.com/innovation/us-replicator-thousands-of-drones>. Star Wars anyone?

See "Google's DeepMind unveils platform to permanently watermark AI-generated images" at <https://www.theverge.com/2023/8/29/23849107/synthid-google-deepmind-ai-image-detector>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 880

Writing of Blackwell Ops 9: Cameron Stance

Brought forward..... 4087

Day 1..... 1595 words. To date..... 5682

Day 2..... 2101 words. To date..... 7783

Day 3..... 2573 words. To date..... 10356

Day 4..... 1588 words. To date..... 11944

Day 5..... 2135 words. To date..... 14079

Day 6..... 2019 words. To date..... 16098

Day 7..... 3067 words. To date..... 19165

Day 8..... 1562 words. To date..... 20727

Day 9..... 2616 words. To date..... 23343

Day 10.... 2696 words. To date..... 26039

Fiction for August..... 32555

Fiction since August 1..... 32555

Fiction for 2023..... 147102

Nonfiction for August..... 23810

Nonfiction for the year..... 173710

Annual consumable words..... 320812

2023 Novels to Date..... 2

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)... 232

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark and adherence to Heinlein's Rules. Unreasoning fear and the myths of writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

Royalty Free Photos, and More on AI

August 31, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Royalty Free Photos
- * More on AI (sigh)

- * The Writing
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“One of the main reasons why I embrace the indie method of publishing is not only for the additional cash it makes me, or will make me down the road, but because of the independence it offers me both as a creative and a businessperson.” Vin Zandri, in the lead-in to his recent [YouTube offering](#)

Royalty Free Photos

A fellow writer emailed to ask where I get royalty free photos for my cover art.

Actually, I'm a fairly good photographer (I have a good eye) so I've taken several shots myself that later became covers.

But when I need something else, I tend to go to royalty free sites. Here are my favorites:

Paid Plans Ranked

First, a disclaimer. A few sites are way out of my price range, especially because some of the pics that appear on these sites also appear on others.

Those (too) expensive sites include

- Dreamstime
- Fotolia
- Getty Images
- iStock
- Shutterstock

But feel free to check them out. I know Dean uses Dreamstime at least sometimes.

Next I've listed the paid sites that I have found useful. The pics aren't free, but if you invest in a package, they're relatively low priced:

- DepositPhotos.com (my favorite)
- Bigstock
- Canstock

And finally, the free sites I have used are

- Unsplash (my favorite)
- Pexels
- Pixabay

There are a ton of others. Just key-in “royalty free photos” into your search engine.

Also, you can key-in “royalty free photos” into the search box in the sidebar of the Journal at <https://hestanbrough.com> and you’ll find another post or two about this topic.

If you have downloaded the [free, searchable PDF Journal Archives](#), so much the better. You can use the same search term to check all of the archives.

Happy hunting!

Caution: There’s a place out there called GraphicStock. I advise you to stay away from it. They try to reenroll you when your plan ends, and it almost takes a lawyer to get you out once you’re in. And frankly, the images aren’t all that.

More on AI (sigh)

There’s a post in TPV titled [“Here Comes Bing”](#). It talks about using AI to generate an outline from which the writer will then write a book. Nifty, eh? Not.

Here’s the comment I left.

“AI models aside, I’ve never understood why anyone would want to slog through writing a story when they already know how it will end per the outline. How boring is that?”

“This is why actual authors who know what they’re doing don’t include plot in sales copy. Give away the story in the blurb, the reader has no reason to buy the book.”

I don’t write outlines, and I don’t write fiction from outlines. What I write in a story is what happens in the story as I run through it with my characters. It is wondrous to watch the action unfold and to see and hear the characters’ reaction to it.

Most long-term professional authors write this way. Of course, writing is the one art in which beginners are most reticent to learn from professionals. They prefer instead to believe they must outline first, in addition to a lot of other blocks they have to check to be successful.

Yet even James Patterson, famous for outlining his work, no longer writes fiction himself. Probably because he got too bored following his own outlines. But even he gets the pleasure of writing the original story, albeit in outline form. Then he hands it off to some schlep who wants to ride his coattails and share billing. 😊

Anyway, if you want them, there are three more posts on AI at TPV today too:

[“Deep AI – Part 1”](#)

[“Deep AI – Part 2”](#)

[“Deep AI – Part 3”](#) PG’s take is humorous.

The Writing

Had a great day of writing yesterday (by my current standards) and hoping for the same or better today. As soon as this is posted, I’ll be back at the writing ‘puter in the Hovel.

And thanks to Chris R for the topic on royalty free sites.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “10 Types of Words You Never Knew Had to Be Capitalized” at <https://www.rd.com/list/words-to-always-capitalize/>. An excellent article. I agree with it completely. I’ve even added it to my Writer Resources over at HarveyStanbrough.com.

See “Indie Publishers and Copyright” at <https://deanwesleymith.com/indie-publishers-and-copyright/>.

See “Long Forgotten (But Cool) Medieval English Words” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/08/long-forgotten-but-cool-medieval-english-words.html>.

See “Writing Short Stories to Jumpstart Your Novel Writing” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/writing-short-stories-to-jumpstart-your-novel-writing/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 760

Writing of Blackwell Ops 9: Cameron Stance

Brought forward..... 4087

Day 10.... 2696 words. To date..... 26039

Day 11.... 3200 words. To date..... 29239

Fiction for August..... 35755

Fiction since August 1..... 35755

Fiction for 2023..... 150302

Nonfiction for August..... 24570

Nonfiction for the year..... 174470

Annual consumable words..... 324772

2023 Novels to Date..... 2

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date.....	4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	73
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)...	232
Short story collections.....	31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark and adherence to Heinlein's Rules. Unreasoning fear and the myths of writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

Reverse Outlines, and a Whole Other Level of Writing

September 1, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * The Writing
- * Speaking of Reverse Outlines
- * A Whole Other Level of Writing
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Why would I write from AI outline? it wouldn't even be my story.” Balázs Jambor in a comment on yesterday's post

The Writing

Yesterday I went to the Hovel at 6:30 but spent the first almost four hours of the morning finally putting together a reverse outline. Duh. During my absence and spotty return to writing fiction, I'd forgotten how necessary this is.

When I stopped for the day, I'd written only a little over 2000 words, but including the reverse outline I considered the day a complete success.

Speaking of Reverse Outlines

Up front, no, a reverse outline is nothing at all like the outlines so many shysters talk about in their how-to books. I'll explain shortly.

As I constructed the reverse outline, I allowed myself to touch the novel here and there as I went. Over the whole thing, I added around 270 words. During brief breaks, I also wrote this Journal entry. (grin)

The current novel is filled with twists and switchbacks, making the reverse outline absolutely essential. Already I've had to search back through the story for the name of an airport or a restaurant and sometimes even a character's last name or affiliation. A reverse outline would have given me a quick glimpse and let me stay in the flow of the story.

Briefly, a reverse outline is exactly what you might imagine. You list the chapter numbers down the left side of the page, then *as you finish* writing a chapter (or two or three, don't interrupt the flow of writing) you note a few significant details about what happened in the chapter: characters and their descriptions, places and their descriptions, timelines, etc.

I also include a few separate sections: a listing of character names in order of their appearance, a listing of significant places (both geographical locations and individual buildings and businesses, etc.), a listing of the specific weaponry used, and detailed character descriptions for main characters, all for quick reference.

Basically, the reverse outline is a great aid later in the novel when you're searching for something. You can quickly refer to the reverse outline instead of searching through the whole manuscript.

If like me, you like to keep your chapters at a certain approximate length, you can also add the word count to each chapter next to the chapter number.

To learn more about what they are and how to create one, key in "reverse outlines" in the Search box at <https://hestanbrough.com>.

Also, if anyone would like an example of a reverse outline, I'd be happy to share one of mine with you. It will arrive as a .txt document. If you use a PC, you can open it with Notepad or Wordpad. You can probably open it with a Mac too, but I wouldn't know which program you'd use.

A Whole Other Level of Writing

I mentioned awhile back that I've reached a new level in my fiction writing. This is due in large part to my having read (and then studied, afterward) stories by Stephen King, the only Stage Five writer working today, and a couple of other very advanced writers.

I've been practicing a technique ever since I restarted my fiction writing a few months ago. Now, in the current novel, I've finally made it my own, so I'm ready to share.

First, as I've said many times before, there is a significant difference between content editing and cycling. Content editing is always a function of the conscious, critical mind. It has absolutely no place in fiction writing.

(Copyediting is fine and often necessary, but that's a different animal. If you have a good first reader, you probably don't need a copyeditor.)

Cycling is a function of the creative subconscious. It is essential, in my view, to writing good fiction.

But when cycling you **MUST** remain in the creative subconscious. You can allow yourself to touch the manuscript here and there, but adding words can never be a conscious decision. It can never be the result of the writer thinking (critical mind) “Ooh, this word would be better” or “That sentence is too long or too short.”

Anything you add while cycling is something extra that the characters themselves and the story situation give you.

So bearing that firmly in mind, lemme ask you a question: When you read back over your manuscript, no matter how many times, can you remain in the creative subconscious?

In other words, can you avoid “looking for” problems (conscious, critical mind) and nitpicking little things like sentence length, paragraph length, specific words or phrases, and all that?

Put yet another way, can you stay inside the heads or personas of your various characters in the different situations?

If you can't, I urge that every time you sit down to write, you practice silencing that critical voice. If you practice, you *will* get better. And eventually you'll be able to turn out a short story or novel in record time.

But if you can't currently do that, do your best to force yourself not to “look for” (again, critical mind) anything as you read back over your manuscript.

Here's the kicker. If you can already do that—but **ONLY** if you can—your work will invariably improve. And you will have moved to another level of fiction writing.

Understand, I'm not talking about or condoning going over and over and over a story, editing and nitpicking things the reader will not care one whit about, like whether you use “that” or “which” or “beneath” or “under.”

But if you can remain firmly outside of yourself and inside the story and in the voice of your characters and your creative subconscious, you'll turn out better work.

So if you can do that, do it. Don't be held back by the necessity of writing one quick draft and being finished.

I still write one clean draft, then move on to the next chapter or story or novel. And often I still cycle back over what I've written only one time. Then when I reach the white space again, I just keep writing. Then I cycle back over the new writing when I return from my next break.

But sometimes—especially for truly intense, stop-action scenes—I’ll go over the scene more than once. And the result always conveys the story more deeply and more intimately than it would have otherwise.

For those who can recognize it, this is a gem to be mined. Don’t let the opportunity pass.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Here’s how NASA will test space internet with lasers on ISS” at <https://interestingengineering.com/innovation/nasa-test-space-internet-lasers>.

See “20 Delightful Slang Terms From the 1930s” at <https://www.mentalfloss.com/posts/1930s-slang-terms>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1140

Writing of Blackwell Ops 9: Cameron Stance

Brought forward..... 4087

Day 10.... 2696 words. To date..... 26039

Day 11.... 3200 words. To date..... 29239

Day 12.... 2007 words. To date..... 31246

Fiction for August..... 37762

Fiction since August 1..... 37762

Fiction for 2023..... 152309

Nonfiction for September..... 1140

Nonfiction for the year..... 175610

Annual consumable words..... 327919

2023 Novels to Date..... 2

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)... 232

Short story collections..... 31

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Time Flies, and “Actual Authors”

September 2, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Time Flies When You're Having Fun... Writing
- * I Am Not an “Actual Author” (grin)
- * A New Story
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Whatever your impressions of pulp fiction are, no one can deny that the best of the pulp writers paved the way not just for modern genre fiction, but for future masters of the craft. ... There is no reason we cannot do the same now. Write Fast, Write Clean, Publish Often.” Frank Theodat, editor of Pulp, Pipe, & Poetry magazine <https://pulppipepoetry.substack.com/> in “The Pulp Work Ethic” (see “Of Interest”)

Great advice. Thanks, Frank.

I pulled the first three links in “Of Interest” from Frank’s posts. I will add all three to the Writer Resources page over at HarveyStanbrough.com.

Time Flies When You're Having Fun... Writing

September 2 already. Wow. August flashed right by.

Despite my having managed somehow to write two novels and four short stories earlier this year, I really only finally broke my two years in writing purgatory earlier in August.

Of course, Wes helped me hack my way toward the gate of writers heaven. I wouldn't have expected anything less or anyone else to show up when I needed him most. (grin)

And then Cameron Stance of Blackwell Ops, of all people, helped me actually gain entrance. I can't begin to tell you how good it feels to be back: showing up, saying good morning to whatever characters pop in, then racing through their stories with them.

I Am Not an “Actual Author”

Frankly sometimes I don't know why I bother talking with other writers and would-be writers, commenting on blog posts, and all that. (grin)

After all, once folks decide to append the suffix “writer” or more often “author” to their name, they somehow become experts. They know all there is to know about writing ‘cuz they’ve read all the books on the topic, albeit without somehow noticing that most of the books repeat exactly the same myths, often in exactly the same words. (grin)

They think about writing a lot, they attend real writers’ conferences and writers’ groups and critique groups. They learn to research and outline and then revise and rewrite and “polish,” whatever that is.

And in the end, the only thing most of them don’t do—or don’t do very long because they don’t get overnight success or they succumb to irrational fear—is write. (Take a look at the final entry in “Of Interest.”)

I can only shake my head and go back to my keyboard. I freely admit, I’m usually grinning at the incredible inanity of it all.

A few days ago I left a comment on a post on The Passive Voice:

“I’ve never understood why anyone would want to slog through writing a story when they already know the ending. How boring is that?”

“This is why actual authors who know what they’re doing don’t include plot in sales copy. Give away the story in the blurb, the reader has no reason to buy the book.”

In response, Elliot01 wrote in part,

“Not too long ago, the traditional publishing establishment reserved the title of ‘actual author’ to those traditionally published. Seems it’s a coveted title.”

Incredulous, I almost fell out of my chair laughing.

Anyway, I thought Elliot01’s comment plus my response might make a good topic:

“Of course the tradpubs ‘reserved’ the title, to the extent they could do so without registering a trademark. (grin) Feeding writers’ egos is money in the bank for them. Their only bottom line is the IP on their spreadsheet, which they are freely handed for pennies on the dollar.

“Likewise, all those writing ‘gurus’ repeat the same tired myths over and over in how-to writing books only in order to pad their personal bank accounts.

“Do you really believe they actually care about other writers? The more beginning and would-be writers they can convince to believe they need all that nonsense, the more books the shysters can sell.

“Guess I’m not an ‘actual author,’ but I’m good with that. I’ve been traditionally published and put up with pennies on the dollar. I would never go back and don’t even want the tshirt.

“But I don’t mind not being called an ‘actual author’ by tradpubs or anyone else. I’m just a lowly fiction writer.

“I show up day-in, day-out, [put my fingers on the keyboard and write what happens as I run through my characters’ story with them. A]s a result I’ve written over 70 novels (several series and stand-alones), 9 novellas and over 230 short stories in the past 7 years. And all of that in several different genres.

“I make my living doing what I do. And lemme tell ya, I put a lot more stock in the judgment of readers than in some 20-something fresh out of college reading through slush piles in New York.

“But all of that being said (shrug), as Felix wrote [in his comment] above, ‘different strokes.’ Hey, by all means. My paycheck doesn’t rise or fall depending on what any given number of less experienced writers believe or whether any take advantage of my generous nature as displayed in my free instructive Journal almost every day.

“I’m only trying to pay it forward. I lay the information out there in case anyone wants to pick it up.”

The parts set off inside [brackets] are additions I made in this post for clarification.

As always, folks, you do you. “Different strokes,” as the other commenter said.

I can teach you what I know, but only you can decide whether to shake off the irrational, unreasoning fears and apply it.

A New Story

“Going Back” went out from my other substack yesterday as the story of the week. This is one of my personal favorites. I’ve often thought of revisiting it just in case the character would like to tell me more. I hope those of you who read it enjoyed it.

Those of you who still haven’t subscribe (it’s free) can do so by clicking [“Going Back”](#) and hitting the Subscribe button at the bottom.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “1,000,000 Words of Fiction” at [https://franktheodat.substack\[dot\]com/p/1000000-words-of-fiction](https://franktheodat.substack[dot]com/p/1000000-words-of-fiction). A couple of good links in this one, the second of which is below.

See “The Pulp Work Ethic” at [https://pulppipepoetry.substack\[dot\]com/p/the-pulp-work-ethic](https://pulppipepoetry.substack[dot]com/p/the-pulp-work-ethic). Don’t miss this one either. Some great links, including an interview with Harlan Ellison and an article by Erle Stanley Gardner.

See “Buckle Down and Write” at <https://thepulp.net/pulp-articles/buckle-down-and-write/>. I decided to include this one too. It’s also going into Writer Resources at HarveyStanbrough.com

See “The Weight” at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/09/the-weight.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1100

Writing of Blackwell Ops 9: Cameron Stance

Brought forward..... 4087

Day 10.... 2696 words. To date..... 26039

Day 11.... 3200 words. To date..... 29239

Day 12.... 2007 words. To date..... 31246

Day 13.... 2838 words. To date..... 34084

Fiction for September..... 2838

Fiction since August 1..... 40600

Fiction for 2023..... 155147

Nonfiction for September..... 2240

Nonfiction for the year..... 176710

Annual consumable words..... 331857

2023 Novels to Date..... 2

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)... 232

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark and adherence to Heinlein’s Rules. Unreasoning fear and the myths of writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

You Want to Read This Edition

September 3, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

* Quote of the Day

* Welcome

* More Short Stories Coming

- * Great Articles
- * The Value of New York Editors and Publishers
- * A Bonus Topic: The Writing
- * So I Don't Forget
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“I remember when I would sent out hundreds of copies of a book to agents hoping to get an agent. I felt like it was a job interview. And I felt that I, the one who actually wrote, had to impress some nonwriter to ‘get my foot in the door’.” George Kordonis

You and me both, George. (grin) Now, as my buddy Dan says, I feel like I am in Hebben.

Welcome

To Redd Oscar and any others who recently subscribed to the Journal. Feel free to visit <https://hestanbrough.com> (the Journal website) where you can download several free items, including fully searchable PDF archives.

Remember the Challenge

is ongoing. Deadline is tomorrow before the Journal goes live. Get your short story titles and word counts or novella/novel titles and weekly counts in.

Anyone can jump into the challenge at any time. There's no cost, and the challenge is a great way to increase your inventory and jumpstart your writing.

Chances are you'll have more fun than you've had in a long time. The challenge is also a great way to get more practice pushing down the critical voice. For more details, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com or check any Monday edition of the Journal for Bradbury Challenge.

More Short Stories Coming

Whew. After “Going Back” came out on September 1, I remembered I'd scheduled posts in advance on that substack only into September. So I double checked, and found that none were scheduled after that first one.

So I spent a half-hour or so scheduling more stories, and now we're good through November 10. Of course, that's also the Marine Corps birthday. Marines will have it easy this year. The ball will probably happen on Friday night, and they'll have the whole weekend to recover. (grin)

But my reader numbers are declining. If that continues I'll need to make a decision re the free stories. Putting them up takes a lot of time and effort, so I'll either add a paid tier to that substack or I'll just stop using that one altogether.

Great Articles

Yesterday I mentioned these articles in "Of Interest":

["1,000,000 Words of Fiction"](#) — A couple of good links in this one, the second of which is below.

["The Pulp Work Ethic"](#)

See **["Buckle Down and Write"](#)**

I also said I'd be adding them to the Writer Resources page at HarveyStanbrough.com. Haven't done that yet.

But these and others like them are so vital to work ethic and having fun as a serious professional writer, I've also decided to create a new page complete with its own tab in the menu.

It will be called If You Really Want to Write Fiction. When you feel yourself succumbing to critical voice or slipping out of the joy of writing, you can go there, click the tab, and read inspiring articles that tell the truth about writing.

I realized yesterday that the current iteration of HarveyStanbrough.com has been around 14 years. Whew!

The Value of New York Editors and Publishers

Back in the day when I used to speak at a lot of writers' conferences, there was a common theme among the less-experienced writers attending. That theme is still prevalent among many who still seek (foolishly, IMHO) agents and publication with a big house.

That theme is that the writer is all but worthless, only fodder for the tradpubs, and they should be glad the tradpubs will even consider their work.

Ridiculous. Writers seem to forget who's important, or for that matter, who works for whom in the tradpub system.

So in many presentations, and often in informal chats in the lounge or just standing around in the lobby, I used to offer this discussion:

Me to a writer: "Know what writers would do if there were no agents, editors or publishers?"

Shrug. "No, what?"

“They’d write. Now, do you know what agents, editors and publishers would do if there were no writers?”

Grinning. “What would they do?”

“You want fries with that?”

Never forget, writers. You are what’s valuable in this system no matter where or how you publish. Without you, there are no stories.

A Bonus Topic: The Writing

After all the novels and novellas and short stories, I’ve written, something dawned on me only yesterday during a cycling session.

Every story I write has three basic elements: dialogue, hard-action scenes, and psychological suspense or intrigue.

For me, the dialogue is the easiest and most fun to write. I only have to listen as the characters talk. During cycling they smooth out what I wrote, usually adding brief descriptive narratives. He shrugged, she smiled, he took a sip (or a slug) of his scotch. Stuff like that. And pacing, the give and take, is hyper-important.

The hard-action scenes are easy to write too, but I usually cycle over them more than one time, most often allowing the characters to add things about the setting that they noticed during the hyper-quick action. We notice different things, and notice them differently too, when we’re in the midst of battle or whatever. Again, pacing is hyper-important.

The psychological suspense (or intrigue, depending on the story) is easy and fun too. That’s mostly conveyed in the unspoken thoughts (internal monologue) of the POV character. Cycling for those scenes is more medium, the characters wanting to be sure they’re conveying precisely what they mean to convey. Pacing here is still important, but not as much as in the first two.

But I realized, those elements are the reason I love to write stories. They’re the reason I can’t wait to get back to the writing ‘puter and wish I could keep going at the end of the day when my brain is shot. Great fun. For examples of any of those, read Stephen King or pretty much any of my novels. Obviously, the newer stuff is a little more advanced than the earlier stuff.

So I Don’t Forget

So I don’t forget, chances are good you’ll have to eke by without the Journal and my daily lambasting from this coming Wednesday for a few days. That’ll be September 6 through September something a few days later.

I’ll be heading out to the Gila Wilderness with my buddy Dan in search of high winds, hail, rising rivers, philosophizing and other adventures. (grin)

Yes, I'll take my writing 'puter and a DC converter. Yes, I'll write every day unless the converter shoots itself or something.

I'm sure you'll get by. (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Reaction To Failure Post Brought Forward" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/reaction-to-failure-post-brought-forward/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1130

Writing of Blackwell Ops 9: Cameron Stance
Brought forward..... 4087

Day 10.... 2696 words. To date..... 26039

Day 11.... 3200 words. To date..... 29239

Day 12.... 2007 words. To date..... 31246

Day 13.... 2838 words. To date..... 34084

Day 14.... 3111 words. To date..... 37195

Fiction for September..... 5949

Fiction since August 1..... 46549

Fiction for 2023..... 158258

Nonfiction for September..... 3370

Nonfiction for the year..... 177840

Annual consumable words..... 336098

2023 Novels to Date..... 2

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 73

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)... 232

Short story collections..... 31

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Elements, and Finished the Novel

September 4, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Late Last Night
- * Elements of Your Stories
- * Finished the Novel
- * The Bradbury Challenge
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“It’s your reaction to your failures that make your success.” Adam Levine to a contestant on The Voice back in 2018 (per Dean’s post yesterday)

Late Last Night

I added a new page to [HarveyStanbrough.com](#), then copied it over to the Journal website at [HEStanbrough.com](#). You can find it on either site by clicking the tab labeled If You Really Want to Write Fiction.

Elements of Your Stories

Yesterday I mentioned what I call the elements of my stories. Those are dialogue, action scenes, and psychological suspense or intrigue.

I thought the duality of that last one needed a little explanation.

In my mind, Psychological Suspense is the larger and maybe stronger of the two. Psychological Intrigue has a lighter touch and maybe less impact.

Psychological Suspense is a genre in its own right, though it can also be an element in other genres. My novel *Jonah Peach* is primarily psychological suspense, but also Crime and Thriller.

Psychological Intrigue (like Romance) is interlaced through every novel in the Wes Crowley saga, and it’s a major factor, but the genre is Period Western, meaning a western set during a particular historical time.

One or the other, psychological suspense or intrigue, runs through pretty much everything I write. I love it.

But yesterday's post also started me wondering, and I should have asked in that post, what about in your own writing?

Realizing those three elements are pervasive in my writing helped raise my awareness as a fictionist.

So what elements are pervasive in yours?

I've known a few writers who tell stories only in past-tense (or present-tense, ugh) narrative. By that I mean with no or very little dialogue.

I've also seen beginning writers try to write a story with only dialogue. No narrative description at all. Years ago, I tried it. I think I'm safe in saying that doing so is impossible. Or at least that writing an interesting story—one that truly pulls the reader in—is impossible.

Sit back sometime and self-assess one or more of your own short stories, novellas or novels. I think doing so will help.

A Tip—If you regularly omit description that passes through your mind as you're writing, the story will be "thin." Take your time. Enjoy the process. After all, the characters chose to share their story with you, nobody else. That alone should make you feel pretty special.

Finished the Novel

What wonderful fun! I finished the novel and did so with the first 4000+ word day I've had for 2 years. Woohoo!

But it gets better. I also finished it yesterday, on Writing Day 15. It's also the first time that's happened in two years. My next personal goal is to reduce that to calendar days. I intend to do that with my next novel, though I might not start that one until after my upcoming little vacay in the boonies with my buddy.

When I reopened this novel from a much earlier start that I wrote last year, I brought forward 4087 words. As it turned out, none of those words survived the cut. I tossed out the whole beginning and started over. During the course of the writing I also cut 1341 more words.

But when I started writing it again, about two chapters in I added a subtitle: A Romantic Thriller. Personally I'd never heard of a romantic thriller, and I've definitely never written one before now. But it felt right to add that subtitle. I didn't understand why until the very end.

It's incredible, folks. Once again I've verified for at least myself that it's the characters' story, not mine, and they definitely know what they're talking about. If you only trust them, they will lead you through to the end.

But soon you'll be able to see it for yourself if you want. After I run a spell check and send this off to my first reader, I plan to sign in to Kindle Vella. If Vella feels like a good fit, I'll start sharing the story a chapter at a time. Each chapter is a little over 1000 words.

If I remember right, you get to read the first three chapters on Vella free before you have to start paying for tokens. So you can read at least part of this novel absolutely free if you want. If I can add a link to the story in Vella, I'll let you know here in the Journal.

If I decide not to go through Vella with this one, I'll let you know that too.

The Bradbury Challenge

For anyone who doesn't know yet, I expanded this challenge to writers of longer fiction as well. Short story writers have to write at least one short story per week, then submit their story title and word count (genre if you want) to be before the Journal goes live on Monday.

Longer-form writers report by the same deadline, but with the title of their novella or novel and their word count for the week. Having a place to report can help motivate you. It's one of the main reasons I started this Journal back in 2014.

And participating in the challenge can jumpstart your writing like you wouldn't believe. Of course, you can conduct your own challenge without reporting numbers to me or anyone else. You can also drop out, join, or rejoin the challenge at any time.

During the past week, in addition to whatever other fiction they're writing, the following writers reported their progress:

Short Fiction

- George Kordonis "The Book About You" 3450 words, Supernatural Horror
- Alexander Nakul "A Secret Watcher of the Blue Room" 1555 words
- Chynna Pace "Message in a Sugar Bowl" 6129 words Fantasy
- Christopher Ridge "The Survey" 2500 words Suspense
- K.C. Riggs "The Magic Loom" 1156 words Magic Realism
- Philip Michael Smith "An Exciting Opportunity" 1248 words Literary
- Frank Theodat "Quota" 3500 words Dystopian SF

Novellas and Novels

Alexander Nakul "Horses of Mayhem" 4270 words Historical Fantasy

Congratulations to all of them.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “X-Files: Resurrection” at [https://vincentzandri.substack\[dot\]com/p/x-files-resurrection](https://vincentzandri.substack[dot]com/p/x-files-resurrection). Well worth the \$5 it costs to buy-in as a paid subscriber. This post also gives me a marketing idea. (grin)

See “Why Don’t Wild Animals Get Lost?” at <https://www.suecoletta.com/why-dont-wild-animals-get-lost/>.

See “Harlan Ellison At San Diego Comic Con” at [https://www.youtube\[dot\]com/watch?v=BRXt6t3D9JE](https://www.youtube[dot]com/watch?v=BRXt6t3D9JE).

See “Harlan Ellison’s Watching 32” at [https://www.youtube\[dot\]com/watch?v=-6z5Nr5Hrvk](https://www.youtube[dot]com/watch?v=-6z5Nr5Hrvk).

See “Harlan Ellison Goes to Hollywood” at [https://www.youtube\[dot\]com/watch?app=desktop&v=zJa77gKrzv4](https://www.youtube[dot]com/watch?app=desktop&v=zJa77gKrzv4).

See “Business Musings: Reading And Writing” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/business-musings-reading-and-writing/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1090

Writing of Blackwell Ops 9: Cameron Stance

Brought forward..... 4087

Day 1..... 1595 words. To date..... 5682
Day 2..... 2101 words. To date..... 7783
Day 3..... 2573 words. To date..... 10356
Day 4..... 1588 words. To date..... 11944
Day 5..... 2135 words. To date..... 14079
Day 6..... 2019 words. To date..... 16098
Day 7..... 3067 words. To date..... 19165
Day 8..... 1562 words. To date..... 20727
Day 9..... 2616 words. To date..... 23343
Day 10.... 2696 words. To date..... 26039
Day 11.... 3200 words. To date..... 29239
Day 12.... 2007 words. To date..... 31246
Day 13.... 2838 words. To date..... 34084
Day 14.... 3111 words. To date..... 37195
Day 15.... 4398 words. To date..... 41593 (done)

Fiction for September..... 10347

Fiction since August 1..... 56896

Fiction for 2023..... 162656

Nonfiction for September..... 4460
Nonfiction for the year..... 178930
Annual consumable words..... 343586

2023 Novels to Date..... 3
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 74
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 232
Short story collections..... 31

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New Novel, Blackwell Ops 9, and No Vella Yet

September 5, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Started a New Novel
- * Blackwell Ops 9: Cameron Stance
- * No Vella Yet
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Started a New Novel

Turned out I wanted to write another story in the Blackwell Ops world, or at least the character Jeremy Stiles wanted me to. I saw him on stage, of all things, waving and saying goodnight to a studio audience.

In starting this one, I relied on my novel template, a thing I put together awhile back. The forematter and back matter are already in place along with the correct font sizes and alignment for the title, chapter heads, and text. I'd be happy to share. Just email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

Anyway, I took the opportunity to revise it slightly. The last item in the end matter, the Disclaimer, now reads

This story was created in its entirety without the slightest bit of input from any generative artificial intelligence. It is a work of fiction, a story that unfolded as the author ran through the trenches of the story trying to keep up with his characters. In other words, for those of a more traditional bent, it is strictly a product of the author's imagination. Either way, any perceived

resemblance or similarity to any actual events or persons, living or dead, and any perceived slights or people, places, or organizations are a product of the reader's imagination. Probably.

Feel free to use it or part of it if you want.

After my work yesterday morning to get the novel below published, my wife and I took a break and went to the grocery, then ate lunch. I thought I might take the rest of the day off.

But when we got back, Jeremy Stiles was still nagging me. Okay, so I went back to the Hovel, opened my writing 'puter, and slapped down just over 1600 words in a little over an hour. I think this one's gonna be fun. (grin)

Blackwell Ops 9: Cameron Stance

This one is subtitled A Romantic Thriller. My first reader tells me it earned the title. (grin)

I got it put up on StoneThread Publishing yesterday. If you're interested, you can read the description (sales copy) at <https://stonethreadpublishing.com/bo-9/>.

And if you're ready to "buy," it's currently free with Amazon Kindle Unlimited at <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0CH91LT99>.

No Vella Yet

I didn't even go look. I felt dumb considering serializing a novel that's finished. My first reader got his annotations back to me last night. Talk about a fast turnaround.

Yesterday, I applied Russ' changes. A little later I designed a cover and a promo doc, and then I published it. As I mentioned above, I went to Amazon Kindle Select first.

After a few months (I believe it's a 3-month minimum) I'll pull it out of Select and publish it wide to over 400 markets and 1200 libraries worldwide. It's a great time to be a fiction writer.

Even though it's been awhile since I

- designed a cover,
- wrote sales copy,
- edited the Crime-Thriller & Action-Adventure page and
- put up a new book page on StoneThread Publishing, and
- uploaded to Amazon,

the whole process took only about three hours. I'm okay with that. (grin)

Oh, another note on royalty-free photos. I realized this morning, all the covers for my Blackwell Ops series came from [Unsplash](https://unsplash.com). Just sayin'.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “An Interesting Thing Happened...” at <https://www.youtube.com/live/wzRAi1N5NQc>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 560

Writing of Blackwell Ops 10: Jeremy Stiles
The Way Things Go

Day 1..... 1635 words. To date..... 1635

Fiction for September..... 11982
Fiction since August 1..... 68878
Fiction for 2023..... 164291
Nonfiction for September..... 5020
Nonfiction for the year..... 179490
Annual consumable words..... 343781

2023 Novels to Date..... 3
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 74
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)... 232
Short story collections..... 31

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KDP Select and Vella

September 6, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * KDP Select and Vella
- * Vacation
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

KDP Select and Vella

Just in case any of you were wondering the same thing....

Yesterday, I got online in a chat with an Amazon rep (Raul). I asked whether I could simultaneously publish a novel to KDP Select and then also serialize it in Vella.

I figured it was a stupid question, but I couldn't know until I'd asked. I'd never heard of anyone doing that before, and for me it would be perfect.

To my amazement, Raul asked me to give him a moment to "investigate whether that would be possible."

In short, the answer is no. He wrote in reply,

"Upon checking the Kindle Vella guidelines it seems that is not allowed to break down published content (ebooks and paperback) on Kindle Vella. [You can check this help page for more information.](#)"

Well, at least now we know. (grin)

Vacation

Leaving shortly to head for the hills. Well, actually the Lower Gila Box Wilderness.

My co-traveller, Dan Baldwin, graciously allowed me, in our absence, to repost a recent blog he wrote. It will appear tomorrow. Then it might be a day or two before you hear from me again. (grin) I'm sure you'll bear my absence from your inbox.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Sometimes, I Just Start Writing" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/09/sometimes-i-just-start-writing.html>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 230

Writing of Blackwell Ops 10: Jeremy Stiles (The Way Things Go)

Day 1..... 1635 words. To date..... 1635

Day 2..... 2464 words. To date..... 4099

Fiction for September.....	16081
Fiction since August 1.....	84959
Fiction for 2023.....	168390
Nonfiction for September.....	5250
Nonfiction for the year.....	179720
Annual consumable words.....	348119
2023 Novels to Date.....	3
2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
2023 Short Stories to Date.....	4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	74
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)...	232
Short story collections.....	31

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How Much Description Is Too Much?

September 9, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Vacation Was Short-Lived
- * Yates Briscoe...
- * How Much Description Is Too Much?
- * Well, Kindle Vella
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“I finished my first novel that I seriously tried WITD on, and I’m sad to be done but also so thrilled! It was so much fun. My characters took me places I never expected. Literally, some things came up where I thought, ‘Did I just write that? I never would have planned that’.” Erin Donoho, recent convert

I wrote back to welcome Erin to the club. (grin)

“The business of business is relationships; the business of life is human connection.” Robin S. Sharma, as reported on The Passive Voice

For a friend: “Science fiction is any idea that occurs in the head and doesn’t exist yet, but soon will, and will change everything for everybody, and nothing will ever be the same again. As soon as you have an idea that changes some small part of the world you are writing science fiction. It is always the art of the possible, never the impossible.” Ray Bradbury

Vacation Was Short-Lived

But outstanding.

For the first time in two years without email as an intermediary, Dan and I slathered philosophy all the way through the drive over, the rest of that day and night, and half the next day.

The one night we spent there was exceptional. We always find something exceptional in our little camp perched on a cliff about 300 feet above the Gila.

This time, on Wednesday night, Musk’s Starlink satellite stream came up in the west a little after sundown and passed straight over us. An absolutely incredible sight.

I also got to witness for the first time in my 70 years a serious meteorite, complete with a very long green tail that lingered for a second or two after the meteorite disappeared.

Plus the requisite passenger jets bound east and west and various satellites. Oddly, the usually consistent wind/breeze appeared only intermittently, so we passed a fitful night slapping away mosquitos and gnats.

Around 1 p.m. the next day after hopefully watching clouds form and disappear, we decided to pack up and head back. Temps reached over 100, and there’s very little shade up there on the rock, and I for one am definitely not a spring rooster. (grin)

It’ll take me a day or two to get my routine under me again.

“Yates Briscoe and the Beauty of Britain”

Another short story went out free yesterday, the first in a string of ten I wrote while at, or as a result of, an earlier camping trip on the Gila.

To read it free, click <https://stanbroughwrites.substack.com/p/yates-briscoe-and-the-beauty-of-britain>. If you haven’t subscribed to these free short stories, you can do so by clicking the subscribe button at the bottom of the story.

One guy who read it yesterday emailed with this:

“That one’s a keeper. Not too wordy, not too short. (Goldilocks porridge.) The fight scenes are first-rate witness descriptions, and the picture of his mother made me think of Lee Marvin in a flowered dress.”

Thanks, Gary V.

How Much Description Is Too Much?

One subject among many Dan and I broached during our brief outing. We both write into the dark, recording the story as it unfolds, and as we run through it with our characters, striving to keep up. We agreed on the answer to the question:

If your POV character(s) notice something about the setting, it goes into the story. Period.

This goes back to the root admonition of writing fiction into the dark: Don't think.

If your characters add some description about the setting, leave it in. Don't think maybe it's "too much" (it isn't) and take it out.

Likewise, if something about the description passes through your mind as you're writing, put it in. Again, period.

For example, if you have two people talking in a second-floor formal dining room with a balcony, you can't just open the next sentence (and scene) with "They looked out across the grounds spread wide beneath them."

Nope. At some point in your mind, the characters made the move from the dining room through the double doors (or whatever) onto the balcony. Put that transition scene into the story. Otherwise, their being on the balcony surveying the grounds is miraculous, and you never want to do anything miraculous in your story.

Miracles don't happen in stories anyway. Anything like that is the result of the writer not conveying to the page something that passed through their mind while writing the story.

Every scene has a resolution. Often, that resolution is a miniature scene, a transition. Write it.

The other half of the answer to the original question is this:

If you, the writer, "feel" (consciously think) that something should be added to bolster the setting, don't put it in. That is the very definition of too much description.

So how much description is too much?

In a nutshell it's just this:

If the POV character(s) notice it, put it in.

If he, she, or they don't notice something, don't include it.

Well, except while cycling. But again, that will be the characters, not the writer, adding description. After all, it's their life story that's unfolding, not yours.

As always, questions are welcome in the comments or via email at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

Well, Kindle Vella

I decided to take the plunge and upload the first four chapters of Blackwell Ops 10: Jeremy Stiles to Kindle Vella

All four are "in review." The first three chapters will be released all at one time (Amazon's standard "within 72 hours.") In an update this morning, the Zon said that all three first chapters will go live within 24 hour. Chapter 4 (the first strong action chapter) will be released on Tuesday, September 12.

I don't know yet, but I assume future chapters (episodes) will be released later than that. I'll keep you posted as I learn more.

Anyway, I spent the last two hours of the writing day creating a square image for the series, uploading it, and then uploading the first few chapters to Vella.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "The Life and Times of a Copyright" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/the-life-and-times-of-a-copyright/>.

See "Interesting Math" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/interesting-math/>.

See "In praise of short books..." at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/in-praise-of-short-books-to-start-and-finish-in-one-sitting-is-a-rare-unbridled-joy/>.

See "Why Do Writers Use Different Pen Names for Genres?" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/why-do-writers-use-different-pen-names-for-genres/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 230

Writing of Blackwell Ops 10: Jeremy Stiles
The Way Things Go

Day 1..... 1635 words. To date..... 1635
Day 2..... 2464 words. To date..... 4099
Day 3..... 1615 words. To date..... 5714

Fiction for September..... 17696
Fiction since August 1..... 102655
Fiction for 2023..... 170005
Nonfiction for September..... 6310
Nonfiction for the year..... 180780
Annual consumable words..... 350785

2023 Novels to Date..... 3
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 74
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)... 232
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark and adherence to Heinlein's Rules. Unreasoning fear and the myths of writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

Quotes of the Day and Of Interest

September 10, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Nothing to Talk About Today
- * A Reminder
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“I think it is not just about not planning, but not thinking at all while writing. I just follow my characters and write down how their stories unfold. When I think about how the story should go, I step into the way of my characters.” Balázs Jambor

“This week I struggled with my writing, until I got to the revelation that I don't have to wait to write until I feel good enough to do it (until my muse calls). [W]riting is what makes me feel good.” Balázs Jambor

Nothing to Talk About Today

The Quotes of the Day are good and there are some good links in “Of Interest.” I’ll have more for you tomorrow, probably. I’m in a bit of a writing frenzy. (grin)

A Reminder

You Challenge folks be sure to get your titles and numbers in to me before the Journal goes live tomorrow morning.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “...conceive babies in space” at <https://interestingengineering.com/science/startup-creates-ivf-incubator-to-conceive-babies-in-space>.

See “My Total F’ Up!” at [https://www.youtube\[dot\]com/live/aHLpipJOrBs](https://www.youtube[dot]com/live/aHLpipJOrBs).

See “Nahanni – Valley of the Headless Human Cadavers” at <https://dyingwords.net/nahanni-valley-of-the-headless-human-cadavers/>.

See “Arizona Rangers State Museum – Tombstone, AZ” at <https://azrangers.us/arizona-rangers-museum/>.

See “The Pulp Magazines Project” at <https://pulpmags.org/>. (Thanks to A. Nakul)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 220

Writing of Blackwell Ops 10: Jeremy Stiles

The Way Things Go

Day 1..... 1635 words. To date..... 1635

Day 2..... 2464 words. To date..... 4099

Day 3..... 1615 words. To date..... 5714

Day 4..... 3808 words. To date..... 9522

Fiction for September..... 21504

Fiction since August 1..... 124159

Fiction for 2023..... 173813

Nonfiction for September..... 6530

Nonfiction for the year..... 181000

Annual consumable words..... 354813

2023 Novels to Date.....	3
2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
2023 Short Stories to Date.....	4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	74
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)...	232
Short story collections.....	31

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Blackwell Ops 10, Learning as You Go, and the Challenge

September 11, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Blackwell Ops 10 is LIVE on Vella!
- * Learning as You Go
- * For Anyone New to the Journal
- * Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting
- * My Own Writing
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“I try to leave out the parts readers skip.” Elmore Leonard

“New Ideas come into this world somewhat like falling meteors, with a flash and an explosion.” Henry David Thoreau (courtesy of Dan Baldwin)

“I’ve never been in charge of my stories, they’ve always been in charge of me. . . . Jump off a cliff and build your wings on the way down.” Ray Bradbury (as reported by

Blackwell Ops 10 is LIVE on Vella!

That’s right! You can read along one chapter at a time as I write my current novel!

Here’s the hype:

This will be the 10th novel in the Blackwell Ops series. TJ Blackwell runs a worldwide network of assassins for hire. The targets are always deserving for one reason or another, but a large check is all TJ needs to forward the assignment to one of his operatives.

For security, all assignments are sent via a VaporStream device. Once the message is received, it vanishes. Hence VaporStream. Operatives are very well paid, but the only retirement plan is a permanent one.

To start reading, click [Blackwell Ops 10: Jeremy Stiles](#). The first three episodes (chapters) are absolutely free. Chapter 4 should go live on September 12th.

If you'd rather copy and paste the URL, here's the link: <https://www.amazon.com/kindle-vella/story/B0CHNMBDJ3>.

Learning as You Go

I write into the dark, and I strongly advocate writing into the dark (writing without a plot or a plan and letting your characters tell the story that they, not you, are living) and [Heinlein's Rules](#).

However, that does not mean, as those who plot everything in advance would have you believe, that I don't believe you need to continue learning. I most definitely do. That's why I've written so many hundreds of thousands of words in this Journal since 2014.

Especially when you're first starting out (but later too as you become more advanced), it's critically important that you at least try to learn one new awareness or craft item about writing between every two stories you write, no matter the length.

So write a short story or novel, then pick up a new technique or become aware of or learn a new craft item. Absorb it with your conscious, critical mind. That is the only purpose of the critical mind for fiction writers.

You can also learn through assimilation by reading the works of your favorite Stage 4 and 5 writers. Much of my own fiction is available free, either in the free story of the week I publish every Friday, in Writer Downloads (see below) or by emailing me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com and asking. I'm happy to share.

Whatever you read or learn and then absorb, afterward don't think about it. Thinking is anathema to writing great fiction. So forget about it. What you need will seep into your creative subconscious and come to the fore as you write the next short story or novel.

Don't slack up. Write, learn, and then practice when you write something new.

Don't back up either. Don't go back to something you've already written and try to work what you've learned into that old story. Let it stand as a marker of where you were as a writer when you wrote it.

Always keep moving forward. Not standing still, hovering with revisions and rewrites over your current work, and not backing up, applying new things you've learned to old stories. Keep moving forward. It's called practice, and it's profitable if you do a lot of it.

For Anyone New to the Journal

Be sure to visit <https://hestanbrough.com> (the Journal website) and the tabs labeled Free Archives and If You Really Want to Write Fiction. Lots of free stuff there.

I also recommend visiting my author website at <https://harveystanbrough.com> and the tabs labeled Writer Downloads and Writer Resources.

Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting

An Introductory Note — Most of those who have joined in this challenge have written tens of thousands more words than they might have otherwise. You can still join in the challenge at any time. And if you're a fiction writer, why not?

Anyone can jump in and join the challenge at any time. This really is a great way to jumpstart your writing and get more practice pushing down the critical voice.

There's no cost, and the challenge is a great way to increase your inventory and jumpstart your writing. Chances are you'll have more fun than you've had in a long time. The challenge is also a great way to get more practice pushing down the critical voice.

As I wrote awhile back — I wouldn't be a professional fiction writer today if I hadn't taken a deep breath and dived into the three main things I learned from Dean Wesley Smith: Heinlein's Rules, that it was perfectly all right to trust myself, and Writing Into the Dark.

Frankly, this Challenge is my way of paying forward the best thing since sliced bread. And now the Challenge is also extended to longer works: novellas and novels.

It dawned on me that short stories aren't everyone's cup of whatever. I am a prime example. I enjoy writing short fiction, but I prefer writing novels. Some of you do too.

If you aren't sure how long your story will be but you'd like to report it here, report your title and weekly numbers for inclusion below.

You might look at this Challenge as an ongoing NaNoWriMo, but without the "intentionally write sloppy" part. Do your best the first time through, spell check it, and then move on to the next story or novel.

Just think how much further ahead will you be if you start reporting your numbers this coming Monday than if you wait to start at some later date. (GV et al, I'm looking at you. [grin])

Notice, there's no pressure re submitting or publishing. That's up to you. I just want to help you enable the sheer fun of writing and learning to keep track.

During the past week, in addition to whatever other fiction they're writing, the following writers reported their progress:

Short Fiction

- Erin Donoho "The First Choice" 2700 Historical Fiction
- George Kordonis "Secret of the Sideways Dimension" 2488 SF Horror
- Alexander Nakul "In Portuguese apartment buildings" 5618 Thriller
- Chynna Pace "A Curious Concoction" 2869 Humorous Fiction
- Christopher Ridge "The Dog" 2400 Horror
- K.C. Riggs "London is Alive" 1586 Magical Realism

Longer Fiction

- Balázs Jámor "Trilogy of the Lora Stories" 4000 words Fantasy

My Own Writing

I wrote only about 2000 words of fiction yesterday, but I also wrote two Journal entries, including this one except for the final input from those in the Challenge.

This post is getting too long, so please be sure to check the Journal tomorrow (Tuesday) for a **clarification of how I am using Vella**.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Minor Characters to the Rescue" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/09/minor-characters-to-the-rescue.html>. I disagree on some points, but this isn't a bad primer on characters.

See "Spotlighting Rural Crime Fiction" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/spotlighting-rural-crime-fiction/>.

See "Why This Award-Winning Piece of AI Art Can't Be Copyrighted" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/why-this-award-winning-piece-of-ai-art-cant-be-copyrighted/>.

See "How to Tell if You're a Super-Recognizer" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-to-tell-if-youre-a-super-recognizer/>. Read PG's take, then read the article.

See "Motif in Literature: Definition and Examples" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/motif-in-literature-definition-and-examples/>. I neither use nor endorse Grammarly, but this might be a useful article.

See “Your Writing Superpower in a World of AI” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/your-writing-superpower-in-a-world-of-ai/>. Not what you’d expect.

See “Reporting Writing Challenge” at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/reporting-writing-challenge/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1190

**Writing of Blackwell Ops 10: Jeremy Stiles
The Way Things Go**

Day 1..... 1635 words. To date..... 1635
Day 2..... 2464 words. To date..... 4099
Day 3..... 1615 words. To date..... 5714
Day 4..... 3808 words. To date..... 9522
Day 5..... 2057 words. To date..... 11579

Fiction for September..... 23561
Fiction since August 1..... 147720
Fiction for 2023..... 175870
Nonfiction for September..... 7720
Nonfiction for the year..... 182190
Annual consumable words..... 358060

2023 Novels to Date..... 3
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 74
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)... 232
Short story collections..... 31

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Clarification on Vella, and About Challenges

September 12, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Welcome
- * Clarification on Vella
- * On Being Prompt (guest post)
- * A Few Words About Challenges
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“The battles that count aren’t the ones for gold medals. The struggles within yourself ... that’s where it’s at.” Jesse Owens

Welcome

Welcome to Zoey, Clint, Lakshmi and any other new subscribers to the Journal

I hope you will visit the Journal website at <https://hestanbrough.com>. There you will find numerous free downloads on the Free Archives page. I also recommend visiting the If You Really Want to Write Fiction page on that site, and the Writer Resources and Writer Downloads pages on my author site at <http://harveystanbrough.com>.

When it comes to writing fiction, this is a no-myth, no BS zone. Enjoy. Anything I can do to help, feel free to email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

Clarification on Vella

Before we get to the guest post, I want to clarify something for you guys.

The “episodes” (chapters) I’m sending to Vella are my version of “writing in public,” like Harlan Ellison used to do in department store windows.

If you don’t know the story, he would sit in the window, receive story ideas from onlookers, pick one and write a short story as they looked on. Each time he finished a page, he would have an assistant tape it to the inside of the window so onlookers on the sidewalk could read it in real time. (If you don’t believe me, please Google it.)

Obviously I’m not quite doing that, and not EVEN on an electric typewriter, but it’s roughly the same thing. For example, a few things back in Chapters 1-3, which are already live in Vella, and also in Chapters 4-8, have already changed in the full-length novel, a result of necessary cycling.

The novel will be very close to the combined episodes on Vella, but it will be different, cleaner and better.

I admit I'm also using Vella as a marketing tool to expand my readership. If readers enjoy what they see there, they might look up my books, Blackwell Ops and otherwise.

And yes, I absolutely advise you to use it in the same way. Vella is nothing more than a tool.

Now the guest post by Dan Baldwin.

On Being Prompt

Guest post by Dan Baldwin

My good buddy and fellow writer Harvey Stanbrough and I recently spent a long night on the Gila River committing philosophy and, as usual, the conversation roared around writing.

One session involved the ubiquitous “Where do you get your ideas from?” question we writers encounter on an all-to-common basis. Harvey and I have pretty much the same response: “Where don't we get our ideas!”

Our conversation waddled into a discussion of the articles, blogs, and even entire books dedicated to writer's prompts — those lists of idea starters that are apparently necessary to jump start the creative process. Who in the hell needs a prompt to start writing a story, novel, screenplay, poem or whatever?

As a mental game, and in a somewhat semi-serious mood, we began shouting out story ideas at the slightest provocation. A jet flew over and we jumped on just a few of the ideas by playing the what if game.

What if — a passenger was running from the law, or running to a lost love, or was a sky marshal with a death wish, or was a stewardess or pilot who sensed something wrong with the craft, or was a woman suddenly going into labor, or what if the passenger saw William Shatner walking on the wing?

A beautiful green hummingbird circled our camp, and that started off a round of story ideas. What if the bird was the size of an automobile? What if it was the spirit of a departed soul? What if it flew into our truck's windshield, was hurt and needed care? What if one of us chased it and ran over the nearby hillside never to return? What if the bird spoke?

We noticed a bit of cloth pegged on the needles of a barrel cactus. Was that torn from a Wild West cowboy looking for strays? An Apache warrior looking for stray cowboys? The key piece of evidence in a rural murder? What about a story told from the perspective of the torn piece of cloth?

This went on for a couple of days. We were just making an obvious point to ourselves. The only writing prompt a writer really needs is his or her imagination. Set free, it needs no prompting at all.

Quote of the Week: “New Ideas come into this world somewhat like falling meteors, with a flash and an explosion.” Enry David Thoreau

A Few Words About Challenges

Writing challenges are great, especially when they lead to streaks. But remember to keep the writing fun.

By that I mean the challenge is there to nudge you to write. It is NOT there to pressure you.

Most challenges necessarily include deadlines, like Monday morning before the Journal post goes live. But even the fake (the world won't end) deadline exists only as a goal to be reached.

So how do you keep the writing fun and avoid feeling pressured while fulfilling the requirements of your challenge while under a deadline?

The answer is simple: You have a safety net.

The safety net is the knowledge that you're checking in on your characters and recording their stories only as an escape. Only to have fun.

You write fiction only to record what you experience (see, hear, feel, smell and taste via the POV character) as you run through the trenches of the story with your characters.

The longer you go, the longer you'll feel compelled to go. That's the power of the challenge and the power of streaks.

But when you finally miss or intentionally drop out, that's still a positive experience. You're still moving forward, not remaining static or moving backward.

Any story or novel written is a success. And any number of stories or novels written for a challenge is not a failure. That's also a success.

If you do feel that you've failed, temper it with the knowledge that you've failed to success.

When I wrote 14 novels in 7 months during the first half of 2021, my intention was to do the same for the rest of the year. I failed miserably.

When I first started the Bradbury Challenge in this Journal, likewise I failed, dropping out after only a few weeks.

But in both cases, I failed to success. I wrote 14 more novels and 4 or 5 more short stories than I would have written without those challenges. My “inventory of product” was increased by 18 or 19 titles with my name on them.

So do what you gotta do, but have fun. You write to lift yourself up, not beat yourself up.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “September Sucks” at <https://www.youtube.com/live/GHuLQnsgrTU>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1150

**Writing of Blackwell Ops 10: Jeremy Stiles
The Way Things Go**

Day 1..... 1635 words. To date..... 1635
Day 2..... 2464 words. To date..... 4099
Day 3..... 1615 words. To date..... 5714
Day 4..... 3808 words. To date..... 9522
Day 5..... 2057 words. To date..... 11579
Day 6..... 3563 words. To date..... 15142

Fiction for September..... 27124
Fiction since August 1..... 174844
Fiction for 2023..... 179433
Nonfiction for September..... 8870
Nonfiction for the year..... 183340
Annual consumable words..... 362773

2023 Novels to Date..... 3
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 74
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)... 232
Short story collections..... 31

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Vin Zandri, Pen Names, Prompts, and Vella

September 13, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Vin Zandri!
- * A Note on Pen Names
- * About Using Prompts
- * Further Clarification on Vella
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Amateurs sit and wait for inspiration, the rest of us just get up and go to work.” Stephen King

“Good cover design is not only about beauty... it’s a visual sales pitch. It’s your first contact with a potential reader. Your cover only has around 3 seconds to catch a browsing reader’s attention. You want to stand out and make them pause and consider, and read the synopsis.”
Eeva Lancaster

Vin Zandri!

Vin Zandri has published well over 100 novels and tons of shorter stuff as well as his nonfiction writing as a freelancer. He and I (and DWS and most major long-term fiction writing professionals) have very similar outlooks on writing.

Vin is a New York Times and USA Today bestselling writer, as well as an ITW Thriller Award and PWA Shamus Award winner.

Please do yourself a favor and see Vin’s announcement at [https://vincentzandri.substack\[dot\]com/p/the-writers-life-mindset-lecture](https://vincentzandri.substack[dot]com/p/the-writers-life-mindset-lecture).

This is beyond-exciting news for fiction writers, whether you’re just starting out, have written a few novels, or are farther along than that. At only \$147 for this entire master’s course on writing, I just bought it. That’s how strongly I endorse it.

Check it out, you won’t be sorry. The course is currently available at Amazon, but it’s only \$127 if you buy it through Vin’s website. Just sayin’. (grin)

A Note on Pen Names

I received a nice email from writer Lakshmi N. and wanted to share it and my response with you.

Lakshmi wrote

“From [your post here](#), I take it that it is ok to publish all my work across genres under the same name, correct?”

“I’m working on my first novel and I’m also simultaneously writing my first non-fiction technical book (which is very likely to be distributed through the same channels as my novel).

“Should I still be using my original name, or should I have a pen name exclusively for all the fiction I write?”

Excellent question, and one I probably didn’t cover in the post.

First, the notion that a fiction writer should use a different pen name for every genre s/he writes is another of those myths, though one that I hope is dying out.

If you write erotica, and if others knowing that might harm your personal or professional reputation, by all means use a pen name for that, but otherwise, no.

As to the particular question Lakshmi asked, here’s my response:

“If it were me, I would still recommend using your own name for everything. I’m known widely for my fiction but just as widely (among fiction writers and those who want to write fiction) as a non-fiction writer and poet.

“However, it depends on your job too. Would being known as a fiction writer harm your reputation in whatever field you’re in? If so, go with ONE pen name for all your fiction. If writing fiction would only enhance your reputation among your boss and co-workers, go with your real name.

“I also recommend putting up a website under whichever name you use for fiction, and adding that URL and your email address as a fiction writer to your emails in a ‘signature’ (see mine below).”

About Using Prompts

Yesterday, writer Balázs Jambor (Hungary) left this comment on the Journal website:

“About the prompts... I rarely use them, but there are some occasion I do. When I use them, I ... open the prompt’s book at a random place, and randomly choose one of them. Then I play with the idea until I get a starting point.

“Most of the time I don’t actually write the prompt, just the story [it] led me to.

“Most of the time I don’t need them because I have more ideas than I can write during my time, but when I want something new — something fresh — I just play the game. Like how DWS uses titles to start his own writing, or Harvey uses pictures.”

Exactly right. The main thing is to keep writing and keep having fun.

Further Clarification on Vella

I received another email.

When you send an “episode” to Vella, no, you aren’t sending them a “rough draft” replete with spelling errors, wrong words, etc.

You don’t write rough drafts, right? Of course not. You write to the best of your ability the first time through. Cycle back through the chapter (episode) to give your characters (not yourself) a chance to revise, then run a spell checker, then upload the episode.

But you’ll probably cycle back as necessary later too. Say to slip a revolver into the pocket of Aunt Marge’s robe back in Chapter 3. You might do that as you’re writing Chapter 5 or 6, when Marge hears something in the middle of the night, gets up and slips on her robe to investigate, and pulls a revolver on the would-be robber.

Your Episode 3 in Vella will stand as-is. But when you publish the finished novel, the scene in Chapter 3 will be altered slightly.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See “Paperback Writer” at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/paperback-writer/>. Interesting history.

See “How to Design a Book Cover...” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-to-design-a-book-cover-that-grabs-readers-attention-in-7-steps/>. See PG’s note.

See “Writing Techniques: Use and Abuse of ‘Lampshading’” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/writing-techniques-use-and-abuse-of-lampshading/>. I had never hear of this, at least by that name.

See “My Magazine. My Voice. My Rules.” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/my-magazine-my-voice-my-rules/>. Oh, but see PG’s take!

See “How to Finish Writing Someone Else’s Novel” at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/how-to-finish-writing-someone-elses-novel/>. Hint: you can also use this as practice if you love and want to practice a particular voice. In that case though you can’t publish what you’ve written. Any questions, ask me.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 930

Writing of Blackwell Ops 10: Jeremy Stiles The Way Things Go

Day 1..... 1635 words. To date..... 1635
Day 2..... 2464 words. To date..... 4099
Day 3..... 1615 words. To date..... 5714
Day 4..... 3808 words. To date..... 9522
Day 5..... 2057 words. To date..... 11579
Day 6..... 3563 words. To date..... 15142
Day 7..... 1881 words. To date..... 17023

Fiction for September..... 29005
Fiction since August 1..... *91327
Fiction for 2023..... 181314
Nonfiction for September..... 9800
Nonfiction for the year..... 184270
Annual consumable words..... 362773

***I had been calculating the number since Aug 1 wrong. It is correct now.**

2023 Novels to Date..... 3
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 74
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)... 232
Short story collections..... 31

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Practice Exercise, Keep Coming Back, and Thank You

September 14, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * A Valuable Practice Exercise
- * Vin Again, and Keep Coming Back
- * I'm a Fortunate Guy
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Do it as well as you possibly can. You will get an enormous reward. You will have created something.” Kurt Vonnegut

“On this day September 12 in 1817, 81-year-old John Adams had a great excuse for not writing someone back sooner. He opened his letter with, ‘The procrastination of old age and the dissipation of the month of August must be my apologies for neglecting your important letter of July, to this day.’

In other words, sorry for the delay—it’s hot and I’m old.” As reported by Mona S. (grin)

A Valuable Practice Exercise

Yesterday in “Of Interest” I mentioned that finishing someone else’s story or novel was a great way to practice taking that writer’s “voice” on board. Of course, you would be enthralled with the way that writer writes and want to learn pretty much by osmosis from him or her.

If you love a writer’s work, writing a new ending is an excellent practice exercise, especially if you enjoyed the story but wish the ending was different.

You might want to practice with Hemingway or with Zandri or Cussler or whomever else. And I’m no hypocrite. I don’t mind if you practice on my work.

For example, if you enjoyed the Wes Crowley series but absolutely hate what happened with Coralín late in Book 10 of the original saga (so did I, but that’s what happened), [The Right Cut](#), feel free to use it as an exercise.

You don’t have to tell whatever writer you use to practice because the exercise is only for your own edification.

Here’s one way to do that:

- 1. First read** and reread the story until you get into the flow of it. The flow gives you the feel of the writer’s style.
- 2. Type-in (preferred)** or copy and paste the short story or the last chapter or two (but only up to the point where you disliked the ending) into Word or your chosen word processor. Now you have an unfinished story or novel.
- 3. With your fingers resting on the keyboard**, read over again what you typed-in or pasted. Allow the characters to make changes here and there as necessary.
- 4. When you reach the white space, keep typing.** Let the story unfold as you run through it with the characters.

Before you ask, yes, this will work for any genre, even literary. (For magic realism, I strongly recommend Isabelle Allende or Gabriel Garcia Márquez.)

Of course, when you've finished the new twist or new ending, you can't publish what you've written. That would be plagiarism, and you would never do that, right?

But you will have advanced in your writing, maybe a lot. I've done this three or four times both before and during my fiction writing career. It was easily among the easiest and best learning experiences I've ever experienced as a writer.

Vin Again, and Keep Coming Back

As many of you know, “keep coming back” has been my mantra ever since I started writing fiction.

Yesterday I watched and listened to Vin Zandri's short but excellent broadcast on writing sprints (see “Of Interest”) and commented on it:

“Re your writing method, yep. I've long preached ‘Keep coming back’ if you want to be productive.”

Vin replied, “Gospel.”

As usual, he and I are in perfect sync.

If you want to increase your daily production, write when you can, then take a break or go do necessary stuff.

But later in the day as you are able, come back and pick up where you left off. Even if you believe you're “stuck” or whatever. At the end of the day, you will be amazed at your word count.

I'm a Fortunate Guy

I'm fortunate my mind works the way it does. I hope all of you have characters just pop-in on you from time to time with a line of dialogue or, more rarely, a bit of an action scene. Either of those is a legit, and usually strong, story starter.

I know that probably not all of you think that way because it wasn't always the case for me. I was born with some of it, but I picked up most of it through practice.

Also, our personal situations vary. Many writers are necessarily attached-to or grounded-in a lot of non-writing events and occasions. Jobs, rearing minor children, and so on.

But other than the occasional shopping trip, routine chores and so on, all of those things are in the past for me. For the most part, I can spend as much or as little time at my writing 'puter — or at my business computer answering emails and writing items for the Journal — as I want to.

Some of you have helped make that possible, especially my donors and those who share the Journal with other writers who haven't subscribed yet.

Of course, a tip of the hat also to those readers who spread the word about my Wes Crowley novels or my SF series or action-adventure crime-thriller Blackwell Ops series. Every little bit helps, and as the old saying goes, *A rising tide lifts all boats*.

So all of the preceding is to say a big Thank You for helping enable my own personal dream life: writing fiction and passing along what I learn to other writers.

If you get something of value from the Journal or from my usually quick responses to your emails — and if you are able — please consider visiting the [Donations page](#) and contributing any amount, either as a one-time donation or as a recurring monthly donation. You who donate help keep the Journal free in perpetuity.

If you aren't able to do that, please consider sharing the Journal with other writers who haven't yet seen the clear, myth-free light. (grin) To do that, you only have to click the **Share This Post** button at the bottom of this message.

And either way, thank you again for being out there. I am privileged to know you. I'm in great company among you, and you are the gentle wind at my back.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Writing Sprints, Writing Lectures, and the Future of the Writer's Life" at [https://vincentzandri.substack\[dot\]com/p/writing-sprints-writing-lectures](https://vincentzandri.substack[dot]com/p/writing-sprints-writing-lectures). Lecture series I mentioned yesterday should be live on his website today or tomorrow. Worth holding off to save \$20.

See "Lost Words" at <https://killzoneblog.com/2023/09/lost-words.html>. I was a little distressed to realize I still use some of these words and phrases. (grin)

See "Unlocking Amazon A+ Content for Books: The Ultimate Handbook" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/unlocking-amazon-a-content-for-books-the-ultimate-handbook/>. This is a really great post.

See "UFO expert unveils 'alien corpses' in Mexico Congress" at <https://interestingengineering.com/culture/ufo-expert-unveils-alien-corpses-in-mexico-congress>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1120

**Writing of Blackwell Ops 10: Jeremy Stiles
The Way Things Go**

Day 1..... 1635 words. To date..... 1635
Day 2..... 2464 words. To date..... 4099
Day 3..... 1615 words. To date..... 5714
Day 4..... 3808 words. To date..... 9522
Day 5..... 2057 words. To date..... 11579
Day 6..... 3563 words. To date..... 15142
Day 7..... 1881 words. To date..... 17023
Day 8..... 3047 words. To date..... 20070

Fiction for September..... 32052
Fiction since August 1..... 94374
Fiction for 2023..... 184361
Nonfiction for September..... 10920
Nonfiction for the year..... 185390
Annual consumable words..... 369751

2023 Novels to Date..... 3
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 74
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)... 232
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark and adherence to Heinlein's Rules. Unreasoning fear and the myths of writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

Pen Names Revisited

September 15, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Pen Names Revisited
- * Working Into a New Schedule
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“You as the writer are just the conduit.” Vin Zandri in Episode #805: Write Only For Yourself

As I commented on the video, “Easy for me. I just run through the trenches of the story with the characters, write what happens, and what the characters say and do in response. And if anyone asks why I wrote whatever dialogue or setting, I just shrug. “‘Cause that’s what happened.”

Seriously, all I do as a writer is move my fingers. Every word of every story or novel comes directly from the characters.

Pen Names Revisited

Peggy K left a comment on [the post from a couple of days ago](#): “The other issue about pen names is privacy.”

Of course, that is a very valid point. But my main point in the post was that all of your writing — with the exception or two that I mentioned in the post — should be in one name. I’ll stick with that.

Publishing under one name is how you build inventory under that name, and the more inventory you have published, the greater your discoverability.

Say you publish a novel every month. If you write under four genres, each under a different pen name, at the end of the year you will have published only 3 titles per pen name.

If all of those were published under one name, you would have twelve novels and much greater discoverability.

I know at least one bestselling Romance author who writes everything under a single pen name, and that seems to work for her. I can’t claim to know her reasons — we’ve never talked about it — but I theorize she does so because her pen name harkens back to the romance novels of the Regency period.

She reads this Journal. Perhaps she will elaborate in a comment. (grin) If you enjoy Romance, check out the works of [USA Today bestselling author Diane Darcy](#).

Stephen King wrote several stories and books under the pen name Richard Bachman, but he was later outed by a book store clerk.

During the Pulp Era, prolific writers used pen names for a very practical reason: they were turning out so many manuscripts so often that publishers wouldn’t consider them. Readers might not buy magazines filled with one writer’s work.

When the writers started using pen names, they could sell multiple stories to the same magazines (and book publishers) under different names.

If you're still stuck in the agent-tradpub mindset, and if you're prolific, that might also be a reason to use different pen names even within the same genre: because you're just putting out too much work.

That's another thing I love about the time we are living in. I can write whatever I want (I write across five or six different genres) and I can publish as often as I like. And with the exception of erotica ("Which I no longer write," he said) and magic realism (Gervasio Arrancado) I do all of that under one name.

So it all boils down to whether you want to give readers the best chance of finding your books.

For much more, key "Pen Names" into the Search box at [the Journal website](#). And while you're browsing and enjoying a cuppa, check out my books and the discounts you can get at [StoneThread Publishing](#).

Working Into a New Schedule

I'm slowly working into a new schedule, or actually the one I slipped out of a couple of years ago.

I sacked out last night at 7:30. I awoke this morning at 3:30, and the first thought on my mind was to rush to the Hovel to get back into the novel. (grin) What a great feeling!

Of course I had to brew my coffee and get dressed first (yes, in that order) and now only this is delaying me, so I'll end this a little early this morning.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Diane Darcy" at <https://www.dianedarcy.com/>.

See "Special Stretch Goal" at <https://deanwesleysmith.com/special-stretch-goal-2/>.

See "Amazon's Latest Actions Against Fake Review Brokers..." at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/amazons-latest-actions-against-fake-review-brokers-2-fraudsters-found-guilty-of-facilitating-fake-reviews-in-amazons-store/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 690

**Writing of Blackwell Ops 10: Jeremy Stiles
The Way Things Go**

Day 1..... 1635 words. To date..... 1635
Day 2..... 2464 words. To date..... 4099
Day 3..... 1615 words. To date..... 5714
Day 4..... 3808 words. To date..... 9522
Day 5..... 2057 words. To date..... 11579
Day 6..... 3563 words. To date..... 15142
Day 7..... 1881 words. To date..... 17023
Day 8..... 3047 words. To date..... 20070
Day 9..... 2588 words. To date..... 22658

Fiction for September..... 34640
Fiction since August 1..... 129014
Fiction for 2023..... 184361
Nonfiction for September..... 11610
Nonfiction for the year..... 186080
Annual consumable words..... 373029

2023 Novels to Date..... 3
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 74
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)... 232
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark and adherence to Heinlein's Rules. Unreasoning fear and the myths of writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

The Myths, and What Gives?

September 16, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Shameless Self-Promotion
- * Welcome
- * A Quick Lesson on Spanish Name Pronunciation
- * "The Old 710"
- * The Myths, and What Gives?
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“The man who views the world at 50 the same as he did at 20 has wasted 30 years of his life.”
Muhammad Ali

“The beautiful thing about learning is nobody can take it away from you.” BB King

“The island on which traditional publishers and their camp followers live provides a very warped view of the real book world. ... Approximately one out of ten thousand ‘kids’ would choose a paperback instead of an ebook.” The Passive Guy

Shameless Self-Promotion

A day or two ago was the 7th anniversary of my stand-alone SF novel [**The Day the Earth Shuddered and Went Dark.**](#)

You can read descriptions of any of my books or short story collections by selecting the genre tab at [**StoneThread Publishing**](#), clicking the genre tab, then clicking the cover of the title you’re interested in.

And be sure to read about our great discounts when you order direct. Those are on the home page at StoneThread.

Welcome

By the way, welcome to Denise and any other new subscribers. Good to have you aboard.

Be sure to check out the freebies at the [**Free Archives \(and more\) tab**](#) and at the [**Writer Downloads tab**](#) over on my author site.

“The Old 710”

That’s the title of my short story that went out to subscribers to the Stanbrough Writes substack yesterday. I always forget until it hits my inbox.

If you would like to read it, [**Click Here**](#). If you would like to subscribe and get a free short story from your fiction-writing instructor every Friday, click the Subscribe button at the bottom of that post.

The Myths, and What Gives?

The myths of fiction writing are so prevalent that the “open rate” among my subscribers is sometimes really low.

I can only assume new readers and new subscribers open the Journal, see information that doesn't conform to the vast majority of how-to writing books, and split. Some probably break out into a cold sweat and shove their computer away as if it might be possessed by the devil or something. (grin) The myths are just that prevalent.

Instead of teaching the myths, I teach self-confidence, self-reliance, and adherence to Heinlein's Rules. Stuff like that. See my Disclaimer at the end of this post.

You're all familiar with the myths I'm talking about:

- you must know at all times what's going to happen next (very unlike real life) so before you write a word of the story,
- you must outline (critical mind)
- you must write character sketches (critical mind)
- you must do some world-building (critical mind)

Then, when you finally actually write the thing (*if you do, if you aren't already bored with it because you already know how the story will end*),

- you must revise
- you must consult others for their input (critique groups, etc.)
- you must rewrite X number of times
- you must polish (whatever that means)

All of that for one novel.

How long does that take? Not to mention with every revision and every rewrite, you're taking the story further away from your unique, original voice and the story the characters actually lived.

I hasten to add, that's fine. If that's your process, good for you. But wow, do you ever need this Journal.

Still, without it you will learn the "secret" someday on your own.

Well, if you don't give up writing fiction altogether and find something fun to do instead. Something that isn't nearly as tedious and arduous and labor-intensive as most of the how-to books make writing fiction out to be.

But back to the Journal and the low open rate:

For just one example, even on Thursday's post, with the (I thought) enticing title of "Practice Exercise" (Hey, that alone would have nailed me to the screen) "Keep Coming Back, and Thank You," the open rate was only 39%. And that was only among those who viewed the post, which was only about 75% of my subscribers.

Now, I understand that many blogs on various topics have much lower open rates and that low rates are to be expected.

But I'm writing a dedicated blog aimed at a dedicated audience of folks who want to cut their learning curve while actively writing fiction.

And I'm passing along information on writing fiction that you *literally* cannot get nowhere else, at least regularly. So I'm a little stymied.

What gives? Any ideas?

- Is it the format?
- Something I should add?
- Something I should discontinue?
- Are the topics not up to snuff? (And what topics would you suggest?)
- Is the typical Journal post "too" something? Too long? Too short? Too personal? Too varied?
- Does it arrive too often?

I am also aware some of you only "catch up" on the Journal posts once a week or so. Realizing that is why I started slapping (I hope informative) titles on the Journal posts almost two years ago. (The first "titled" Journal entry posted on November 3, 2019.)

Having watched a lot of Vin Zandri's YouTube channel segments, I know he talks about writing at times. And he and I write about the same way and discuss similar topics.

Vin also does a boilerplate marketing and promo bit for the first minute or two. And my buddy Dan Baldwin adds a little promo to the end of each of his weekly blogettes.

Given how seldom some open the Journal, that's a good idea. So I will do a little of that beginning today in the Journal. (Thanks, Vin and Dan.) Probably right after the Quotes of the Day, so easy enough to skip over if you aren't interested. Like my Numbers near the end.

Vin's regular videos (not including the new format, in which he interviews real people about their job, life experiences, etc., which are very good by the way and I recommend subscribing), are about 10 to 15 minutes long.

I imagine it takes about that long to read a typical edition of the Journal.

And Dean Wesley Smith, as much as I admire the guy and appreciate all I learned from him in my early days as a fiction writer — FREE, by the way, just as I offer now in the Journal — Dean has gotten farther away from doling out free writing advice and spends most of his posts promoting himself, WMG Press, and his Kickstarter campaigns.

So again, any ideas on how I can improve the Journal?

You don't have to leave a comment either here at the substack or at [the Journal website](#) unless doing that is more convenient for you. Feel free to email me directly at harveystanbrough@gmail.com with any concerns or recommendations.

I must be doing something wrong.

But you don't even have to go out of your way to visit the Journal website each morning to see what's new. The Journal is delivered directly into your inbox.

Okay, so I'll kind'a sort'a hope to get a lot of comments or emails on this post. I want to make reading the Journal a good experience for you. Please be honest.

If you're reading this, even if you are NOT yet a subscriber, you can comment or email too. And you can subscribe (it's FREE) by clicking the **Subscribe** button below. You can also **Share This Post** at the second button below.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See "Write Only for Yourself" at https://www.youtube.com/live/b_Vh4tDJKQw.

See "Where Have All the YA Paperbacks Gone?" at <https://www.thepassivevoice.com/where-have-all-the-ya-paperbacks-gone/>.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1250

Writing of Blackwell Ops 10: Jeremy Stiles The Way Things Go

Day 1..... 1635 words. To date..... 1635
Day 2..... 2464 words. To date..... 4099
Day 3..... 1615 words. To date..... 5714
Day 4..... 3808 words. To date..... 9522
Day 5..... 2057 words. To date..... 11579
Day 6..... 3563 words. To date..... 15142
Day 7..... 1881 words. To date..... 17023
Day 8..... 3047 words. To date..... 20070
Day 9..... 2588 words. To date..... 22658
Day 10.... 3572 words. To date.....26230

Fiction for September..... 38212
Fiction for 2023..... 190521
Fiction since August 1..... 100534

Nonfiction for September..... 12860
Nonfiction for the year..... 187330
Annual consumable words..... 377851

2023 Novels to Date..... 3
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 74
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)... 232
Short story collections..... 31

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Admin Stuff, Spanish Names, and More on Vella

September 17, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Shameless Self-Promotion
- * An Administrative Note
- * A Quick Lesson on Spanish Name Pronunciation
- * No Joy
- * More Info on Vella
- * 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 (Thanks to Russ J for reminding me of this.)

Take note, fiction writers. Once again, all things “bad” about creativity boil down to fear. And every fear you ever have is a function of the conscious, critical mind.

Shameless Self-Promotion (and Vella)

I took a few moments yesterday to spell-check and upload episodes (chapters) 9 through 16 to Vella.

Episode 8 (uploaded earlier) will be available on Sep 18, and Episode 9 will go live on Sep 20. After that, a new will go live every day until I finish the novel. (grin)

If anyone out there wants to read this brand-new novel, the first three episodes are free. You can find them at <https://kdp.amazon.com/kindle-vella/story-details/A0C3BB99Z8J>.

See much more about Vella below.

An Administrative Note

For those of you who regularly click through to items in “Of Interest,” I’ve changed the format a little. From now on, the title of the article itself will serve as the link. This will be a huge time saver for me.

If you want the specific URL of an article, click the link and then copy it from the address bar in your browser.

Note: When copying (or pasting) URLs, you can make them “clean” by stopping after the last forward slash (/) or just before the question mark.

For example, you can chop off everything after the ASIN and the forward slash in any Amazon URL.

If you hover over the link, the URL should also appear in the bottom left of your browser screen. This will save me a LOT of time.

A Quick Lesson on Spanish Name Pronunciation

If you’re unsure of how to write the pronunciation of Spanish names, see the comments by Rikki M and my responses on [“Practice Exercise, Keep Coming Back, and Thank You”](#).

Imagine a Russian citizen and an American westerner talking a little Spanish back and forth. (grin) There y’go.

No Joy

There were only two responses to my open request yesterday for what you would like to see in the Journal.

One writer commented on the substack, basically saying I should just keep doing what I’m doing. Another said the same thing, but in a comment directly on the Journal.

The second guy is not a subscriber but visits the site almost every day to view that day’s post. If everyone did that, I would discontinue the substack.

I’ve done the same thing since early 2014 with Dean Wesley Smith’s website. It isn’t that difficult.

That's something I might consider anyway. It would certainly thin the herd. Only those who were really interested would visit at all. And it would save me about an hour a day. Hmm.

I'm not worried about the lack of responses. Eventually I will probably tire of passing along what I know via the Journal anyway and focus all my time on my own work.

Just know that as long as the Journal is running, you can always comment or email me to express what you would like to see.

Use it while you can.

More Info on Using Vella

If you upload several episodes to Vella like I did this morning, be careful to fill in the release date near the bottom of the form (below all the "reader poll" stuff).

I think I filled-in all of the release dates correctly. As I wrote above, my intent was to release one episode (chapter) per day beginning on September 20. I uploaded 8 new episodes yesterday morning.

Episodes 9 – 14 and 16 were approved. But when I went to the Vella site to see what was going on, Episode 15 was marked "Publishing."

Publishing? I was frantic. Did I manage to mess up the scheduled release date? I'm old. I'm tired. Take pity on me. Waaa. (grin)

But no. A kind Vella rep told me "Publishing" actually means "In Review."

I told her I hoped so, and maybe she could pass the word up the chain so that episodes that are being reviewed are marked "In Review" rather than "Publishing."

Or maybe I'm just putting too much effort into my hope that whatever college grad set up that page understands that "in review" and "publishing" do not mean the same thing to most people.

You shouldn't have to interpret instructions and status cues. They should simply say what they mean.

But maybe that's just me.

Just so you know, everything turned out all right. The episodes will go live in the proper sequence every day beginning on September 20.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See [“Hemingway!”](#)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 790

Writing of Blackwell Ops 10: Jeremy Stiles The Way Things Go

Day 11.... 3025 words. To date..... 29255

Fiction for September..... 41237
Fiction for 2023..... 193546
Fiction since August 1..... 103559
Nonfiction for September..... 13650
Nonfiction for the year..... 188120
Annual consumable words..... 381666

2023 Novels to Date..... 3
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 74
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)... 232
Short story collections..... 31

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Vignettes vs. Short Stories

September 18, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Four More Episodes
- * Rare Book Signing Event
- * Vignettes, Short Stories, and the Challenge
- * Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“What does it matter if I’m 23 or 53? I’m making stories up, not fighting fires or digging ditches under a steady rain.” George Kordonis, on starting to write fiction seriously at 53.

“Slang is a language that rolls up its sleeves, spits on its hands and goes to work.” Carl Sandburg (stolen from Dan Baldwin’s Writing Tip of the Week, which will be featured here as a guest post sometime in the next few days.

“Nothing tears a reader out of a story faster than a mistake about something they know well.” Sue Coletta, award-winning Crime writer

“Jesus. I think I’d let her shoot me just so she would be the last thing I’d ever see.” Character Jeremy Stiles, looking at a woman in Chapter 19 of *Blackwell Ops 10: Jeremy Stiles: The Way Things Go*. (grin)

Four More Episodes

I uploaded four more episodes (chapters) to Vella yesterday morning. Chapters 17 through 20.

The Blackwell Ops novels are fun to write. Each one is basically a collection of short stories, each covering one to three or four chapters.

All the stories in a book feature one main character and a slew of supporting cast, including the target of the main character’s latest assignment. Great fun to write.

I’m actually thinking about opening up the Blackwell Ops world to other writers if any of you are interested.

If you’re into writing psychological suspense and might enjoy writing Every Man or Woman main characters who have an odd profession or secondary profession in which s/he is a very talented, knowledgeable, and well-paid assassin, email me.

If you want a taste, you can find the first three episodes of Blackwell Ops 10: Jeremy Stiles FREE at <https://kdp.amazon.com/kindle-vella/story-details/A0C3BB99Z8J>.

Rare Book Signing Event

I don’t get out much, but if any of you will be in Bisbee Arizona on Saturday, September 23, I’ll be signing Wes Crowley paperbacks at Zearings from 12 to 3 p.m.

Tip: Another Thing I’m Doing Now

I’m paranoid about writing a few thousand words, then losing all that due to whatever happened during a glitch in the electronic universe.

So now when I first start writing a novel, for example, “Title.docx” I immediately save it as “Title.docx 1” also, most often in a different storage device, like my little external hard drive.

Afterward, every time I finish a chapter (1000 to 1500 words) I click Save As, then click “Title.docx 1” and hit Enter. A little pop up says the document already exists and asks whether I want to replace it. I click Yes and It saves.

Then, to get back to the original document, I click Save As again and do the same for “Title.docx”. It takes only a few seconds and gives me great peace of mind.

Vignettes, Short Stories, and the Challenge

I received a nice email with a question. The writer wondered whether a vignette would count for the challenge.

A vignette or “slice of life” is to a short story (or novella or novel) what a memoir is to an autobiography.

The typical memoir covers a particular event or specific time period during the memoirist’s life, whereas the autobiography is usually all-encompassing, cradle to hearse.

Likewise, whereas a short story is about One Event, a novella is about A Few Interrelated Events and a novel is about More Interrelated Events Than That, a vignette is usually about One Part of One Event (hence, slice of life).

Being about complete Events, short stories, novellas and novels also include all four story elements: Setting, Character, Conflict, and Resolution.

That’s where the vignette differs. Being only a slice of life (being about only part of an event) it always lacks Resolution. Often, it will lack Conflict as well, or the conflict will only be implied.

As some of you know, I recently expanded the ongoing Bradbury Challenge to also report weekly numbers for those who are writing novels instead of short stories.

So do vignettes count for the Challenge? Sure. In fact, so does flash fiction, which I consider a complete short story (Setting, Characters, Conflict, Resolution) in 100 words or fewer, including the title

As always, please send your information in this format, no commas necessary. Then I won’t have to delete them: Title xxxx (word count) Genre Name.

Don’t include (word count). Just the number.

And yes, you can send info on more than one story in a week if you want to. For example, Alexander Nakul sent info on four short stories this week.

And of course you can participate in your own challenge privately without reporting numbers to anyone. But especially in my early days as a serious fiction writer I found reporting my numbers to someone else helped keep me writing. Just sayin'.

Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting

Anyone can jump in and join the challenge at any time. This is a great way to jumpstart your writing and get more practice pushing down the critical voice.

There's no cost.

Notice, there's also no pressure re submitting or publishing. That's up to you. I just want to help you enable the sheer fun of writing and learning to keep track.

During the past week, in addition to whatever other fiction they're writing, the following writers reported their progress:

Short Fiction

- Erin Donoho "Two Village Girls" 860 Historical Fiction
- Loyd Jenkins "Meeting a Friend" 1790 SF
- George Kordonis "The Library" 1566 Urban Fantasy
- *Alexander Nakul "Amelia learns" 2073 Erotic Fantasy
- *Alexander Nakul "A windfall for a night demon" 2774 Erotic Fantasy
- *Alexander Nakul "One more lesson for Amelia" 1468 Erotic Fantasy
- *Alexander Nakul "What did the rapier sing about?" 3013 Erotic Fantasy
- Chynna Pace "The Clinging Place" 1674 Paranormal
- Christopher Ridge "The New Neighbors" 4500 Horror
- K.C. Riggs "I Am" 2119 Magical Realism

*(Alexander Nakul also provided a live link for these stories, but all are in Russian and there is no page-translation capability. If you would like to read them, email me and I will send you the links.)

Longer Fiction

- Balázs Jámbor *Trilogy of the Lora Stories* (novel) 4000 (8000 total to date) Fantasy
- Alexander Nakul *Horses of Mayhem* (novel) 5114 (9384 total to date) Historical Fantasy

Congratulations to all for having fun with their writing.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

See ["Raymond Chandler"](#)

See [“What Does Coffee Taste Like?”](#)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1050

**Writing of Blackwell Ops 10: Jeremy Stiles
The Way Things Go**

Day 11.... 3025 words. To date..... 29255

Day 12.... 2649 words. To date..... 31904

Fiction for September..... 43886

Fiction for 2023..... 196195

Fiction since August 1..... 106208

Nonfiction for September..... 14700

Nonfiction for the year..... 189170

Annual consumable words..... 385365

2023 Novels to Date..... 3

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 74

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)... 232

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark and adherence to Heinlein’s Rules. Unreasoning fear and the myths of writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

Writing Prompts Are Yours for a Song

September 19, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Shameless Self-Promotion
- * Writing Prompts Are Yours for a Song (guest post)
- * The Writing
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called Huckleberry Finn.” Ernest Hemingway

“The English major reads because, as rich as the one life he has may be, one life is not enough. He reads not to see the world through the eyes of other people but effectively to become other people.” Mark Edmundson

Shameless Self-Promotion

Those of you who are in southeast Arizona on Saturday, September 23 and would like to chat with me for a little while, remember to stop by Zearings in Benson. It's on the main drag, and I'll be there from noon to 3 p.m.

Writing Prompts Are Yours for a Song

If you're stuck for a story idea, you don't need to purchase a book of writing prompts or go online for a such a list, just turn on your radio or whatever implement is attached to your hand these days and listen to the lyrics of just about any song.

I'm a fan of classic country music, a style that's been described as “three chords and pain” and in pain there is ... concept. But you can get ideas from the lyrics of any genre of music.

First, consider the lyrics of a Hank Williams classic.

Hear that lonesome whippoorwill
He sounds too blue to fly
The midnight train is whining low
I'm so lonesome I could cry.

Tell me you can't find a hundred story ideas in that bit alone.

Curly Putman and Bobby Braddock wrote perhaps the greatest country song of all time, which contains the following lines.

He stopped loving her today. They placed a wreath upon his door.

Do you need any more than that for a great story? The heartache, the depth of feeling, the emotion in those words can be a source to power your own vision of the lyrics.

Who is he? Who is she? Did she precede him in death? Was she a bitch? Was he a jerk? How were they estranged? Were they estranged?

The ideas are limited only by your imagination or your deadline.

Of course, you don't have to mine just the words of tragedy. Country comedy offers a rich vein of humor as exemplified by this Mac Davis tune.

To know me is to love me
I must be one hell of a man
Oh Lord, it's hard to be humble
But I'm doing the best that I can.

Consider Roger Millers:

Dang Me! Dang Me!
They oughta take a rope 'n hang me.

Roy Clark's unforgettable lines offer a wealth of ideas in

Thank God and Greyhound She's Gone!

A writer just needs to put his head into that character and follow him or her to whatever destination they seek.

You don't need to and shouldn't borrow the story from the song.

That's the original writer's character and besides, you don't need it. Your character will have an entirely different tale to tell. Finding and relating that story isn't a challenge; it's an adventure.

You don't have to limit yourself to country western music or entire passages. A single line or even a title from just about any song can lead to a great story.

- There is a house in New Orleans....
- Only love can break a heart....
- I can't get no satisfaction....
- Knock knock knockin' on heaven's door....
- Oh pretty woman....
- What becomes of the broken hearted....
- Won't get fooled again....
- Love is like a heat wave....
- Don't wanna miss a thing....

Okay, I'm dating myself, but you get the point. Music is everywhere and so are great ideas for great stories. Tune in and see where the music takes you.

(Ed. Note: I once wrote a short story titled "Pancho and Lefty: An Alternate Ending")

Quote of the Week: "Slang is a language that rolls up its sleeves, spits on its hands and goes to work." Carl Sandburg

Recommended Reading: *Streetwise Spycraft* by Barry Davies

Recommended Online: desertfoothillsbookfestival.com

Want Information on Publishing?

I seldom write a post on publishing, and I'm not going to do one today. Primarily because I already wrote most of what I know about the topic in three books:

- Quick Guide to Self-Publishing & FAQs
- Toward Efficiency in Epublishing
- The Essentials of Digital Publishing

And I'm not hawking them. You can get all three completely free in PDF format by visiting <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives-gifts-dvds/>.

Then scroll down a little and click on those titles. They should open in a new window and download directly to your desktop (or wherever your downloads end up). You can open them and read them to your heart's content.

And did I mention they're free?

The Writing

I can feel the novel drawing to a close, but I think it will probably take another 5,000 or 6,000 words, so probably another four or five chapters. Of course, it might run longer.

I'm fine with that. The 14 days I hoped for was a false deadline anyway. The sky won't fall if I don't complete it in that time.

I do hope to be finished with it before I do the booksigning this coming Saturday in Benson.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

["Romance Books Getting Spanked and More News"](#)

[The comments on "Paperback Writer"](#)

["It's Time To Stop"](#) For those who WITD, this will probably never happen. I will stop only when I must or when I find something else that's more fun.

["The 2023 Ig Nobels"](#) (Thanks to Bob C for the tip.)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 930

Writing of Blackwell Ops 10: Jeremy Stiles The Way Things Go

Day 11.... 3025 words. To date..... 29255

Day 12.... 2649 words. To date..... 31904

Day 13.... 3991 words. To date..... 35895

Fiction for September..... 47877

Fiction for 2023..... 200186

Fiction since August 1..... 110199

Nonfiction for September..... 15630

Nonfiction for the year..... 190100

Annual consumable words..... 390286

2023 Novels to Date..... 3

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 74

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)... 232

Short story collections..... 31

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Why the Journal?

September 20, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Shameless Self-Promotion
- * Why the Journal?
- * Finished the Novel
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“I found a great many pieces of punctuation and typography lying around dormant when I came along – and I must say I had a good time using them.” Tom Wolfe

“The reason a writer writes a book is to forget a book and the reason a reader reads one is to remember it.” Tom Wolfe

“From what I can gather, there are more than a few bruised and dented apples in our tree.”
Jeremy Stiles in Chapter 27 of Blackwell Ops 10: Jeremy Stiles: The Way Things Go

Shameless Self-Promotion

Sometime or other, be sure to stop by and read [**“If You Really Want to Write Fiction”**](#). I will be an eye-opener for some of you.

Those of you who are in southeast Arizona on Saturday, September 23 and would like to chat with me for a little while, remember to stop by Zearings in Benson. It’s on the main drag, and I’ll be there from noon to 3 p.m.

Oh, and please tell your friends. They’re just like your characters, after all. You don’t control them either, so you have no idea where they might be three days from now. (grin)

New Episodes — I put up four new episodes of Blackwell Ops 10 yesterday. Chapters 21 through 24. If you’re an early adopter, you can read the first three chapters (episodes) free of charge at [**https://kdp.amazon.com/kindle-vella/story-details/A0C3BB99Z8J**](https://kdp.amazon.com/kindle-vella/story-details/A0C3BB99Z8J).

Why the Journal?

A writer emailed to thank me for the Journal and for directing him to the free downloads on publishing and other articles at [**Free Archives**](#).

That prompted me to write a bit about why I bother with writing the Journal almost every day. And while I’m on the topic, why I do so with such frequency.

When I first started the Journal back in 2014, I did so for mostly selfish reasons. As an old retired jarhead, I needed a place to report. The Journal and its subscribers became that place.

Almost as an aside, I also wanted to pass along what I had learned from DWS. Especially Heinlein’s Rules ([**Heinlein’s Business Habits for Writers**](#)) and Writing Into the Dark.

But back then, I passed them along only as concepts, something I hoped other writers would try as well. I hoped they would find the same unbridled joy I had found once I learned to trust my characters and simply transcribe the story that they, after all, not I, were living.

I started the Journal in October of that year, I think, but you can check the archives if that matters to you. So almost 9 years ago. Where has the time gone?

That was also about the time I started writing my very first novel, [Leaving Amarillo](#), for which the catalyst was a short story — “Adobe Walls” — featuring a former Texas Ranger and deputy US marshal named Wes Crowley.

At that time, I had taken the plunge into WITD. But I had been writing into the dark for only about 7 months, and all short stories up to that point.

You know the result. There are 20+ novels in the overall Wes Crowley saga as well as a smattering of short stories, and I just finished my 75th novel, a personal benchmark for me.

Ever since I finished my 50th novel, my overall goal was to write at least 75. Now my overall goal will shift to 101. Why 101? Because jarheads don't to “to” the objective. They go through it. (grin)

But back to the Journal.

Over the years, I practiced. Meaning I kept moving forward. It's Heinlein's Rules all over again: Write, finish, publish and write the next story or novel.

Yes, I omitted Rule 3: Don't rewrite. That's because rewriting is hovering, *not* moving forward, and I already said I kept moving forward.

So I wrote (did not hover to rewrite), finished, published and started the next story or novel.

In practicing so much, I had new thoughts about WITD and eventually made the concept my own. I had originally learned the concept from Dean, but in my opinion I improved upon it.

About that time I also realized I no longer needed a place to report. The excitement of finding out what happened next in the current or subsequent story or novel was more than enough motivation.

And that's about the time the shift happened.

Suddenly the Journal was more for you than for me. I like subscribers as much as the next blogger — it feeds my silly ego — but what really mattered from that point on is you. Your belief in yourself and your trust in yourself and your characters.

It matters that you believe in yourself and what you already know in your creative subconscious mind about writing and structure and all that — concepts you don't even consciously realize you know — and then trusting that belief and your characters.

And then just writing what comes, what the POV character gives you. Practicing.

Realize that no individual story or novel is important. Either one is only a few minutes' or hours' entertainment for the reader. Absolutely nothing more. What's important is That you write, not what you write. And that's important only because you call yourself a writer.

As to the frequency of the Journal, when I have a thought that I believe might be of interest to you or helpful to you as a writer, I typically turn to the Journal and write it, as I'm doing right now.

As as for why I bother, I really am not altruistic. It simply costs me nothing (well, but a little time) to share with you, to pass along what I know and what I learn as I keep moving forward. And maybe to help motivate you to believe in yourself and trust yourself and your characters.

A Note on Donations — I've always kept the Journal free, and I will continue to do so. I very much appreciate those who donate and help compensate me for my time, but if you can't, you can't. I've been on that side of the dollar sign too.

If you do choose to donate (and you who are already donors, please listen) you may feel free to request pretty much anything from me — a novel or short story collection or nonfiction book, for example — at pretty much any time. I will be happy to oblige.

Finished the Novel

Blackwell Ops 10: Jeremy Stiles—The Way Things Go wrapped yesterday at something over 40,000 words. The story ran full circle and came to a natural conclusion.

I admit it feels a little good to have 75 novels behind me now. But I'm really looking forward to the next one.

Before I quit for the day, I ran the final spell check and sent the complete novel to my first reader. Today I'll upload the remaining episodes to Vella and be done with it.

I figure a week or so after the final episode goes live, I'll pull it out of Vella and publish the book in Amazon KDP Select.

After that, I'll publish it wide. It feels great to be on a new path. Or my old path but in a new direction

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[The Big Publishing Secret](#)

[The Back Cover of a Book: Just as Important as the Front Cover?](#)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1220

**Writing of Blackwell Ops 10: Jeremy Stiles
The Way Things Go**

Day 1..... 1635 words. To date..... 1635
Day 2..... 2464 words. To date..... 4099
Day 3..... 1615 words. To date..... 5714
Day 4..... 3808 words. To date..... 9522
Day 5..... 2057 words. To date..... 11579
Day 6..... 3563 words. To date..... 15142
Day 7..... 1881 words. To date..... 17023
Day 8..... 3047 words. To date..... 20070
Day 9..... 2588 words. To date..... 22658
Day 10.... 3572 words. To date.....26230
Day 11.... 3025 words. To date..... 29255
Day 12.... 2649 words. To date..... 31904
Day 13.... 3991 words. To date..... 35895
Day 14.... 4773 words. To date..... 40668 (Done)

Fiction for September..... 52650
Fiction for 2023..... 204959
Fiction since August 1..... 110199
Nonfiction for September..... 16850
Nonfiction for the year..... 191320
Annual consumable words..... 396279

2023 Novels to Date..... 3
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 74
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)... 232
Short story collections..... 31

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Vella, and Depth

September 21, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Shameless Self-Promotion
- * Welcome
- * Another Note on Vella
- * A Note on "Depth"
- * The Writing
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

"Up until now my process has always been, mainly, rushing. ... flying at breakneck speed, rushing myself and missing the actual meat of the story. ... I've never felt immersed before, and now I do." Chynna Pace, after experience Dean's "Depth in Writing" class

That's exactly it. That's why I constantly tell folks to slow down, take their time, don't skip over what the POV character is giving them.

"I believe in the impossible because no one else does." Florence Griffith Joyner

"The steam alone was strong enough to scald the eyelids off a bobcat. The coffee was even better." Wes Crowley in a future novel

Shameless Self-Promotion

Whew! Yesterday, in addition to uploading the last several episodes to Kindle Vella, I designed a cover, wrote the sales copy, and updated StoneThread Publishing. I both updated the Crime Thrillers & Action-Adventure page and created a new page for Blackwell Ops 10.

To see the cover and sales copy ("blurb") click <https://stonethreadpublishing.com/bo-10/>.

If you'd like to get a taste completely free of charge, scroll to the bottom of that page and click the link that reads Start reading Blackwell Ops 10. You get the first three chapters free. You guys trust me to teach you writing, right? So see whether I know what I'm doing.

Welcome

Welcome to Denis, Jay, Denise and any other new subscribers or reader of the Journal. I hope you will find it useful.

Be sure to check out the Archives and all the other free downloads at <https://hestanbrough.com/the-daily-journal-archives-gifts-dvds/>.

Another (Probably Final, I Hope) Note on Vella

Episodes uploaded to Vella have to be at least 600 words. Huh. Live and learn.

If I had known that going in (but it's probably in the FAQs on Vella), I would have either included the "epilogue" (originally only 230+ words) in Chapter 30. Either that or I would have slowed down and let the characters made the epilogue itself a little longer.

As it was, I had already uploaded Chapter 30, and I didn't want a chapter to be over 1500 words anyway.

That's just kind'a my personal magic number. Chapters in my books are a scene, usually around 1200 to 1499 words long.

Remember that sense of urgency I mentioned awhile back? I wanted to be finished uploading episodes of this novel to Vella. So I quickly (ahem) padded-out the epilogue. It plus my About the Author bit came to 760+ words, and I shamelessly uploaded it.

I won't have to do any such thing in the future, and now you know the requirement in advance, so you won't either.

All of that said, when I read over the new epilogue, I realized there were parts of it that seemed necessary to resolve the novel and the POV character's personal emotional strife.

My POV character came through for me yet again. I only had to slow down and listen. Some of it was even necessary to contrast his "regular" job as a game-show host in Hollywood with his activities as an operative for TJ Blackwell.

(Remember, **every word** in a novel should come through the POV character along with his or her physical and emotional senses and his or her opinion of the setting and the event. Nothing should come from you. You aren't in the story. You are only an imbedded observer.)

So later yesterday I cycled back over the "new" epilogue, removing the chaff and keeping the wheat. When it was over, Jeremy had added right at 400 words. I spell-checked it and sent the revised novel off to my excellent first reader.

I've also decided I will probably revisit Jeremy Stiles in a future Blackwell Ops novel. I like the guy. He leads a very interesting life. But no doubt there are dozens of operatives I haven't met and whose stories I haven't heard yet.

A Note on "Depth"

Awhile back, a writer asked for my recommendations of which of DWS' online workshops to take.

Her work had always drawn me in immediately and kept me immersed to the end of the story. (That's the purpose of "depth.") So I advised her against taking Dean's Depth in Writing class.

She took it anyway, and good for her. Back when I took it, my writing improved. Or so I thought.

I read back over the opening of my very first novel WITD and the openings of a few chapters. Each time they pulled me into the story and kept me there.

And it wasn't only me. The comment that I get most often from my readers is that they feel they're *in the setting with the character* and find it difficult to put the novel down. Good. That's depth. Well, and pacing, but that's another topic.

To get great depth, here's what you need to do, and I mean doggedly, stubbornly:

1. When describing the setting, write absolutely EVERYTHING the POV character notes or experiences with his physical (sight, sound, hearing, taste, feel) senses and EVERYTHING s/he experiences with his or her emotional senses: opinion of the setting (the "stench" or "perfume" of pipe smoke, the "stupid" or "ornate" library, etc.).

What the POV character notes or experiences is never "too much" description.

2. When describing the setting, write absolutely NOTHING that you, the author, "think" (critical mind) might be necessary to the scene. Always stubbornly guard against doing that.

Any description added by you, the author, will ALWAYS be too much.

Simple as it sounds, and as easy as it is to do if you trust yourself and your characters, that really is all you need to know about how to pull readers into your fiction and keep them there. Keeping them up late at night turning pages requires pacing. Depth and pacing go hand in hand.

But what about cycling? I've said many times that I am by and large what Stephen King calls a "putter inner."

That's true. But when I cycle, *I* don't add anything at all. Like King, I rest my fingers on the keyboard as I read, and allow my POV character to add anything I might have missed.

So just a caution: Practice keeping your conscious, critical, learning mind out of your writing. That is the sole domain of your creative subconscious, as well it should be.

The Writing

After the frenzy of the past few days, and after everything I did yesterday morning, I decided to take the afternoon off instead of starting something new.

I have no idea what I'll write next, unless I write the next Blackwell Ops novel featuring Jeremy Stiles. Having just finished the first, I'm used to his voice, and it wouldn't be the first time I repeated a character.

In my Blackwell Ops series alone there are now ten novels, but only eight unique POV characters. I've repeated Charles Claymore Task and Philip Dunstan, and sort of repeated Jack Tilden when I introduced his wife, Georgette, who is also an operative.

I didn't realize this until I just went to StoneThread Publishing and counted. But in case you're wondering, the genders are only slightly unbalanced. There are 5 male operatives, 3 female operatives, and another female (introduced in the second Philip Dunstan book) who signed up near the end of the book. She might want to tell her story too once she's gotten more experience.

We might well hear again from Marie Arceneaux from the Italian riviera, or from Melanie Sloan. Both great, exciting characters.

Eventually I will also return to the Wes Crowley gap series. I'll toss out part of the one I started awhile back, *Rose Padilla*, and finish that story.

Then sometime or other I hope Wes might round his overall story out with a transition novel that will lead us back into Book 3 of the original 12-volume saga. If you're a fan, the gap series fits between Books 2 and 3 of the original saga.

Great fun. I wish the same for you.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[The Ultimate Story Checklist](#) — Read and absorb what you want or need, but don't think about what you learn while you're writing.

[Business Musings: Platforms](#)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1220

Writing of

Day 1..... XXXX words. To date..... XXXXX

Fiction for September..... 52650

Fiction for 2023..... 204959

Fiction since August 1..... 110199

Nonfiction for September..... 16850

Nonfiction for the year.....	191320
Annual consumable words.....	396279
2023 Novels to Date.....	4
2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
2023 Short Stories to Date.....	4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	75
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)...	232
Short story collections.....	31

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Correction, Workshops, and a Reflection

September 22, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Shameless Self-Promotion
- * Vella Correction
- * Workshop Sale
- * Reflection on Editing
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“It’s not what WE see in the setting or know from research that matters. It’s what the CHARACTER sees and knows AND cares about enough to mention that matters.” Professional novelist Dawn Turner

“With all of the qualities of the scene-setting, the dialogue, the place and time and the time and place in which your characters move. And I want to move with the characters, move with them and describe the world in which they are living.” Gay Talese

“When you come to a fork in the road, take it.” Yogi Berra (grin)

Vella Correction

A reader told me yesterday the link I’ve spreading around to my Vella account didn’t work. I checked, and he’s right.

If you go to Amazon, then in the Search box key in “Vella, Blackwell Ops 10: Jeremy Stiles (The Way Things Go),” it will take you to the story.

Or you can just click <https://www.amazon.com/Blackwell-Ops-10-Jeremy-Stiles/dp/B0CHNMBDJ3/>. Again, the first three chapters are free.

Sorry for any inconvenience.

Workshop Sale

Yesterday I mentioned a bit about Dean’s Depth workshop. This morning he talked about a new workshop sale.

I didn’t read the post, but usually all workshops are 50% off. Get ’em while you can. See “Of Interest.”

Reflection on Editing

Short post today. I’m working on a rare copyedit yesterday and today and probably tomorrow morning, so no playing with my characters.

I’ve done this hundreds of times before, but it’s only just dawned on me how every different it is from writing.

I do get to enjoy the story I’m working on, but even that isn’t the same as writing or even reading.

Instead of playing with the characters in the creative subconscious — which is the mode I’m in when I write and the mode all of us are in when we read and are immersed in Story — I’m in critical mind all day, trudging along, reading carefully, “looking for” things.

It struck me that many writers still do this sort of thing with their own work, forcing it word-by-word into some preconceived notion of what it “should” be. Frankly, I don’t know why writers would ever want to do this to their own work, when instead they can run and play freely with their characters, simply enjoying the story as it unfolds all around them.

At the end of a day of copyediting, I’m not just pleasantly tired, like after playing with my childhood friends all day. Instead I’m exhausted. Remember how you felt after that one day of school when there were no real classes and you had to take tests all day? It’s like that.

Don’t do that. Run, play, and come home at the end of the day tired but smiling and filled with memories of your wonderful adventures with your characters.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[Your Own Literary Agency](#)

[Tell Matt Perryman about your online reading habits](#) — Help a brother out.

[New Diving Store and Workshop Sale!](#)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 510

Writing of

Day 1..... XXXX words. To date..... XXXXX

Fiction for September..... 52650
Fiction for 2023..... 204959
Fiction since August 1..... 110199
Nonfiction for September..... 17360
Nonfiction for the year..... 191830
Annual consumable words..... 396789

2023 Novels to Date..... 4
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 75
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)... 232
Short story collections..... 31

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Tag Line Verbs and Reverse Structures

September 23, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * A Story: “The Interview”
- * Tag Line Verbs Update
- * Reverse Structures

- * The Writing
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Nope,” Mama said. “You can’t talk to the earth with shoes on.” Mama Tombo explaining the facts of life to another character as she starts to pull on her shoes in K. C. Riggs’ excellent second installment of *The Widow’s Circle* <https://www.amazon.com/Widows-Circle-K-C-Riggs/dp/1534807276/>

“You better live every day like your last because one day you’re going to be right.” Ray Charles

A Story: “The Interview”

A new story went out yesterday. As usual, I didn’t remember until it hit my inbox. It’s another one — an eerie one if I’m remembering right — that came about as a direct result of a camping experience with Dan.

If you’d like to read it free, visit <https://stanbroughwrites.substack.com/p/the-interview>. If you’d like to subscribe, click the appropriate button below the story.

Tag Line Verbs Update

I have updated my Not Tag Lines document. It’s a list I’ve been compiling for years of verbs that folks use in tag lines other than “said” or some other form of utterance, like mumbled, muttered, whispered, yelled, etc.

Some very poor writing instructors who simply don’t know fiction tell their student to vary the verb to make the tag line “interesting.”

Thing is, you don’t WANT the tag line to be interesting. It’s only purpose is to let the reader know which character is speaking, and do so as unintrusively as possible.

Making the tag line “interesting” will draw the reader’s attention away from the story. That is not a good thing.

The best tag line is “s/he (or character name) said.” Nothing more.

Boring, right? Almost not noticeable.

But it *should* be boring and forgettable. You want the reader to practically skip over it and move on.

If any of you would like an updated copy of the compiled list, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com. If you stop using these verbs in your tag lines, your writing will be immediately improved.

Reverse Structures

I'm not talking about beginning, middle and end, or rising and descending action, etc. Focus down much more tightly than that.

For one thing, if you have more than two people talking in a scene, *always* (yep, always) put the tag line (s/he or character name said) or the bit of introductory narrative (s/he or character name shrugged, smiled, laughed, frowned, etc.) AHEAD of that character's line(s) of dialogue.

If you write the dialogue up front, the reader won't know which character was talking. Then the reader has to stop reading, go back, and re-read the dialogue with the new information in mind. You never want to stop the reader from reading.

For another biggie, put actions on the page as the characters actually perform them. If you have a character saying something, then performing an action, then saying something else tied to that action, write the dialogue/action/dialogue in that sequence.

Don't write the dialogue/dialogue and then the action. Again, the reader will stop.

Examples —

Not Good: Wes said, "Been a long trail this time, boys. In the morning, we ride for home. Here's to you." He raised his whiskey to toast them.

Better: Wes said, "Been a long trail this time, boys. In the morning, we ride for home." He raised his whiskey to toast them. "Here's to you."

The Writing

Today I have the signing at Zearings in Benson (southeast Arizona) from noon to 3. If any of you are in the area, I hope you'll stop by if only to chat.

I hope to write a new story or start the next novel today or tomorrow.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[Wow!! What a Store!!](#) To get ideas how you can sell from your own site. And yes, one exclamation point per occurrence will suffice.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 650

Writing of

Day 1..... XXXX words. To date..... XXXXX

Fiction for September..... 52650

Fiction for 2023..... 204959

Fiction since August 1..... 110199

Nonfiction for September..... 18010

Nonfiction for the year..... 192480

Annual consumable words..... 397439

2023 Novels to Date..... 4

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 75

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)... 232

Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark and adherence to Heinlein’s Rules. Unreasoning fear and the myths of writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

Local Authors, and Opening Up Copyediting Again

September 24, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * One More Time to Blackwell Ops 10
- * I Am Not a “Local Author”
- * I’m Copyediting Again
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

One More Time to Blackwell Ops 10

Welp, after my first reader noticed my shift from third to first-person at the beginning of Chapter 4 of the novel, I revised Blackwell Ops 10.

Yep, conscious-critical mind stuff. But then, I've been a copyeditor for around three decades. Maybe four. I've lost count.

Mostly I changed Chapter 1 into a Prologue and left it in third person omniscient to introduce the POV character.

Then I renumbered the remaining chapters and changed the former Chapters 2 and 3 two into first-person POV.

(I did a lot of that with the wonderful Word Find & Replace tool. If you don't know how to use it, see my pretty good and free course on Microsoft Word for Writers <https://harveystanbrough.com/microsoft-word-for-writers/>.)

Finally I wrote a suitable transition that spanned the end of the new prologue and the beginning of the new Chapter 1 (previously Chapter 2). I have to admit, it reads much more smoothly.

Note: The reader is always right when s/he "notices" something and feels jerked out of the story by it.

Take note.

I Am Not a "Local Author"

The brief book signing went all right. Our host was not only gracious, but both she and her husband are also former Marines. I always enjoy meeting another sister or brother from the Corps.

Live and learn. As I sat there, I came to realize I am not a local author. I'm a serious professional fiction writer who just happens to live locally.

I'm truly glad for the local authors who were there and that they got to chat with their friends. More power to them. And we did luck out and sell a few books.

But I admit I wearied of overhearing them wondering aloud whether "that Amazon thing" might be good for their books. Sigh.

If you are a local author, wanting to write a novel to finish your bucket list or publish a history of your family in the area, that's wonderful. I'm happy for you.

But if you are or aspire to be a professional fiction writer, always ask yourself Scott William Carter's WIBBOW question: **Would I Be Better Off Writing?**

If the answer is yes, write instead.

If I ever go to one of those again, I'll sign some books in advance, then take along my laptop and write while I'm there. Maybe even take a printer and sell "short stories while you wait" for \$20 a pop.

Opening Up Copyediting Again

I'm probably crazy, but I've also decided to open my copyediting practice again. But only for readers of the Journal. I'll copyedit any completed, spell-checked novel you want to send me for one cent per word. Or I'll tell you why I won't.

My lowest usual rate is one and one-half cents per word. With a 100,000-word novel, that's the difference between \$1000 and \$1500. With a 50,000 word novel, it's the difference between \$500 and \$750. Quite a difference. And you get explanations and advanced instruction on the side.

If I accept your novel for copyediting, I'll even copyedit a couple of pages and send them back to you free so you can see the result before you decide to have me edit the whole novel (or not).

For details on what a copyedit includes, please visit <https://harveystanbrough.com/copyediting/>. Or go to HarveyStanbrough.com, click the Writer Resources tab, then click the first link on that page.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[The Sudden \(Suspicious?\) Death of U.S. President Warren G. Harding](#)

[Quick Post On AI Lawsuit](#)

[Generative AI vs. Copyright](#) Interesting in light of Dean's post above

[Using Generative AI? Consider These 7 Tips From a Legal Expert](#)

[Character Type & Trope Thesaurus: Whiskey Priest](#)

[Writing Fiction That's "Ripped From the Headlines"](#) Mostly for the cute list at the end.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 640

Writing of

Day 1..... XXXX words. To date..... XXXXXX

Fiction for September..... 52650

Fiction for 2023..... 204959

Fiction since August 1..... 110199

Nonfiction for September..... 18650
Nonfiction for the year..... 193120
Annual consumable words..... 398079

2023 Novels to Date..... 4
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 75
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)... 232
Short story collections..... 31

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Copyediting Redux, Bradbury and More

September 25, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Opening Up Copyediting Again, Redux
- * The Bradbury Challenge
- * Important: If You Want to Donate
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“I can tell you now that Plotting with Depth, Magic Bakery, Teams, Action in Depth, Applied Depth, and Advanced Depth will not be regular classes starting in 2024. We will be starting up new ones as the spring goes along. So grab them on the sale while you can if you want feedback on assignments. If not, they will be classic workshops.” Dean Wesley Smith, from today's post (See “Of Interest”)

If you don't need Dean's often very vague feedback from the classes above, I recommend waiting to take them until after they go to Classis (and half-price). Then you can get them in a sale and pay only \$75.

Opening Up Copyediting Again

I'm running this again from yesterday, but with an addition:

A writer asked whether I would accept a short story collection for editing.

Yes, I will. The minimum overall length of the collection would have to be 10,000 words from the beginning of the first story title to the last word of the last story. (I'll look at any front matter and back matter, but it will not count in the total.)

If I accept the collection for editing, the price will be one cent per word. (So for a 10,000 word collection, \$100.)

Be sure to have the stories in the order you prefer in a single .rtf, .doc or .docx document. The document requirement for novels is the same. And please be sure you have run a spell check before you send it.

Another writer asked whether this would disrupt my own writing too much.

Thanks, but no, it won't. I'll write my own stuff in the morning, from whenever I file the Journal (usually very early morning now) until noonish.

Then in the afternoon I'll work on edits if I have any. Otherwise I'll catch up on other things I have to do, like updating the landing page on StoneThread Publishing or compiling the next day's Journal or uploading episodes to Vella or whatever else.

Here's the rest of the updated original post if you haven't seen it:

I'm probably crazy, but I've decided to open my copyediting practice again. But only for readers of the Journal.

I'll copyedit any completed, spell-checked novel you want to send me for one cent per word. Or I'll tell you why I won't.

My lowest usual rate is one and one-half cents per word. With a 90,000-word novel, that's the difference between \$900 and \$1350. With a 50,000 word novel, it's the difference between \$500 and \$750. Quite a difference. And you get explanations and instruction on the side.

If I accept your novel for copyediting, I'll even copyedit a couple of pages and send them back to you free so you can see the result before you decide to have me edit the whole novel (or not).

For details on what a copyedit includes, please visit <https://harveystanbrough.com/copyediting/>. Or go to HarveyStanbrough.com, click the Writer Resources tab, then click the first link on that page.

Any other questions, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

The Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting

Note to Challenge participants — I'm heading out to the Hovel earlier now, so be sure to get your story informatin to me on Sunday night. It has to be here before the Journal goes out on Monday morning, even if that's 3 a.m. Arizona time

Anyone can jump in and join the challenge at any time. This is a great way to jumpstart your writing and get more practice pushing down the critical voice.

There's no cost.

Notice, there's no pressure re submitting or publishing either. That's up to you. I just want to help you enable the sheer fun of writing and learning to keep track.

During the past week, in addition to whatever other fiction they're writing, the following writers reported their progress:

Short Fiction

- Erin Donoho "Self-Perception" 4800 YA
- George Kordonis "Consumer Culture" 2347 Urban Fantasy
- Chynna Pace "Endora's Feast", 1520 Fantasy
- Christopher Ridge "The Man Next Door" 3500 Horror
- K.C. Riggs "The English Ghost" 1763 Paranormal
- Frank Theodat "[Electric Love](#)" 980 Corpo Dread Speculative Fiction

Longer Fiction

- Balázs Jámber Trilogy of the Lora Stories (novel) 4000 (12000 total to date) Fantasy
- Alexander Nakul Horses of Mayhem 14202 Historical fantasy(23586 total to date)

Important: If You Want to Donate

If you find the Journal of value and want to donate, I very much appreciate it. Donors keep the Journal alive.

But instead of "pledging" through Substack, please visit this link:

https://www.paypal.com/donate/?hosted_button_id=X5L5EX52NW2MA.

With that link, you can make a one-time donation or a recurring monthly donation in any amount. Plus you can use your PayPal account or a debit or credit card.

Substack wants me to set up a Stripe account, etc. I found Stripe difficult to navigate. Besides, I already have the PayPal account set up. (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[Flash Drive Curiosity Leads to Identity Theft](#)

[Questions About the Workshop Sale](#)

[Seven Questions to Test Your Characters](#) Or write into the dark and let your characters do what they do.

[How to Write a Compelling Transition Sentence](#)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 850

Writing of “Finally Home” (a take-off on the song “Seven Spanish Angels”)

Day 1..... 1530 words. To date..... 1530 (done)

Fiction for September..... 54180

Fiction for 2023..... 206489

Fiction since August 1..... 111729

Nonfiction for September..... 19500

Nonfiction for the year..... 193970

Annual consumable words..... 398079

2023 Novels to Date..... 4

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 4

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 75

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)... 232

Short story collections..... 31

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A Brief History of Publishing, and Story Lengths

September 27, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Editing and Writing
- * A Brief History of Publishing
- * Story Lengths
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world.” Albert Einstein

“An artist discovers his genius the day he dares not to please.” French novelist Andre Malraux

“The secret of fiction writing is to have fun with it, do the best job you can, write only what you want to write, and then release and do it again.” Dean Wesley Smith

Editing and Writing

For anyone new to the Journal, I post a new edition on most days, but not all. Sometimes I just don't have anything to say, other than reporting my numbers, which most Journal readers probably skip.

Yesterday, for example, I didn't post a new edition of the Journal. That doesn't happen often, but occasionally.

I'm primarily a novelist. I love the deeper exploration of the longer form. But I did write a new short story the day before yesterday titled “The Mahogany Sea.” It's a magic realism tale based on an inlaid-wood picture I bought somewhere.

I was going to put Gervasio Arrancado's name on it (my magic-realism persona) but the POV character mentioned one of Gervasio's stories in the text, so I claimed authorship for myself.

Then, since I hadn't done any editing at all (yeah, I blew off my new schedule) I spent all day yesterday editing and writing this Journal entry. So here it is. (grin)

A Brief History of Publishing

The tradpubs stood up with mass-market paperbacks in the post-WWII 1940s. Before that, if you can wrap your writer's mind around this, there were no novels padded out to meet an artificial length requirement.

And any length requirement is artificial. Just sayin'. Let the story be whatever length it needs to be. (See “Story Lengths” below for a guideline for what to call a story after you’ve finished it.)

At first, the tradpubs’ artificial requirement was 50,000 to 60,000 words for the typical novel. Today, depending on genre, the requirement ranges anywhere from 50,000 words (Romance, Westerns, SF) to well over 100,000 words (Thrillers, Epic Fantasy, and pretty much everything else).

And get this: Before the tradpubs stood up, most short stories and novels (some serialized) were published in the pulp magazines of the 1920s through the 1950s. Most books that were published separately as novels were — wait for it — self-published, no stigma attached.

(The “stigma” re self-publishing was also invented by traditional publishers to set themselves up as self-appointed gatekeepers, again, out of sheer greed.)

That era before the tradpubs stood up was called The Golden Age of publishing. Fiction writers wrote whatever they wanted to write in whatever genres they wanted to write in, and they did it all on clunky manual (and later, electric) typewriters!

Time was money. The more stories and novels they churned out, the more money they made. They generally made 1 cent per word. Many became millionaires.

They were writing into the dark, letting the story unfold as they typed and letting the characters simply be who they were.

Beginning in about 2011 with the advent of ebooks, we entered a second Golden Age. Just like before the tradpubs stood up and proclaimed themselves gatekeepers, we can again write whatever length we want in as many genres as we want, and we can publish straight to readers and let their personal taste decide what they like or don’t like.

We no longer have to cross our fingers and rub our lucky charm and hope to satisfy some 20-something freshly minted English major who’s being paid minimum wage to read slush piles in New York.

If you are or want to be a professional fiction writer and you aren’t writing your fingers to the bone and publishing ebooks regularly (and by regularly, I mean ever month or two or three), you’re missing an extremely obvious boat. Plus publication to paper is available through print on demand (POD) services.

Writing fiction should never be labor, or drudgery of any kind. If you’re passionate about writing fiction, I strongly recommend you follow [Heinlein’s Rules](#).

Then just have fun and enjoy the journey.

Story Lengths

This feeds directly off the History above.

First, the only difference in the short story and the longer forms is that the short story is about One Event.

- Flash fiction is generally up to 100 words, including the title.
- The short-short story is about one event and is usually up to 2,000 words in length.
- The short story is about one event and is usually 2,000 to 7,999 words.
- The novelette is simply a short story (again, about one event) that runs 8,000 to 14,999 words.
- The novella is about two or more interwoven or interrelated events and runs from 15,000 to 24,999 words.
- The short novel is 25,000 to 44,999 words
- The novel is 45,000 to 79,999 words.
- The long novel is 80,000 words or more.

Disclaimer: The above are story lengths I assigned based in large part on what was going on before the tradpubs reared their greedy heads.

If you look for story lengths at professional writing organizations online, you will find that most of them disagree with me. So do many writers, primarily because they've been brainwashed with tradpubs' "requirements" (see the History above).

But the antiquated lengths they quote are all based on the tradpubs' price points. A novel had to be a certain length or a certain number of folios in order to maximize their profits. Of which, by the way, they paid those who wrote the novels in the first place only pennies on the dollar.

I was traditionally published with [nonfiction books](#) on writing and [poetry collections](#) long before I started seriously writing fiction. The publisher offered me 6 cents on the dollar, then 7 cents after some discussion. I held out and got 10. Even that was truly bad math, but the second Golden Age hadn't started yet.

Today, I receive a minimum of 70 cents on the dollar, and I receive 80 cents on some. On books I sell directly from my publisher site at StoneThread Publishing, I do better than that even with a discount.

Just sayin'. You do the writing, and you should be paid more than a pittance for it.

As I told a youngster at a writer's conference one time, Do you know what writers would do if there were no editors or publishers?

They would write.

But do you know what editors and publishers would do if there were no writers?

You want fries with that? (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[Write Only For Yourself](#)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 850

Writing of “The Mahogany Sea “ Based on an inlaid-wood picture

Day 1..... 3182 words. To date..... 3182 (done)

Fiction for September..... 57362

Fiction for 2023..... 209671

Fiction since August 1..... 114911

Nonfiction for September..... 20590

Nonfiction for the year..... 195060

Annual consumable words..... 398079

2023 Novels to Date..... 4

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 6

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 75

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)... 234

Short story collections..... 31

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Some Notes on Pacing

September 28, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Welcome
- * Pacing
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers
- * If You Want to Donate

Welcome

Welcome to Lee and any other new subscribers or reader of the Journal. I hope you will find it useful.

Be sure to check out these [Archives and other free downloads](#).

Some Notes on Pacing

Pacing is a topic many writing instructors won't touch. I suspect that's because there really isn't a lot to know. After a few facts, it's all practice.

And by practice, I mean writing a story, finishing it, spell-checking and publishing or submitting it, then writing another one. Keep moving forward.

Pacing really does all boil down to paragraphing and sentence length. Here are those few facts I mentioned above:

Paragraphs

First, forget what your high school or college English Composition teacher taught you about paragraphs. In fiction, they aren't based on Topic. In fiction, they're based on characters and mini-scenes. Or if you think visually, on camera angles.

These guidelines are not exhaustive, but they will make your fiction flow better 99% of the time. And a 99 is an A in anyone's class.

1. Begin a new paragraph each time a different character speaks or each time a tag line (s/he said) or brief descriptive narrative (s/he nodded, s/he laughed) serves as an introduction or lead-in to that character speaking. As you practice this, you'll develop a feel for it.

Even if two characters are speaking sentences or sentence fragments back and forth (like real life), start a new paragraph each time the other character speaks. Here's a tongue-in-cheek example, a conversation among three characters:

A frowned. "Why?"

B "Because Harvey said so."

A "So?"

B "Just do it, all right? Guy knows what he's talkin' about."

A "How do you know?"

C "How does he know what?"

A "Whether this guy Harvey knows what he's talking about."

C smiled. "I suggest you do what he says. It'll help your stories read better. The reader won't have to stop to decipher who said what, who scratched his nose or twirled her hair around her finger.."

D walked up, late as usual. “Hey, what you guys talking about?”

A, disgusted, turned away. “Nothing. Never mind.” Over his shoulder, he yelled, “Cormac McCarthy never used quotation marks, y’know.”

B grinned at C and D. “Well, in one book.”

Notes:

A. When you have only two characters in a conversation, you need tag line much less often. Use them only to clarify for the reader which character is speaking. Use brief narrative descriptions (Her eyes widened, he grinned, etc.) any time the characters perform those or other actions.)

B. If a character speaks, then performs an action, then continues speaking, write the dialogue, then the action, then the dialogue (so just as it happened). Narrative doesn’t always have to precede or follow dialogue.

For example, don’t write either

“Between us, we just closed a really good deal. Here’s to us.” Tom raised his glass in a toast.

Or

Tom raised his glass in a toast. “Between us, we just closed a really good deal. Here’s to us.”

In the first, the action comes too late. In the second, ol’ Tom’s holding his glass up too early, and the other character probably wonders whether Tom is mental.

Instead, write it as it happened.

“Between us, we just closed a really good deal.” Tom raised his glass in a toast. “Here’s to us.”

Nuanced? Maybe. But so is life.

2. Also begin a new paragraph each time a new mini-scene starts (or each time the camera angle shifts). As before, as you practice this, you’ll develop a feel for it.

For real-life examples of any of this, see any of my fiction, including the freebies that come out every Friday. To subscribe and receive a free short story every Friday, visit [Stanbrough Writes](#). Click any story title. At the bottom of the story, click the subscribe button.

There should be no long paragraphs (over about 8 lines on the page) in fiction. No, not even in “literary” fiction. If you want the reader to drag through your writing, use long paragraphs.

Short paragraphs (no more than 5 lines) are good. Six- to eight-line paragraphs aren’t bad, especially mixed in with shorter ones. But longer ones give the reader at least one opportunity per paragraph to put your book down and find something else to do.

Sentences

First, a run-on sentence is NOT just a really long sentence. It can be as short as noun verb noun verb.

“It rained Billy cried” is a run-on sentence. (And a comma splice is the same thing but with a comma: “It rained, Billy cried.”)

But “Mary hit the ball over the fence, through the field, across the stream, into the woods, down a slope, and over a rock into the river” is not a run-on sentence.

To fix the first, write “It rained, **and** Billy cried” or “It rained; Billy cried.” Either one is a compound sentence.

“When it rained, Billy cried” fixes it too, but that’s a complex sentence because “when it rained doesn’t make sense by itself.

The longer example above is a simple sentence with a lot of prepositional phrases attached. You could keep stretching it out. You could add another hundred prepositional phrases, adjectives, adverbs, etc. But as long as you didn’t introduce another subject-verb somewhere, it would still be just a really long simple sentence.

But back to pacing.

The longer a sentence is, the more emotion it conveys. If you’ve ever been in a spat or argument with someone else and they unleashed a verbal barrage, you know this.

Shoter sentences evoke a sense of drama. That goes double when they end a paragraph or a scene or chapter. Then, if they’re worded right, they also create intrigue and do double duty as a cliffhanger, making the reader want to turn the page and/or keep reading.

One more note on pacing: Pay attention to rhythm, the feel and the flow of the sentence, as you write. As you practice this, your creative subconscious will learn it’s what you want, and it will occur naturally. Your writing will smooth out.

Rhythm and flow are the only reasons I would personally condone editing (conscious mind) your own work. It’s why I use a first reader. He isn’t a writer (though he could be) but he’s an avid reader. He’s used to “listening” with his eyes.

But if you choose to edit your work, read it aloud from beginning to end and simply enjoy the story.

But again, read it ALOUD. You are used to hearing the natural rhythms of the language even if you aren’t aware of it. If you read your work aloud, your ears will pick up on things your eyes would have missed, including rhythm and flow. Guaranteed.

Okay, that's enough for today.

For a great deal more on this topic and others, get my books [Punctuation for Writers](#) (2nd edition) and [Poetry Techniques for the Fictionist](#).

I promise, you've never seen anything like either one of them. I should also mention what I consider my best nonfiction book on writing, [Writing the Character-Driven Story](#). Check it out.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[B&N Press Blog](#) This is new to me and I haven't vetted it. You might find something useful. Pitch out what doesn't sound right or what you don't want or need.

[Book Business Applauds Government Lawsuit Against Amazon](#) Oh, *please* read PG's take!

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1250

Writing of

Day 1..... XXXX words. To date..... XXXXX

Fiction for September..... 57362

Fiction for 2023..... 209671

Fiction since August 1..... 114911

Nonfiction for September..... 22540

Nonfiction for the year..... 197010

Annual consumable words..... 406681

2023 Novels to Date..... 4

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 6

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 75

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)... 234

Short story collections..... 31

If You Want to Donate

The Journal is a reader-supported publication. If you find it of value and want to donate, either one time or with a recurring monthly donation, please visit

https://www.paypal.com/donate/?hosted_button_id=X5L5EX52NW2MA.

You can donate with a debit or credit card or with your PayPal account. “Pledging” through Substack will do no good.

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark and adherence to Heinlein’s Rules. Unreasoning fear and the myths of writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

No Questions, and Writing Again

September 29, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Welcome
- * No Questions
- * Writing Again
- * Recommended Nonfiction
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“If you want to succeed, you should strike out on new paths, rather than travel the worn paths of accepted success.” John D. Rockefeller

“He is short-sighted who looks only on the path he treads and the wall on which he leans.” Khalil Gibran

Welcome

Welcome to Ryan (are you part of the famous racing family? [grin]) and any other new subscribers or reader of the Journal. I hope you will find it useful.

Be sure to check out the [Archives and other free downloads](#).

No Questions

I was a little surprised I didn’t get more comments and/or emails about the post from yesterday, [“Some Notes on Pacing.”](#)

And only one comment and no emails at all on [“A Brief History of Publishing, and Story Lengths”](#) from the day before.

I'm thinking maybe all of you know that stuff already. (grin) If you do, that's a good thing. It'll make my job a lot easier if you decide to have me edit your work.

And I'll tell you right now, if you have Pacing down and if you have [Tag Lines and Reverse Structures](#) down and if you have [Depth](#) down, your edit will be super easy.

It would basically be a first-read with comments. I'd love that, and of course I'd charge you less than my minimum to show my appreciation. (grin)

Remember, if you send me something for editing, you get a few pages edited free so you can see first-hand what I can do for you before you decide. It's a no-risk deal.

Writing Again

Yesterday I pressed through and finished the edit I've been working on, then took the rest of the day (about a half-hour early) off to just sit and chill.

This morning after I posted the Journal on Pacing, I started practicing again. I was wavering between recasting the last Wes Crowley novel I was working on awhile back — I think it will be the 21st in the series, tentatively titled *Rose Padilla* — and writing another Blackwell Ops novel while Jeremy Stiles is more or less still fresh in my mind.

I chose the latter and started writing *Blackwell Ops 11: Jeremy Stiles*. The tentative subtitle is *A Circle of Doubt*.

And the best news of all — I had the best writing day I've had since sometime in 2021. I churned out a mind-bending (for me personally) 5214 words. That included cycling, and they're all good words. No cuts. Woohoo!

Also, today at 3 p.m. eastern time, if everything works out I'll be the guest on Vin Zandri's podcast. Hope you can stop by.

Recommended Nonfiction

I promise, you've never read anything like my nonfiction books on writing. I don't mimic the silly fiction writing myths like most do. If you want to learn a ton about writing, and quickly, check out these books:

- [Punctuation for Writers \(2nd edition\)](#)
- [Poetry Techniques for the Fictionist](#)
- [Quiet the Critical Voice and Write Fiction](#)
- [Writing Realistic Dialogue & Flash Fiction](#)
- [Writing the Character-Driven Story](#)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

Episode No. 814: Writer FUD! Watch this. Good stuff. Great stuff.

Writing About Pain: Best Practices for Great Fiction

3 Days Left on Workshop Sale

The Best Fiction vs Nonfiction Book Covers: Ways They Differ

The Numbers

The Journal..... 490

**Writing of Blackwell Ops 11: Jeremy Stiles (novel)
A Circle of Doubt**

Day 1..... 5214 words. To date..... 5214

Fiction for September..... 62576
Fiction for 2023..... 214885
Fiction since August 1..... 120125
Nonfiction for September..... 23030
Nonfiction for the year..... 197500
Annual consumable words..... 412385

2023 Novels to Date..... 4
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 6
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 75
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)... 234
Short story collections..... 31

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You can donate with a debit or credit card or with your PayPal account. “Pledging” through Substack will do no good.

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark and adherence to Heinlein's Rules. Unreasoning fear and the myths of writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

A New Short Story, and About Yesterday

September 30, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Welcome
- * New Short Story
- * About Yesterday
- * You Can Subscribe on the Website Now
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“At a formal dinner party, the person nearest death should always be seated closest to the bathroom.” George Carlin

“At a dinner party one should eat wisely but not too well, and talk well but not too wisely.” W. Somerset Maugham

“I went to a garden party to reminisce with my old friends....” Ricky Nelson in [“Garden Party”](#)
Enjoy a blast from the past. (grin)

Welcome

Welcome to Ashley! And to any other new subscribers or reader of the Journal. I hope you will find it useful.

Be sure to check out the Archives and other free downloads at [the Journal website](#).

New Short Story

Another short story went out yesterday. [You can read it here](#).

If you want to subscribe to my free short stories, simply click the Subscribe link that occurs right after the end of the story.

About Yesterday

Yesterday was one of the best days I've had in awhile. I wrote a little, but not much. I was too concerned with whether I could drag my troglodyte self through the tech required to hook up with Vin Zandri for the podcast we'd scheduled. (grin)

I won't go into the hilarious but gritty details, but we got through it. When Vin sends me the link (probably today), I'll post it here so you can all see the debauchery.

There was some discussion of writing and so on, but mostly we just had fun. Which is how we both write too, as it turns out. Who knew? (grin)

Picture two teenage boys finding a string of firecrackers on the street. That kind of fun.

Then, just as we were wrapping up the Vin & Harvey Show, my buddy Robert from Dallas called. Thing is, I ended up having to use my phone to participate in the podcast with Vin.

So when Robert's call came in, I abruptly thumped the red phone icon thingy to make it stopped ringing.

Of course, I called Robert back right after that. There was another very brief delay due to another intensely personal requirement I had to attend to, but we finally got to chat. Robert only calls occasionally, maybe once a month or so, so I wasn't going to abide not speaking with him.

We swapped lies and told stories on ourselves (yeah, and others—they know who they are—for about an hour and a half. Then I finally hung up (well, ended the call, ugh) and went down to the house to make a sandwich for lunch. If you're wondering (I know you aren't) thin-sliced turkey with mustard on a sourdough muffin. Good stuff.

While I made the sandwich, I regaled Mona with tales of my morning, mostly about dragging myself into Technology Land. She laughed so hard she was almost crying.

Then I headed back out to the Hovel, but I didn't write much more. After all the jocularity (Father Mulcahey, *M.A.S.H.*) I needed to just sit and rest.

As a really bad writer would put it, "A good time was had by all." I wish you all could have been there.

And personal thanks to Big Philly and the other writer (If you're reading this, "other writer," I'm sorry. I wish I could recall your name. Email me and introduce yourself.) who showed up to watch the live podcast. I hope they enjoyed it as much as I did and as much as Vin seemed to.

So that's m'story and I'm stickin' to it.

Today I'll be neck-deep in the novel again. And I'm glad. That's probably the only place where I can have nearly as much fun as I had with my buddies yesterday.

Oh, and listen: If you've read this far, thank you. If you're having a terrible time with critical voice and haven't read my book, *Quiet the Critical Voice and Write Fiction*, email me (harveystanbrough@gmail.com).

As a result of having such a fun day, I'm feeling a bit beneficent — as thoroughly uncharacteristic as that is — and I'm giving that book away to Journal readers. All you have to do is email me and let me know which eformat you'd like. (No, I'm not against paper books. I'm just lazy.)

You Can Subscribe on the Website Now

I finally found (and manipulated) an imbedded form and added it to its own page on the Journal <https://hestanbrough.com>. So now you can subscribe to the substack and receive the Journal free in your inbox each morning if you want, without even going to Substack. [Or you can click here.](#) (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[Merriam-Webster adds 690 new words to its dictionary](#) I'm still waiting for them to add "strange," meaning an oddity so strange it strains the mind. (grin)

[How lunar lava tubes could host China's future moon base](#) Meh. I like my way better in The 13-Month Turn.

[Why Bookstores Can't Avoid Politics](#) See PG's excellent take.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 840

**Writing of Blackwell Ops 11: Jeremy Stiles (novel)
A Circle of Doubt**

Day 1..... 5214 words. To date..... 5214

Fiction for September..... 62576
Fiction for 2023..... 214885
Fiction since August 1..... 120125
Nonfiction for September..... 23870
Nonfiction for the year..... 198340
Annual consumable words..... 413225

2023 Novels to Date..... 4
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date.....	6
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	75
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)...	234
Short story collections.....	31

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https://www.paypal.com/donate/?hosted_button_id=X5L5EX52NW2MA.

You can donate with a debit or credit card or with your PayPal account. “Pledging” through Substack will do no good.

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Researching Fiction

October 1, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Once Upon a Time There Was a Typo
- * The Fun Continues
- * Researching Fiction
- * Reminder
- * You Can Subscribe on the Website Now
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“When PG goes into a physical bookstore, the last thing he wants to be confronted with is politics. If a bookstore couldn’t avoid politics, PG would head out the door and order a book from Amazon.” The Passive Guy (see “Of Interest”) I feel exactly the same way about blogs on writing. If the blogger can’t avoid ambushing me with her/his politics, I go elsewhere.

“democratic republic, n. That form of government in which, every four years, the citizens are kept busy canceling each other’s votes while the electoral college selects a president.” from my wrong-headed dictionary (similar to Ambrose Bierce’s Devil’s Dictionary) which I have been compiling for years (see the first post in “Of Interest”).

Once Upon a Time There Was a Typo

The day before yesterday, I had a ton of fun, first on the podcast with Vin Zandri, and then laughing with my buddy Robert during a long phone call.

Then yesterday started off exactly right as I read an email from another Texas friend, Russ, who is also my first reader.

Days earlier, he had found a humorous typo in the fairly somber short story, “Finally Home.” The story was based on the song “Seven Spanish Angels.”

The typo consisted of me writing “hung” in place of “hungry.” (I regularly and inadvertently omit the D from past-tense words. I had omitted the RY from hungry.

The sentence was the POV character’s observation as he passed by a barrel-hook cactus in a moonlit arroyo as he crossed it. The side of the cactus had been chewed out by “hung” javelinas. (grin)

In his email, among the first I read yesterday morning, Russ wrote

“As I slowly drifted across the border of semi-consciousness separating slumber from wakefulness, I thought I heard someone whisper this juicy tidbit of south-of-the-border gossip: ‘Harvey heard Hortensia’s hung javelinas had hungrily harassed her husband José’.”

I laughed so hard I almost cried. Great start to the day. Thanks again, Russ. (grin)

The Fun Continues

Get yourself a cuppa, settle in, and check out the podcast Vin Zandri did this past Friday, featuring yours truly. Yesterday, I purloined it, called it “The Vin & Harvey Show.” (grin) I swear, he and I could work up a pretty good Vaudeville act.

No wait. That’s all over, right? Anyway, here, [Go to the podcast.](#)

Oh! And Adam Kozak! That was the “other guy” I mentioned yesterday who commented during the live stream on Friday.

Thanks for your comments, Adam, and for your recurring donation. Believe me, it helps, and I appreciate it. And sorry I missed seeing your name on the first go-round on Friday.

Here’s a topic you handed me on a platter, and thanks for that too:

Researching Fiction

Research adds verisimilitude (I love that word), the layering-on of details that add veracity to a story. Vin Zandri travels a lot, especially to Italy, and uses what he learns in his stories.

If you're like me and you can't or don't travel a lot, Google Earth, especially "street view," is an excellent option for nabbing details of the setting in which your story takes place.

But mostly, I do what I call spot research.

For example, preceding a recent hit (killing) in a recent Blackwell Ops novel, TJ Blackwell recommended a particular restaurant in Ipanema (an outlying area of Rio de Janeiro) for the hit.

As the story was unfolding and the operative decided he would probably do the hit there, I popped online and looked at internal and external photos of a real restaurant.

The whole research trip online took about fifteen seconds. But it quickly added tons of authenticity to the scene, and I was right back to writing the novel as it unfolded.

In another scene set in Cleveland, a neighborhood café was an alternate location for a hit. The operative finally decided not to use it. The name and description of the café was all fiction, but typical of the thousand or so I've been in personally.

I also learned in a few seconds online, the name of the actual Rio de Janeiro and Cleveland international airports. Stuff like that matters.

But as Adam wrote in one of his comments on the live episode of *The Writer's Life*, it's all fiction. That's important to remember. Also he you said, the main thing is to have fun writing the story itself. Nothing could be more true.

The story itself doesn't matter anyway. It's only a few minutes (short story) or hours (novel) entertainment, nothing more. What is important, what matters, is that you write.

I also learned a long while ago that generally you can get away (in fiction) with one big lie.

In the Wes Crowley saga, that lie (as I think I said on the show) was that Amarillo, Texas even existed in the late 1800s (it didn't) and that a company of Texas Rangers was stationed there.

The point is, Amarillo *should have* existed, and there *should have been* a Ranger company stationed there. And that's what fiction is all about. Putting the truth in its proper perspective. (grin)

Pretty much all the other details in the Crowley novels, and in the Blackwell Ops novels and the Journey Home (SF) novels and the Stern Talbot: PI mystery series and the Nick Spalding action-adventure series are either true or shaded only slightly off true. Same with all of my one-off novels and novellas and all of my short stories.

Verisimilitude comes down to taking your time with the details of the setting. And that's SO easy to do. Here's the secret in two parts:

1. Write EVERYTHING the POV character notices (sees, hears, smells, tastes and feels, physically or emotionally) about the setting, no matter how insignificant or off-target it seems at the time.

Trust the POV character. If the detail was insignificant or off-target, s/he wouldn't have noticed it. If it isn't significant by the time the scene ends, it will figure into the story later.

2. And DON'T put in ANYthing that you, the author, "thinks" should be there.

If you'll do your best to follow those two guidelines, you'll be golden. And if you do spot research, you won't get bogged down in internet rabbit holes. (grin)

Reminder

Those of you who are participating in the Bradbury Challenge and would like me to report your progress, be sure to get your story titles, word count and genre (or not) into me sometime today or tonight.

Vignettes, short stories, novellas and novels (weekly progress) are allowed.

You Can Subscribe on the Website Now

Repeating from yesterday, I finally found (and manipulated) an imbedded form and added it to its own page on the Journal <https://hestanbrough.com>. So now you can subscribe to the substack and receive the Journal free in your inbox each morning if you want, without even going to Substack.

[Check it out.](#)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[ChatGPT Analysis of the Typical Structure of Ernest Hemingway's Novels](#) If you'd like to see how your novels stack up against some of the greats (or how much you've learned about writing without even realizing it), there are three more posts about other writers just above this one: Faulkner, Tolstoy, and Steele.

[Little Writing Pests](#) A rare, myth free post.

[Why Bookstores Can't Avoid Politics](#) See PG's excellent take.

“The Innocent” FLASH SALE, Free Audio Codes, and New Vella Episodes, Oh MY

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1260

**Writing of Blackwell Ops 11: Jeremy Stiles (novel)
A Circle of Doubt**

Day 1..... 5214 words. To date..... 5214

Day 1..... 2657 words. To date..... 7871

Fiction for September..... 65233

Fiction for 2023..... 217542

Fiction since August 1..... 102955

Nonfiction for October..... 23870

Nonfiction for the year..... 199600

Annual consumable words..... 417082

2023 Novels to Date..... 4

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 6

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 75

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)... 234

Short story collections..... 31

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Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark and adherence to Heinlein’s Rules. Unreasoning fear and the myths of writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

Writing Into (not in) the Dark

October 2, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Writing Into (not in) the Dark
- * Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting
- * Idea for an Article
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“I did the same [kind of spot research] ghostwriting a novel about events in Argentina, which neither I nor the author have ever visited. His agent sent back a note that the prospects of sales to a publisher were significantly enhanced by his personal and in-depth knowledge of that country. The author and the writer had a good laugh over that.” Dan Baldwin, in a comment on yesterday's Journal post

Writing Into (not in) the Dark

Some folks get this confused about this.

When I advocate writing into the dark, I'm not talking about sitting alone in a dark room making stuff up, though if you want to keep distracting lights at a minimum (as I do) that works too.

But none of that matters.

Writing into the dark means, literally, writing without knowing where the story's going or what will happen next.

Like walking into the darkness without knowing what's out there. The unknown is exciting, even exhilarating, but when you're sitting at your keyboard it's completely safe. No harm will come to you at all from writing into the dark.

Besides, it's the characters' story, not yours. The characters are taking all the real risks. In the characters' story they're in a gunfight or falling in love or settling into a car on a rickety rollercoaster. But in YOUR story you're sitting at your keyboard making stuff up, right?

If you go into writing a story or novel tentatively, fearful about whether readers will like the story or whether you got every line perfect, you'll be tempted to plan ahead, maybe even outline or “erect signposts along the way” or whatever.

You'll be tempted to revise, even rewrite, in the relentless pursuit of perfection (sorry, Lexus), and I guarantee you will screw up the story.

You can no sooner know in advance what's going to happen in your characters' authentic story than you can know in advance what a stranger halfway around the world will have for breakfast three days from now. Nor should you concern yourself.

Authenticity is spontaneous, not planned out. So take a deep breath, feel the exhilaration of not knowing what's going to happen next, and plunge in.

The best advice I can give you — If you're up there in an authorial ivory tower, controlling everything in the story, come on down here with the regular wordaday writers. Realize the writing itself, not the story, is what truly matters. Ditch the glowing authorial robes and slip into a pair of jeans, sneakers and a t-shirt.

Then grin, jump into the trenches of the story and try to keep up as you run through the story with your characters. It is literally the most fun you can have with your clothes on.

And you already know how.

You have been absorbing Story your entire life from several sources. For example

- Fiction you read
- Dramas and sitcoms you watch on television
- Films you watch in theaters or on television
- The better commercial ads
- Stories other adults and children relate to you, from family tales and adventures to who cut off whom in traffic, near-accidents, and so on

You can intentionally continue your ongoing learning by osmosis by simply putting a thought in the back of your mind before you begin reading a short story or novel or before you switch on the television or pop a DVD into the player. Once the thought is there, forget about it and just enjoy the story

Some examples of thoughts you might use are

- I want to learn Story Structure
- I want to learn Depth (intimate description of characters and setting) that will pull readers into my stories and keep them there
- I want to learn pacing
- I want to learn scene/chapter cliffhangers
- I want to learn story/chapter hooks
- Or anything else you can think of

If you sit down with one of those thoughts in mind, your creative subconscious will absorb whatever it can about that skill as you read for pleasure. Trust it.

This is getting long, so I'll continue this tomorrow with How to Study Particular Passages/Skills in Novels. Don't miss it!

Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting

Anyone can jump in (or jump back in) and join the challenge at any time. This is a great way to jumpstart your writing and get more practice pushing down the critical voice.

There's no cost.

Notice, there's no pressure re submitting or publishing. That's up to you. The point of the challenge is to have fun. Learning to keep track of your writing is a bonus.

During the past week, in addition to whatever other fiction they're writing, the following writers reported their progress:

Short Fiction

- Erin Donoho "Angel from Indiana" 3000 Historical Psychological Fiction
- George Kordonis "All In Good Fun" 1788 Urban Fantasy
- Chynna Pace "Mince Pie Dreams" 4741 Mystery
- Christopher Ridge "Hammer Smashed Face" 2100 Horror/psychopath
- K.C. Riggs "Braille for Aliens" 3518 Satire

Longer Fiction

- Balázs Jámor *Trilogy of the Lora Stories* (novel) 2500 (14500 total to date) Fantasy
- Alexander Nakul *Horses of Mayhem* 9235 (32821 total to date) Historical Fantasy

Idea for an Article

One of my donors asked whether I might write a Journal post about writing through pain, for example after a major surgery or illness.

I don't have personal experience with that, so I can't do it. If any of you want to write a guest post, please feel free and I'll consider it for inclusion in the Journal.

She also asked about using Word's text-to-speech function or other text-to-speech software. I gave her the email address for a friend of mine who regularly uses text-to-speech, but a guest post on this (or both) would no doubt be helpful.

While we're on the topic, if any of you have had a good experience using a voice recorder, that might also be a good option for her and a good article for the Journal.

If you know about any of those technologies, please share what you know. Thanks!

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[Dr. Mardy](#) Great quotes and a great deal more. You can also subscribe now for only \$30 per year, only \$2.50 per month. I strongly recommend it. Wonderful fodder for fiction writers.

[A Celebration of Great Opening Lines in World Literature](#) From friend Sam T.

[Draft2Digital Blog](#) High time I listed this. It's a wealth of information.

[Free Chilling Thrillers!](#)

[Remember to Breathe](#)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1080

**Writing of Blackwell Ops 11: Jeremy Stiles (novel)
A Circle of Doubt**

Day 1..... 5214 words. To date..... 5214

Day 2..... 2657 words. To date..... 7871

Day 3..... 2481 words. To date..... 10352

Fiction for October..... 2481

Fiction for 2023..... 22023

Fiction since August 1..... 105436

Nonfiction for October..... 2330

Nonfiction for the year..... 200680

Annual consumable words..... 420643

2023 Novels to Date..... 4

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 6

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 75

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)... 234

Short story collections..... 31

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How to Study Particular Skills in Novels

October 3, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Shameless Self-Promotion
- * Update on Spot Research
- * How to Study Particular Skills in Novels
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Shameless Self-Promotion

If you haven't tried Blackwell Ops yet, you can find [the first three episodes \(chapters\) free on Vella](#). That one will be finished on Vella on October 12 when the Epilogue goes live.

This morning, I uploaded the first eight episodes of the book I'm currently writing, Blackwell Ops 11: More Jeremy Stiles. Great fun! I'll publish the URL as soon as Amazon lets me know what it is.

Episode 1 will go live on October 13, which is also Friday the 13th. Very appropriate. A new episode will go live every day after that through the end of the novel

I've also already decided my next novel will probably be titled A Circle of Doubt. (Yeah, I stole that from the original subtitle of BO-11.) That story will be appropriate for Halloween, similar in tone to my much earlier one-off novel, *Jonah Peach*.

If you enjoy psychological suspense with just a touch of horror, check out *Jonah Peach* at <https://stonethreadpublishing.com/jonah-peach/>. Order it from StoneThread Publishing (me) for a discount.

Update on Spot Research

According to a writer who lives in Russia, "there aren't any good panorama views for some places in Russia and for any big city in Belarus. But your characters still can visit them using <https://yandex.ru/maps/>."

First, ALWAYS read for pleasure the first time through. Don't "look for" anything. Shut down your critical mind and just enjoy the story (and feed your creative subconscious). But keep a few small, bookmark-sized slips of paper (or small sticky notes) handy.

I do not recommend keeping a notepad handy. Taking notes will pull you from the story and propel you back into "looking for" mode. Just enjoy the story.

But as you come across a passage that blows your socks off, mark the page with a sticky note or slip of paper, then continue reading for pleasure.

Some Skill You Will Want to Study—(adapted from yesterday's post)

- Story Structure
- Depth (intimate description of characters and setting) that pull you into the stories and keeps you there
- Pacing (how slowly or quickly the writing causes you to read and why)
- Scene/chapter cliffhangers
- Story/chapter hooks
- Anything else you can think of

Obviously if you're reading on a Paperwhite or other ereader, mark the passage or note it's location, then keep reading for pleasure.

AFTER you've finished the novel, enjoy the rest of your day. Later, come back to the passages you marked and study them closely. The writing blew your socks off, but how? What did the writer do, and how did s/he do it? **Note: this is a conscious-mind exercise, but learning is the function of the conscious mind.**

Later still, when you start your next story or novel, just before you sit down, put in your mind the thought that you want to practice the skill you studied in that passage.

Rinse and repeat.

Try to study and learn something new between one story or novel and the next of your own writing. Each time you begin your next story or novel, put in your mind that you want to practice another of the skills you studied.

Caution: Don't go back and try to apply new things you've learned to older works. You don't have time. You have new stories to tell. Besides, let those older works stand as a marker of your skill level at the time.

If someone really likes and enjoys your work, thank them, but don't take it to the bank, because some other readers won't like it. Pay no attention to readers' opinions. They are all correct for themselves, but they aren't correct for anyone else.

What others think of your work is none of your business. They have a right to their opinion. Your only business as a writer is to convey your characters' stories.

Keep moving forward. Perfection is neither possible, necessary, nor preferable. Besides, what you believe is "better" or "perfect," another reader will pick apart.

Remember, when you write a story or novel, you're easily among the more fortunate people on Earth. Your characters have chosen You, among all others, with whom to share the story they're living.

Put your fingers on the keyboard and let them tell it.

My personal favorite authors for learning new-to-me skills are (among others)

- Ernest Hemingway
- Stephen King
- Lawrence Block
- Shirley Jackson
- Chris Lang (writes the Brit crime drama *Unforgotten*)
- Jack Higgins
- James Lee Burke

But pick your own list of writers. Any writer whose work you enjoy will do if their work, as you're reading for pleasure,

- Pulls you into the story and holds your interest
- Keeps you reading from one scene or chapter to the next
- Keeps you turning pages
- Makes you want to buy more books by that author

If you follow these general guidelines, your writing will improve a great deal.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[What is an Eco-Thriller?](#)

[A Celebration of Great Opening Lines in World Literature](#) See? There's something you can study already. (grin)

[Dr. Mardy](#) Great quotes and a great deal more. Free, but you can also subscribe now for \$30 per year, only \$2.50 per month. I strongly recommend it. Wonderful fodder for fiction writers.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 820

Writing of Blackwell Ops 11: More Jeremy Stiles (novel)

Day 1..... 5214 words. To date..... 5214

Day 2..... 2657 words. To date..... 7871

Day 3..... 2481 words. To date..... 10352

Day 4..... 0923 words. To date..... 11275

Fiction for October..... 3404

Fiction for 2023..... 220946

Fiction since August 1..... 106359

Nonfiction for October..... 3230

Nonfiction for the year..... 201570

Annual consumable words..... 422456

2023 Novels to Date..... 4

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 6

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 75

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)... 234

Short story collections..... 31

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Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark and adherence to Heinlein's Rules. Unreasoning fear and the myths of writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

If You're a Writer, Write

October 4, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Thoughts on Writing Fiction From Yer Uncle Harv
- * Welcome
- * If You're a Writer, Write

- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“[T]rust your own writing and voice. Act like an artist instead of a doormat for heaven’s sake.”
Dean Wesley Smith

“Leap off a cliff and build your wings on the way down.” Ray Bradbury

“It took me fifteen years to discover I had no talent for writing, but I couldn’t give it up because by that time I was too famous.” Robert Benchley (grin)

Thoughts on Writing Fiction From Yer Uncle Harv

You can be a fiction writer if you really want to and if you have a passion for it. Remember, there was a time when Little Willie Shakespeare and Little Ernie Hemingway and Little Stevie King didn’t yet know how to use two longer lines and a smaller one to form a capital letter A. And look at them now.

Welcome

Welcome to Michelle L and to any other new subscribers or readers of the Journal. I hope you will find it useful.

Be sure to check out the Archives and other [free downloads](#) at the Journal website.

If You’re a Writer, Write

Chat with friends via email about writing if you want. Attend writing groups, conferences, seminars and workshops. Then, finally, take a deep breath and —

Think about writing, but feed the dog, then rinse and fill his water bowl, make your first cuppa, load or unload the dishwasher, run a dry mop over the kitchen floor, put on a load of laundry and head for your writing room.

But along the way, notice the living room carpet could use a good vacuuming. Run the vacuum, put it away (neatly, be sure to wrap the cord), then dust all the surfaces and adjust the venetian blinds so they’re Just Right. Oops, gotta dust those too. How long has it been?

At long last, go to your writing room.

But the washing machine stopped. Go back in there, load the dryer, load the washing machine again (sigh appropriately), then put your hands on your hips and say, “*Finally*, I can go write!” and return to your writing room.

Adjust the lighting so it’s just right, switch on the small air purifier, and finally Sit Down. After all, you remember that the secret to writing is simply solving an application problem: applying your backside to the seat of the chair. Go ahead and grin, but do that. And open your laptop.

Power up your writing machine, then check for and respond to emails. Flex your fingers. Crack your knuckles if necessary. Of course, you have to conduct research too. Pore over maps and photos of the area in which your story will eventually take place, but —

Well, dang it. The light coming over your shoulder is a little off. Get up to adjust the venetian blinds so they’re just right. After you’ve dusted those too, finally, finally, *finally* slip back into your writing chair, the one with three-way adjustable arms. Adjust them, then put your fingers on the keyboard and —

Wait for inspiration to strike.

Humorous, maybe, but none of those things are writing, folks. Writing is putting new words on the page.

If you’re a writer, you have to push away the world outside your laptop. If necessary, you may try to look sad as you do that.

But then sit down, put your fingers on the keyboard and get lost in your characters’ world.

If you’re in a pinch for story ideas, all it takes to start is a character with a problem dropped into a setting. The problem doesn’t even have to be the main problem of the story. The character(s) will hand you that later. This is just to get you started writing. So a character with a problem in a setting: whomever, whatever, wherever.

Your characters’ world is the one place you can be absolutely certain you’re always welcome.

How can you be sure? Because they invited you in specifically to record what you witness as they live their lives. They trust you, so trust them.

Best of all, it’s a standing invitation.

All you have to do is open the door and walk in. It really is that simple.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[28 Top Robert Benchley Quotes](#)

[A Special Place In Hell](#) Exactly how I feel about the folks who retard writing by teaching writers that they “must” do the myths (outline, revise, rewrite, etc.)

[Authors are losing their patience with AI](#) See PG’s take but remember I don’t always agree with what even he writes. I am 100% against using generative AI in any art form. Whether to agree is up to you to decide.

[How Science Fiction Informs the Future of Innovation](#)

[7 Craft Books to Help You Become a Better Writer](#) I feel a little like a chump listing others’ craft books, but again, up to you to decide. I do recommend [Writing the Character-Driven Story](#).

The Numbers

The Journal..... 820

Writing of Blackwell Ops 11: More Jeremy Stiles (novel)

Day 1..... 5214 words. To date..... 5214

Day 2..... 2657 words. To date..... 7871

Day 3..... 2481 words. To date..... 10352

Day 4..... 0923 words. To date..... 11275

Fiction for October..... 3404

Fiction for 2023..... 220946

Fiction since August 1..... 106359

Nonfiction for October..... 4050

Nonfiction for the year..... 202390

Annual consumable words..... 423276

2023 Novels to Date..... 4

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 6

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 75

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)... 234

Short story collections..... 31

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Writing Through Pain, and Essential "Of Interest" Items

October 5, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Thoughts on Writing Fiction From Yer Uncle Harv
- * Welcome
- * Writing Through Pain
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

"Don't compromise yourself. You are all you've got." Janis Joplin

"The free-lance writer is one who is paid per piece or per word or perhaps." Robert Benchley

"I saw an interview with Sir Patrick Stewart who said he finally learned that the character to be played was already inside him. He noted that when he stepped out on the stage he hadn't a clue as to what was about to happen, but that he trusted his subconscious and knew he'd give the right performance." Dan Baldwin

"The task of a fiction writer is to immerse her readers into her story. And story is setting. Characters have to be somewhere while they are talking, thinking, and engaging in action." C.S. Lakin (see "Of Interest")

Thoughts on Writing Fiction From Yer Uncle Harv

Everyone who's reading this edition of the Journal should get a cuppa, then relax and enjoy. Dawn Turner's guest post on "Writing Through Pain" is excellent. And it's beneficial whether you're writing through pain or not.

Afterward, bookmark or otherwise spend time reading the items in the "Of Interest" section (or both). Everything listed in it today should be mandatory reading for fiction writers. You won't regret it.

Welcome

Welcome to Philip S (Big Philly) on his return and to any other new subscribers or readers of the Journal. I hope you will find it useful.

Philip was away from Substack for awhile kicking the body fluids out of the critical voice that was nagging him. (grin)

Be sure to check out the Archives and other [free downloads](#) at the Journal website.

Writing Through Pain

a guest post by [Dawn M Turner](#)

Note from Harvey: Although the post was fine as it was, I did reparagraph parts of it so it would present in more bite-sized pieces on the page. Here's Dawn Turner.

I started having chronic health issues in my early twenties, and they've snowballed since then (I'll be 54 in a few days). Rheumatism, migraines, fibromyalgia, and connective tissue disease are my worst offenders. Needless to say, I've done a lot of writing despite/through/with pain. How successfully largely depends on the type of pain and where it's located.

If it's in my head, it often muddies my thinking too much. I can usually ignore pain elsewhere in the body well enough, though, as long as it's not so bad my brain obsesses on it. It can take a bit of time and deep breathing (into the belly, not the chest) to help me get there, but when I can, it allows me to forget the pain for a while.

If all else fails, I write about the pain itself. What it feels like. Where it is. How it hampers my movement, activity, ability to concentrate. How exhausting it is, and how THAT affects my life. What annoys or eases it?

To make it more fun than just listing symptoms or jotting notes, I give a character the same pain. Regardless of whether the cause/source is the same, I pour my symptoms into them.

- How do they react to it?
- Do they get as frustrated as I do?
- For the same or different reasons?
- Do they want to curl up under the bed and stay there until it passes?
- Power through it?
- Try to ignore it?
- Are they wanting to give up?

It turns into a great outlet as well as a fun writing exercise.

Or create a different writing challenge. Put yourself in the shoes of a character dealing with a loved one suffering with the symptoms you have.

- Are they annoyed at the inconvenience?
- Feeling helpless because they can't fix the situation?
- Trying to find solutions?
- How do they deal with the affected character's response to their attempts to help?

This is actually a great way to step outside the pain for a while but still use the outward way it manifests (limited mobility/activity, for example).

I've done this often over the years. Not just with pain. When I can't sleep, I put myself into the head of a character with insomnia or, conversely, who is exhausted and falls asleep.

Have a head cold? Inflict a character with it and put into words the coughing, sneezing, runny nose mess.

Battling depression or anxiety? Write a character's experience with it. Maybe even help them overcome it, whether through their thought processes or due to help from another character.

Suffering from a migraine? Have a character describe the knives plunging through their eyeballs with exposure to light, or how every sound feels like crushed glass grating on raw nerves.

Below is an example from when I had a head cold a while back. This is just the first few paragraphs of a larger scene that became a chapter, but it'll give you an idea of what I'm talking about.

In my case, I ran out of Kleenex. Resorting to paper towels was NOT fun, but I decided not to wallow. I wrote this instead:

Is it truly possible for one person to feel so miserable and not die? I'm pretty sure I'm putting that to the test.

Macy blew her nose for the umpteen-millionth time, grimacing into the rough paper towel.

From now on, I keep a whole roomful of facial tissue, even if it busts my bank account to do it. At least a case of it, in every room, at all times.

If I have to go through it, I might as well make it useful. When I can find a way to smile about it, all the better. At least, that's what I finally decided when I got really aggravated by pain one day and couldn't sit at the computer. It basically becomes fodder for stories.

Thank you, Dawn.

Folks, Dawn also creates bead pattern designs. [You can see those here.](#)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[The Importance of Crafting Connected Settings](#) Read it, absorb it, and forget it. Your creative subconscious will do the rest.

[AI Update: Copyright And Other Things](#) Royalty-free photo site CanStock is closing. All due to AI. And there's a great deal more. READ THIS.

[Canada's Wattpad Updates Its Paid Program: 'Originals'](#) If you use or have thought of using Wattpad, read this, especially PG's take.

[The Flashback: A Greatly Misunderstood Storytelling Device](#)

[Troy Lambert talks the writing life and balancing marketing with creativity](#)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 400

Writing of Blackwell Ops 11: More Jeremy Stiles (novel)

Day 1..... 5214 words. To date..... 5214

Day 2..... 2657 words. To date..... 7871

Day 3..... 2481 words. To date..... 10352

Day 4..... 0923 words. To date..... 11275

Day 5..... 3424 words. To date..... 14699

Fiction for October..... 6828

Fiction for 2023..... 224370

Fiction since August 1..... 109783

Nonfiction for October..... 4450

Nonfiction for the year..... 202790

Annual consumable words..... 427100

2023 Novels to Date..... 4

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 6

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 75

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 234

Short story collections..... 31

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Starting with Action, and a Caution on Kindle Vella

October 6, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Tips on Writing from Yer Uncle Harv
- * Welcome
- * Useful Comments
- * Caution on Kindle Vella
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Tips on Writing from Yer Uncle Harv

If you want to follow the age-old (and wrong) advice to start in the middle of the action, do that. But then back up a little.

- What happened just before the action started?
- What is the setting?
- Who are the characters in the immediate vicinity?

Write that through the POV character's (not your) physical and emotional senses before the action. Then skip ahead to the white space and continue writing.

Welcome

Welcome to Debbie and to any other new subscribers or readers of the Journal. I hope you will find it useful.

Be sure to check out the Archives and other [free downloads](#) at the Journal website.

Useful Comments

For a great deal more on writing through pain and/or dictating, please see [Rikki Mongoose's two comments](#) on yesterday's post.

Caution on Kindle Vella

I recommended Kindle Vella pretty strongly the last time I talked about it. But increasingly, I'm thinking it seems like a great program, but one that isn't for me.

Learn from my stupid mistake. If you're considering using Vella, be sure to read the [Vella Content Guidelines](#). I most often read things like this, but I was in too big a hurry.

Most notably, excerpted from those guidelines,

- In order to publish a completed Kindle Vella story or group of episodes as a book or other long-form format, the last episode must have been available to readers in the Kindle Vella store for at least 30 days.
- A book or other long-form format containing republished Kindle Vella content must contain a minimum of 10 episodes. Individual episodes may not be published as standalone content outside of the Kindle Vella store.

Still, do yourself a favor and read the entire content guidelines for yourself. (See the link above.)

Vella is probably a really great platform, especially if

- it takes you longer than say three months to write a novel.
- you are schedule-minded and can easily pay attention to distant phaselines (publishing to Vella, when to request removal, waiting 60 days to release the full novel, etc.)
- you are young enough to not feel the pressure of time (the sense of urgency that has driven me most of my life)

If you're seeking a personal challenge, Vella is probably the closest you can come to writing a novel "in public," publishing one chapter at a time, unless you do so on your own website or in Wattpad or some other venue. (But consider the traffic you'll get at Vella or Wattpad etc. vs. the traffic you get on your own site.)

Writing in public is a wonderful personal challenge for the writer who wants to build confidence in his or her ability to write into the dark. But at least one reader has told me directly that he isn't fond of reading a story in that segmented way. Neither am I. Your opinion might differ.

Don't allow the alleged "attention span" issues of younger readers to affect your decision to publish (or not) through Kindle Vella or elsewhere in chapters or episodes.

Those issues are BS. How you affect the attention span of any readers of any age is strictly up to you as a writer. That is a function of your skills as a writer.

If you study and learn enough, then practice enough — and if your story or novel suits the reader's taste, which is primarily guided by genre — your story or novel will hold the reader's attention.

End of lecture.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[Why Kickstarter Class Is Free to Writers](#)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 610

Writing of Blackwell Ops 11: More Jeremy Stiles (novel)

Day 1..... 5214 words. To date..... 5214
Day 2..... 2657 words. To date..... 7871
Day 3..... 2481 words. To date..... 10352
Day 4..... 0923 words. To date..... 11275
Day 5..... 3424 words. To date..... 14699
Day 6..... 3649 words. To date..... 18348

Fiction for October..... 10477
Fiction for 2023..... 228019
Fiction since August 1..... 113432
Nonfiction for October..... 5060
Nonfiction for the year..... 203400
Annual consumable words..... 431359

2023 Novels to Date..... 4
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 6
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 75
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 234
Short story collections..... 31

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Reader Attention Span

October 7, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Reminder
- * A New Story
- * Update on Yesterday's Kindle Vella Caution
- * Reader Attention Span
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Reminder

You folks writing for the Bradbury Challenge, get your stories in before midnight tomorrow (Sunday).

A New Story

[“Mr. Sloan and the Crone”](#) published yesterday on my Stanbrough Writes Substack. I think it's kind of a PI metaphysical romance thing, but I don't know. I do know it contains a few typos, including a shift at one place from first to third person. (grin)

Email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com with any of those typos and you get a free novel.

If you would like to subscribe, click the link to the story and then the Subscribe button at the end of the story. You'll receive a new short story every Friday, and it's free.

Below the Subscribe button, there are other short stories you can read in most genres. Enjoy!

Update on Yesterday's Kindle Vella Caution

Three updates actually.

[Vin Zandri](#) let me know via email you can publish your complete book 30 days after the last episode goes live on Vella.

In a comment on yesterday's post, he also wrote, “I'm not sure Vella is here to stay for very long. It's been 3 years and nothing about the beta version has changed very much other than they don't pay much in the way of author bonuses anymore. They've failed to expand into the Asian market which is where they need to be. I wouldn't be surprised if at the start of the year no more Vella.”

Then Jill of KDP support wrote to say she had made an exception and unpublished the episodes I'd posted (in my haste) of my newest book, Blackwell Ops 11, since it had garnered "less than three readers in the last month."

Well, I suspect there WERE fewer than three readers. Like zero, since the first episode wouldn't have gone live until October 13. (grin)

Anyway, good on Jill for granting an exception to an old man who acted too quickly.

For the previous novel, Blackwell Ops 10, I'll take my licks and publish it (wide) in mid-November, 30 days after the last episode goes live on October 12. Going with KDP Select would be less than fair to readers who enjoy the Blackwell Ops series but shop elsewhere.

Like all my novels, the current Blackwell Ops 11 is standalone, but to give the readers the full story in one shot, I'll wait to publish it until a few days after I publish Blackwell Ops 10.

For me, this is a really strange situation from a publishing standpoint. And I don't mean only the delay. My fault, and that's fine. Besides, strange situations mean opportunity and room for innovation. (grin)

For example, there's a very good chance my *next* novel, tentatively titled *A Circle of Doubt* (or *Fear*), a psychological suspense thriller, will be written and published before Blackwell Ops 10 and 11 are even published. (grin)

For that matter, I'll probably squeeze-in the novel *AFTER A Circle of* (whatever) too. (grin) Hey, maybe I'll get to write a whole series of *A Circle of* novels. (This was a brand new realization and the catalyst for tomorrow's Journal post, which I just wrote. (grin))

Such are the "problems" of a professional fiction writer who both knows the craft and writes into the dark. Just as you can, if you want to.

Reader Attention Span

Yesterday I wrote, "Don't allow the allegedly stunted 'attention span' issues of younger readers affect your decision to publish (or not) through Kindle Vella or elsewhere in chapters or episodes."

Thanks to a comment by Philip S, I thought I would expand on that thought.

The effect of your work on the attention span of ANY readers of ANY age group is strictly up to you as a writer. It is a direct function of your skills as a writer. Yup. If you can't pull 'em into your story, that's on you, not the readers.

I still don't agree with the nonsense about "reader taste" either. Saying your sales are lagging strictly because of reader taste is a cop-out. It's a way to set yourself up as blameless even though you're the one who wrote the story in the first place.

Yes, readers have particular tastes when it comes to reading material. But reader taste ends at genre. Even if the reader enjoys reading work in your chosen genre(s), you still have to pull them down into the story and then keep them there.

I love psychological suspense, action-adventure and thriller novels. But James Patterson's work, both before and after he started simply outlining and then having others write the story, leaves me flat. Not one of his books has ever pulled me into the story.

I do admit the guy's a master at marketing. Hence his millions. But then, back in the day he worked for J. Walter Thompson, a premier (maybe THE premier) marketing and advertising firm in NYC.

I can't teach you marketing. But I can teach you right now how to pull readers down into the story and then keep them there:

1. You pull readers into the story, ground them in the story, with your opening, during which the POV character describes the setting and characters. You think you know bestselling novels that have started with action?

Go back and read the opening again. You'll find setting and character description ahead of the action.

That's exactly why I advised yesterday to start with the action if you want, then back up and write the setting and character(s) and what happened just before the action happened or started.

This is "Depth" or "Deep POV," and you can write it in either first- or third-person, doesn't matter. But everything **MUST** go through the POV character's physical and emotional senses.

Anything the POV character notices and describes is necessary to the story. Anything you, the writer, "think" should be added is excess. Don't do it.

2. And you keep readers in the story, and keep them turning pages, with pacing and with good scene and chapter cliffhangers coupled with good scene and chapter hooks plus the opening of the next scene or chapter.

Period. That's the whole thing.

If you study enough and absorb enough, and if you then apply that by practicing enough (*practice, n. putting new new words on the page*), your story or novel **WILL** hold the reader's attention.

Because it's no longer up to them. It's up to you.

The more often you practice what you've learned about the craft, the more quickly you'll begin to apply it without thinking about it.

You already do that with periods and question marks and quotation marks around dialogue. Do you have to think about those things before you apply them?

Of course not. The same goes for the bits and pieces of the writing craft. Learn, absorb, then trust what you know and just write.

I continually learn or realize new things and I continually practice.

In fact, the beginning of Blackwell Ops 11 is vastly different than the beginning of Blackwell Ops 10. The difference is a craft technique I realized after I'd finished 10 and before I started 11.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

Note: Owing to a slow news day, the items below are repeated from a couple of days ago.

[AI Update: Copyright And Other Things](#) Royalty-free photo site CanStock is closing. All due to AI. And there's a great deal more. [READ THIS](#).

[Canada's Wattpad Updates Its Paid Program: 'Originals'](#) If you use or have thought of using Wattpad, read this, especially PG's take.

[The Flashback: A Greatly Misunderstood Storytelling Device](#)

[Troy Lambert talks the writing life and balancing marketing with creativity](#)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1210

Writing of Blackwell Ops 11: More Jeremy Stiles (novel)

Day 1..... 5214 words. To date..... 5214

Day 2..... 2657 words. To date..... 7871

Day 3..... 2481 words. To date..... 10352

Day 4..... 0923 words. To date..... 11275

Day 5..... 3424 words. To date..... 14699

Day 6..... 3649 words. To date..... 18348

Day 7..... 3334 words. To date..... 21682

Fiction for October..... 13811

Fiction for 2023..... 231353

Fiction since August 1..... 116806

Nonfiction for October..... 6270

Nonfiction for the year.....	204610
Annual consumable words.....	435903
2023 Novels to Date.....	4
2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
2023 Short Stories to Date.....	6
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	75
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	234
Short story collections.....	31

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The Value of Cycling, and How Series Occur

October 8, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Reminder
- * The Value of Cycling
- * How Series Come About for WITD Writers
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Reminder

You folks writing for the Bradbury Challenge, get your stories in to me before midnight tonight (Sunday).

Shameless Someone-Else Promotion

K.C. Riggs' long-awaited sequel to [The Widow's Circle](#) (trust me, this is not about ladies sitting around sewing quilts) is available now.

Get your copy of [The Widow's Circle: Going to Ground](#) today!

Hint: Like me, this excellent writer writes into the dark. (grin)

The Value of Cycling

Each morning after I file the current edition of the Journal and before I start writing, I cycle back over everything I wrote the day before. This is in addition to cycling back over each session when I return for another session.

But remember, this is still cycling. I rest my fingertips on the keyboard as I read for pleasure so the POV character can check and correct or add (in my case) things I missed the first time through.

I very seldom take anything out because I assume it will become necessary later in the story. I trust my characters.

Two days ago, I must've been off my game. In a little over an hour of cycling, my POV character added 387 words to what I'd written the day before. I was almost relieved to get back to the white space.

Well, I'm *always* relieved to get back to the white space. And anxious to find out what happens next. (grin)

How Series Come About for WITD Writers

“There are many ways to write,” the pundits say, “and whatever way works for you is best.”

Well, unless you tell those same pundits you write one clean “draft,” then submit or publish it and move on to the next story.

Then they backtrack. Because after all, what could Stephen King, Kristine Kathryn Rusch, Lee Child, Vin Zandri, Dean Wesley Smith, I, and almost all other long-term professional writers possibly know about writing fiction?

What we know is that Time is our most precious commodity, and we much prefer to be racing through the next story with our characters instead of hovering over one work for weeks or months or years.

Folks, one hour spent “looking for” things and revising or rewriting instead of putting new words on the page or cycling is an hour thrown out the window of your life. Don't do it.

The pundits all follow the myths of writing, of course. And they never quite get around to defining “what works.”

If by “what works” they mean it's sensible to

- labor for months or years over an outline,
- spend six months writing a 50- or 60,000 word novel (a mean average of 277 to 333 words per day, about 20 minutes' work),
- then revise,
- then seek input from a critique group,
- then rewrite, and
- after writing two such novels in a year, believe themselves “prolific”....

Well, then our definition of “what works” differs greatly.

Those are the folks whose series are planned, plotted, laid-out almost word for word, thought by careful thought, until the entirety of the original story is gone.

And by “original story,” I mean the unique story the characters would have lived. And would have let you run through it with them if only they'd been given a chance. If only you had trusted them to live the story the way they actually lived it.

You know, like you live your own mostly spontaneous life.

That's just head-shakingly sad, not to mention cowardly.

How can any writer even breathe, much less write, while constantly laboring under the overpowering shadow of all that fear?

- Fear of getting something “wrong.”
- Fear of being rejected by some 20-something reading slush piles in New York.
- Fear of being successful (How will I ever do that again?)
- Fear your Aunt Marge won't like what your characters say or do.

It's all bullscat. The only thing to fear is that you haven't conveyed the unique, fresh story your characters so graciously invited you to experience with them.

Besides, if your sole intent isn't to enjoy the process, to experience exhilarating fun while racing through the trenches of the story with the characters to find out what will happen next, seriously, why bother?

Chances are you won't get rich from writing. You certainly won't get rich overnight. So why not go fishing or find something else to do that you actually enjoy?

- Ask Vin Zandri how he makes money writing fiction.
- Read Stephen King's ***On Writing*** (if you haven't key it into your search engine).
- Read almost any of Dean Wesley Smith's books on writing.
- You don't even have to ask me. Keep reading this article or just download the free [Journal Archives](#) and see for yourself.

And consider, while all the pundits are pressuring you to outline, revise, seek critical input, and rewrite, I'm not pressuring you to do anything.

I'm only saying, "Hey, you really ought'a try this. Trust yourself and your characters and write what happens as you run through the story with them. You won't be sorry."

And if it doesn't work, you can always go back to plodding—er, I mean plotting.

Which (finally) brings me to today's topic.

How we who write off into the dark—who enjoy and trust ourselves and our characters—write series. And how those series come about in the first place.

- First and foremost, we come down out of the ivory tower and lose the glistening Authorial Robes.
- We slip into jeans, a t-shirt, and a pair of sneakers.
- Then we leap into the trenches of the story and race through it with our characters, trying to keep up and knowing that eventually they will lead us to the end of the short story or novel.

Okay, that's fine for writing, but how do *series* come about for we who buck the advice of the pundits?

Simple. A character from a previous story or novel tugs on our sleeve or pops back into our mind and says, "Seriously, don't you wanna know what happens next?"

And we say, "Why yes. Yes I do." (grin) And a series is born.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

["Enemies and Frenemies"](#) Hmm. Maybe I'm actually your enemy. I will always tell you the truth about writing.

[How to Create Mood Effectively in Your Fiction](#)

[Notes from the Fiction Factory](#)

["The Shroud Key" Flash Sale, More FREE Audio Codes, and New Kindle Vella!](#)

[Some Things to Expect in 2024](#)

[Learning Copyright](#)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1070

Writing of Blackwell Ops 11: More Jeremy Stiles (novel)

Day 1..... 5214 words. To date..... 5214
Day 2..... 2657 words. To date..... 7871
Day 3..... 2481 words. To date..... 10352
Day 4..... 0923 words. To date..... 11275
Day 5..... 3424 words. To date..... 14699
Day 6..... 3649 words. To date..... 18348
Day 7..... 3334 words. To date..... 21682
Day 8..... 4633 words. To date..... 26315

Fiction for October..... 18444
Fiction for 2023..... 235986
Fiction since August 1..... 121439
Nonfiction for October..... 7340
Nonfiction for the year..... 205680
Annual consumable words..... 441606

2023 Novels to Date..... 4
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 6
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 75
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 234
Short story collections..... 31

The Journal Is a Reader-Supported Publication

If you find it of value, you can help keep it going with either a one-time or a recurring monthly donation via debit or credit card or PayPal. [Click Here To Donate](#). Thank you!

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark and adherence to Heinlein's Rules. Unreasoning fear and the myths of writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

POV, Acting Out, and the Bradbury Challenge

October 9, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * From Yer Uncle Harv
- * Acting Out (guest post)
- * Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“We realize the importance of our voices only when we are silenced.” Malala Yousafzai, women and girl’s education activist

“Lovers of print [paper books] are simply confusing the plate for the food. Douglas Adams

From Yer Uncle Harv

Point of View —

Remember that the narrator can describe only what the POV character can see, hear, smell, taste, feel (physically or emotionally) and think. Yes, even if the narrator is omniscient. You can have only one POV character at a time.

E.g., if something is happening behind a barn as the POV character approaches from the front, s/he might hear, smell, fear, or think about that occurrence, but s/he can’t describe the sight of it because it’s on the opposite side of the barn.

But s/he would HAVE to at least hear or smell it, or s/he wouldn’t know anything is happening at all. S/he might also “suspect” (unspoken thought) something’s going on, but s/he can’t see it or know for sure until s/he’s back there.

By the way, to see the chronological reading order of my novels, including series, please visit [HarveyStanbroughWrites.com](https://harveystanbroughwrites.com/reading-order-for-novels/)<https://harveystanbroughwrites.com/reading-order-for-novels/>.

Acting Out

This is a guest post from [Dan Baldwin](#).

I recently saw an interview with Sir Patrick Stewart where he touched on the art of acting.

Stewart eventually came to a point in his career when he knew he could trust his subconscious mind to provide all he needed to play any given role. His life experience was all he needed.

I’m paraphrasing, but he said that when he steps onto the stage or set he hasn’t a clue as to what he is about to do, but he knows his subconscious mind will deliver the right performance.

The interview reminded me of Michelangelo’s famous quote about his statue of David. “In every block of marble I see a statue as plain as though it stood before me, shaped and perfect in attitude and action. I have only to hew away the rough walls that imprison the lovely apparition to reveal it to the other eyes as mine see it.”

The performance or the statue is within and that theory holds true for writing. It’s called Writing Into The Dark.

When a writer sits down at the computer, typewriter, or notepad, the story is already within, waiting to be released. There's no need to plot, plan, develop character sketches, work out pacing, invent red herrings, or whatever – they're all inside.

The writer only has to put fingertips to keyboard and let them out.

To borrow a line from one of Sir Patrick's most famous roles, when starting a writing project you don't need to think – just turn on the computer and “engage.”

Quote of the Week: “Sloth (like rust) consumes faster than Labor wears: the used Key is always bright.” Benjamin Franklin

[Desert Hills Book Festival](#)

[Green Valley Book Festival](#) (email address)

Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting

Anyone can jump in (or jump back in) and join the challenge at any time. This is a great way to jumpstart your writing and get more practice pushing down the critical voice.

There's no cost.

Notice, there's no pressure re submitting or publishing. That's up to you. The point of the challenge is to have fun. Learning to keep track of your writing is a bonus.

Note: Bradbury Participants, please report your progress in the format shown below. Note the absence of “words” and the absence of punctuation. This would make things a ton easier and quicker for me. (grin)

During the past week, in addition to whatever other fiction they're writing, the following writers reported their progress:

Short Fiction

- *Erin Donoho “Untitled” XXXX Historical Psychological
- Heather Hatch “Missing Sock” 1475 Children's
- Heather Hatch “Skipping Stones” 1313 Children's
- Heather Hatch “Delivery Bicycle” 2847 Children's
- Heather Hatch “Honey Heist” 2789 Juvenile
- Loyd Jenkins “Prince Slayer” 2530 Low Fantasy
- George Kordonis “Under the Mask” 2369 Supernatural Horror
- Chynna Pace “The Haunting of Orion Merritt” 2098 Paranormal Fantasy
- Christopher Ridge “Breaking Bones” 7500 Extreme Horror
- K.C. Riggs “Chat Bot Fever” 3852 Old Codgers Getting Even

Longer Fiction

- Balázs Jámber *Trilogy of the Lora Stories* (novel) 3500 (18000 total to date) Fantasy
- Alexander Nakul *Horses of Mayhem* (novel) 9235 (43061 total to date) Historical Fantasy

* **Erin finished a story this week**, but she hadn't yet typed it in, so she didn't report the title or actual word count yet.

If this happens to you, please let me know the title and at least an approximate word count. You can approximate by counting the words in a typical line, then multiplying times the number of lines and then pages. 😊

Remember, even if the week for your personal challenge is different, the story period for this report runs from 0001 on Monday morning through midnight the following Sunday. (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

Nothing specific for "Of Interest" this morning, so I thought I'd pass this along:

You can find tons of story ideas and politically unbiased news at [1440 Daily Digest](#). And it's free.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 810

Writing of Blackwell Ops 11: More Jeremy Stiles (novel)

Day 1..... 5214 words. To date..... 5214
 Day 2..... 2657 words. To date..... 7871
 Day 3..... 2481 words. To date..... 10352
 Day 4..... 0923 words. To date..... 11275
 Day 5..... 3424 words. To date..... 14699
 Day 6..... 3649 words. To date..... 18348
 Day 7..... 3334 words. To date..... 21682
 Day 8..... 4633 words. To date..... 26315
 Day 9..... 4761 words. To date..... 31076

Fiction for October..... 23205
 Fiction for 2023..... 240747
 Fiction since August 1..... 126200
 Nonfiction for October..... 8150
 Nonfiction for the year..... 206490
 Annual consumable words..... 447177

2023 Novels to Date.....	4
2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
2023 Short Stories to Date.....	6
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	75
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	234
Short story collections.....	31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark and adherence to Heinlein's Rules. Unreasoning fear and the myths of writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

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Suspense, Setting Goals, and Agents

October 10, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * From Yer Uncle Harv — Suspense
- * On Setting Goals and Being Prolific
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“No fathers or mothers think their own children ugly; and this self-deceit is even stronger with respect to the offspring of the mind.” Miguel de Cervantes

“If you stuff yourself full of poems, essays, plays, stories, novels, films, comic strips, magazines, music, you automatically explode every morning like Old Faithful.” Ray Bradbury

“The first step to being a writer is to hitch your unconscious mind to your writing arm.”
Dorothea Brande

“[I]f you're doing it for money or fame, don't do it. ... [I]f you have to sit there and rewrite it again and again, don't do it. [I]f it's hard work just thinking about doing it, don't do it.” Charles Bukowski (see the first item in “Of Interest”)

“A literary agent is nothing but a cheap salesman (or woman); while a writer is a cheap salesman (or woman) who also has to actually write the books.” John Hodgman

From *Yer Uncle Harv*

To Insert Tension or Suspense —

To insert tension or suspense into a short story or scene or chapter or novel, generally use terse, shorter sentences, shorter paragraphs, and, if the POV character is alone, intense unspoken thought. If there’s another character present, you can replace some or all of the thought with hushed or whispered conversation.

On Setting Goals and Being Prolific

and thanks to George K for the email that served as the catalyst for this topic

Being prolific is a marathon, not a sprint. What matters is setting and maintaining a daily word-count goal and striving to reach it every day.

The beauty of a daily word-count goal is that it magically resets to zero every day.

If your word count happens to fall short one day or if life circumstances keep you from writing at all (the horror!), the goal resets to zero. And if you exceed your daily goal, bravo! But the next morning the goal still resets to zero.

But that reset is the best aspect of a daily word-count goal: Every day is a fresh start, literally the first day of the rest of your life.

As I told George K a couple of days ago, the secret to being prolific is not wearing yourself out, and it isn’t about “speed”. The secret is patience. It’s the result of spending more time in the chair, taking your time with the writing, and slowly building your word count per day.

Well, and continually setting new daily word count goals.

My own daily goal is 3000 words. Some days I fall short (but the goal resets to zero the next day). Other days I struggle a little, especially when I have to do a lot of spot research. For example, when my character is going to a new place I’ve never personally been or encountering a culture or physical location with which I’m not familiar.

But if I still physically and mentally feel like writing when I reach my goal, of course I keep writing.

Most days, other than vaguely keeping track of the number of words in a chapter in my reverse outline (I don’t like to go under 1000 or over 1500 words in a chapter), I have no idea how many words I’ve typed overall for the day.

I just enjoy experiencing the story as it unfolds around me and the characters. That's the most important thing. If I didn't enjoy finding out, and usually being surprised by, what happens next, I wouldn't be a writer. I'd go fishing.

But you can see the results in Numbers below. That's why I put them down there. Not to show off or even to report, but to motivate you by letting you see what is possible if you invest time in the chair.

In writing the current novel, I missed my daily goal on only three days. Although I missed it by a bunch on Day 4. (grin)

When I have met or exceeded my daily goal consistently for a couple of months, I'll increase the goal by a half-hour (500-word) increments. Even now. Even after having written 75 novels (and very soon, maybe today, 76).

Longer-Term Goals

I don't advise or recommend using weekly or monthly goals as your primary. They're too easy to blow off and say "Well, I'll do better next week (or month)."

That's why I recommend daily goals. If you divide your weekly goal by 7 or your monthly goal by 30 (or 28, 29, or 31) you'll have a daily goal. And those will drive you to the laptop, or legal pad if you write in longhand.

Another writer friend has set an annual goal of 1,000,000 words. That's truly wonderful, but he needs to divide that by 12, then 52, then 365 days.

He'll see that to reach his annual goal, he'll need to write at least 83334 words per month or 19231 words per week or 2739 words per day. That's only about 3 hours' work per day. Up to maybe 5 or 6 including cycling to put the story or novel out clean the first time through.

So why not set a daily goal of 2380 (or 2500) words per day? There will be days when you can't write. Stuff happens. There will be days when your numbers fall short and days when you exceed your goal.

Remember that AVERAGE is what matters.

If you set a goal of 2500 words per day and strive every day to reach it, your average will more than likely hover around that 2380-word magic number and you WILL write 1,000,000 words of fiction in a year. What a rush that will be, eh? (grin)

But you can only celebrate past events. So there's never a better time to start than today, right now.

Well, as soon as you finish reading this post. (grin)

But if you want to leave right now and dive into a story, please do. Believe me, I will understand. In a moment, I'm going to save this and do just that. And even as much as I enjoy chatting with ya'll, I can only barely wait.

Because I practice what I preach. And although what I write doesn't matter in the slightest, THAT I write is all-important. Because writing is what I do. It's even who I am.

- Mechanics repair engines.
- Lawyers practice the law.
- Plumbers plumb, and carpenters build stuff.

And writers write.

My Personal Long-Term Goal

I personally want to get back to hitting over 100,000 words per month. I used to do so fairly routinely. An average of 3500 words per day will get me there. BUT... I'm not in a hurry.

As an example, as of yesterday, my average on the current novel was 3518 words per day. If I throw out the anomaly (I only wrote 923 words on one of those days) the average jumps to 3806 words per day.

About Numbers and Surprises

Like most humans, I enjoy happy little surprises. So I typically wait to add the numbers to my spreadsheet each morning just before I file the Journal.

The new numbers clicking up on the spreadsheet almost always come as a pleasant surprise.

Conversely, as I mentioned above, I don't think about numbers as I'm writing. I'm immersed in the story, enjoying learning What Happens Next. And really, I think that's the whole secret to being prolific.

A Final Word on Tools of the Trade

Comfort is key. I have a good chair with a great lumbar support and 3-way adjustable armrests, and my keyboard is at the optimum height, so that helps.

More than once, I've been known to stand a desk or table on its side and take a saw to the legs to make the writing platform the optimum height. (But take into account the thickness of your laptop or keyboard.)

Or fit a screw into the bottom of the legs so I can adjust one that's too short until it's the right height. Or lay a piece of 1/4", 1/2" or 1" wood under each leg. Or whatever else it takes. (grin)

I also have a wonderfully responsive keyboard that feels good under my fingers. The keys are close together and have almost no travel when I'm typing.

There is literally nowhere I'd rather be than in my chair at my little typing table at the keyboard of my 11.5" HP X360 experiencing my characters' stories. Nowhere.

I wish the same for you with your device.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[so you want to be a writer?](#) THIS! READ THIS, then remember all the stuff I've been trying to teach you.

[Nora Roberts Had 204 Books Stolen](#) GREAT ADVICE.

[Unpacking Suspense with Agent Zach Honey](#) I do not endorse using agents, but maybe some valuable info for you here.

The brutal truth about earning out See PG's always valuable take.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1460

Writing of Blackwell Ops 11: More Jeremy Stiles (novel)

Day 1..... 5214 words. To date..... 5214

Day 2..... 2657 words. To date..... 7871

Day 3..... 2481 words. To date..... 10352

Day 4..... 0923 words. To date..... 11275

Day 5..... 3424 words. To date..... 14699

Day 6..... 3649 words. To date..... 18348

Day 7..... 3334 words. To date..... 21682

Day 8..... 4633 words. To date..... 26315

Day 9..... 4761 words. To date..... 31076

Day 10.... 4109 words. To date..... 35185

Fiction for October..... 27314

Fiction for 2023..... 244856

Fiction since August 1..... 130309

Nonfiction for October..... 9610

Nonfiction for the year..... 207950

Annual consumable words..... 452746

2023 Novels to Date..... 4

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 6

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	75
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	234
Short story collections.....	31

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Finished the Novel, and a Final Word on AI

October 11, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Welcome
- * My Final Word on Generative AI
- * Finished the Novel
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“If you want a happy ending, that depends, of course, on where you stop your story.” Orson Welles

“You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face.” Eleanor Roosevelt

Welcome

Welcome to Philip T and to any other new subscribers or readers of the Journal. I hope you will find it useful.

Be sure to check out the Archives and other [free downloads](#) at the Journal website.

And here's a video where [Vin Zandri and I are chatting](#) about writing and a bunch of other stuff.

My Final Word on Generative AI

See “Of Interest” for probably the last time I’ll ever mention AI in this Journal.

Whatever anyone thinks or believes and however they justify use of generative AI in the arts, only a human mind can or will ever create and convey a unique, original fiction of any length. This is not opinion. It is fact.

Those who use generative AI to “write” stories and novels are not writers. They are shysters and thieves. Yes, even if they admit to using AI to generate the story. Admitting they stole something or received or used stolen property does not make them less culpable, much less “cutting edge.”

“Generate” is the key word here. Using an automated spell checker or even a grammar checker (shudder) is not the same as generating content — the story — with AI.

Everything generated by chatbotGPT or any other AI platform is plagiarism, period. And theft is theft. If you disagree, please feel free to unsubscribe from this Journal. You will never find support here. Upright is not a matter of degree.

AI has tons of application in science and engineering, and I’m sure it can be very useful in those disciplines.

But not in the arts. Ever.

As for those who first created ways to steal other writers’ work to “train” AI programs in the first place, I hope with every fibre of my being they all end up in prison.

Finished the Novel

Not a lot to write about this morning and I’m anxious to get to the next novel, so a fairly short post today. I’m sure many of you are relieved. (grin)

About 4:30 yesterday afternoon (writing day 11) I ran a final spell check and shipped *Blackwell Ops 11: More Jeremy Stiles* off to my extremely talented first reader.

After I have received and applied Russ’ feedback, I’ve decided to give it away (free) to any of you would like to study it for suspense, tension, and pacing. NOTE: This offer is valid only for readers of the Journal. Please do not share it.

It doesn’t feel good to have it off my desk. Each morning as the story unfolded, I could barely wait to get out of bed and rush out to the Hovel to write. I’m grieving a little, and the only cure for that is to begin a new story and celebrate that beginning.

I hope to begin that process today with a new psychological suspense novel featuring a psychopath. (That’s all I know at this point. Not even the POV character’s name.)

(Why do so many writers celebrate ending a story or novel? I mean, I understand celebrating a milestone, but not that a story is over. In every other endeavor in life, we grieve endings and celebrate beginnings.)

Anyway, the novel wrapped at just under 40,000 words, so in keeping with the Blackwell Ops tradition and by the numbers I use to determine such things, it's a "short novel." (If you'd like my take on fiction lengths, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.)

In writing it, I also wrote 1258 words that didn't make it into the novel (cuts). Meh. As should always happen, the story became what it was meant to be, an accurate account of what happened and what the characters said and did in response as the story unfolded.

For my money, it's the best I've written. Which, of course, is also as it should be.

My advice will always be to learn as you go. Always be faithful to the story that unfolds around you and the characters as you run through it with them, folks. There really is no better way.

Recommended Reading

Thanks to Alexander Teut

Pulp Jungle by Frank Gruber (look around, you can find copies)

[Writing Secrets of the World's Most Prolific Authors](#) by Sean McLachlan

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[so you want to be a writer?](#) THIS! Too good not to post again. This should be mandatory reading for all fiction writers.

[ROI \[Return on Investment\]](#)

[Why a Little-Known Copyright Case May Shape the Future of AI](#) I'm posting this only because it has to do with IP (intellectual property). See PG's take.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 810

Writing of Blackwell Ops 11: More Jeremy Stiles (novel)

Day 1..... 5214 words. To date..... 5214

Day 2..... 2657 words. To date..... 7871

Day 3..... 2481 words. To date..... 10352
Day 4..... 0923 words. To date..... 11275
Day 5..... 3424 words. To date..... 14699
Day 6..... 3649 words. To date..... 18348
Day 7..... 3334 words. To date..... 21682
Day 8..... 4633 words. To date..... 26315
Day 9..... 4761 words. To date..... 31076
Day 10.... 4109 words. To date..... 35185
Day 11.... 4726 words. To date..... 39911 (done)

Fiction for October..... 27314
Fiction for 2023..... 249582
Fiction since August 1..... 135035
Nonfiction for October..... 10420
Nonfiction for the year..... 208760
Annual consumable words..... 458282

2023 Novels to Date..... 4
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 6
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 75
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 234
Short story collections..... 31

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Cover Design, and New Disclaimers

October 12, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Welcome
- * The Writing
- * A Few Tips on Cover Design
- * New Back Matter Novel Disclaimers
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“With the hell that exists all around us, how valuable are a few days of heaven?” Aliya, a significant character in Blackwell Ops 11: More Jeremy Stiles

“Everything is habit-forming, so make sure what you do is what you want to be doing.” Wilt Chamberlain

Hey George K, sound familiar? (grin) Having fun is the key.

Welcome

Welcome to Katherine and to any other new subscribers or readers of the Journal. I hope you will find it useful.

Be sure to check out the Archives and other [free downloads](#) at the Journal website.

And here’s a video where Vin Zandri and I are [chatting about writing](#) and a bunch of other stuff.

The Writing

Well, I did no new writing yesterday to speak of. I was going to start a new novel, but I wrote two sentences. It didn’t feel right. Something was off. So I stopped.

Critical mind doesn’t bother me much anymore, but that quiet little voice of the character I had in mind (I still don’t know his name) kept nudging me: *Nope—That isn’t the way it starts.*

Then I remembered I had received a new 10.1” tablet in the mail yesterday. I’d never had a tablet, so I set that up.

Then I received my first reader’s always valuable input. I applied most of it, then wrote a little on a passage that confused him. (Russ, it turns out all three mentions were Detroit instead of Bakersfield. Way different. Good catch.)

Then I decided to go ahead and design the cover. It’s purdy. (grin) After I publish this edition of the Journal this morning, I’ll write the brief promo document for Blackwell Ops 11, put the covers and description up on StoneThreadPublishing.com, and put that one to bed.

But another thing I did yesterday was come up with three disclaimers. They’re below. You can use them too if you want. I don’t mind.

But for now, since I talked about creating a cover, I thought I’d offer...

A Few Tips on Cover Design

Be sure the cover conveys the mood or tone of your story (not the story itself). There are only three main areas that are truly essential:

1. Color/Photo — all my covers for the Blackwell Ops (assassins) series are dark.

My cover photos for the Wes Crowley series are western themed. SF themes for SF, and so on. Sometimes the cover pic has nothing whatsoever to do with the actual story. That's fine.

The only job of the cover is to get the reader to pick your book from among others and read the description.

2. Font Size — This is important. Especially for ebooks, be sure the title and author name are large enough and stand out enough to be read in the thumbnail version.

My titles go almost edge to edge, and so does my name. (You'll have to adjust those items a bit for trim if you publish to paper.)

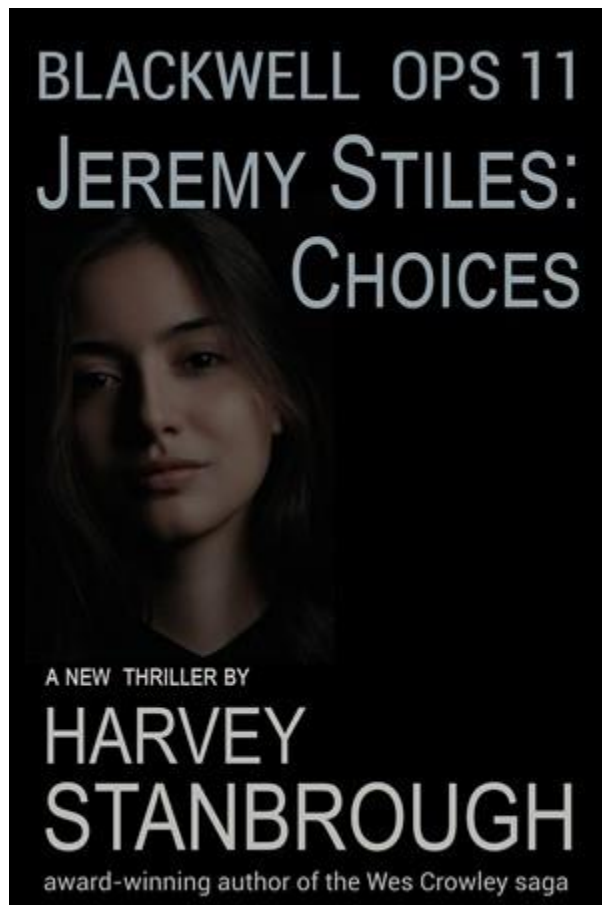
3. Fonts — Don't use more than two different fonts on your cover, and try to keep it to one. If your story is humorous, you might use something like Comic Sans or something similar. You get the idea. My Wes Crowley books use a western-looking font. For all the others I use something like Roboto.

Oh, and if you use ALL CAPS on the cover for some reason, be sure to add an extra space (so two spaces) after each word. Makes the all-caps easier to read.

Not essential, but smart — If you know anything about print advertizing (well, you will here in a second), try to use the Z rule on your cover.

The title leads the reader's gaze left to right. From the end of the title, some element of your photo (or a teaser, etc.) should draw the reader's gaze down and to the left. There, the reader will find your name and finish the Z pattern. All without realizing it.

Here's the cover I created for Blackwell Ops 11:



The woman's face is positioned to the left. Notice how the the slope of her left jawline pulls the reader's gaze to my name.

New Back Matter Novel Disclaimers

Beginning with Blackwell Ops 10, I'm now adding the following disclaimers at the end of each novel, novella or short story:

1. This is a work of fiction, strictly a product of the author's imagination. Any perceived resemblance or similarity to any actual events or persons, living or dead, and any perceived slights of people, places, or organizations are products of the reader's imagination. Probably.
2. This fiction is the result of a partnership between a human writer and the character(s) he accessed with his creative subconscious as he raced through the story with them, trying to keep up.
3. In no part is this story the block-by-block, stolen construction of any sort of generative AI or the artificial construction of any conscious, critical, human mind. What you read here is what actually happened there.

As I wrote earlier, feel free to use them yourself if you want to.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[How Can I Set Aside the Cacophany of Writing Advice and Just Write?](#) Wanna say it with me? Let Go, trust yourself and just Write Into the Dark. That isn't writing advice. It's anti-writing-advice advice. (grin)

[Meet Webster's New Words](#) Meh. If your characters would use them, use them.

[so you want to be a writer?](#) THIS! Sorry. This is just so good.

The Numbers

The Journal.....	910
Writing of Untitled (novel)	
Day 1..... XXXX words. To date..... XXXXX	
Fiction for October.....	27314
Fiction for 2023.....	249582
Fiction since August 1.....	135035
Nonfiction for October.....	11330
Nonfiction for the year.....	209670
Annual consumable words.....	459192
2023 Novels to Date.....	4
2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
2023 Short Stories to Date.....	6
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	75
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	234
Short story collections.....	31

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As a Publisher, Stick With What You Know

October 13, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * A Tip From Yer Uncle Harv
- * A Final Word (and Offer) on Blackwell Ops 11
- * As a Publisher, Stick With What You Know
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“An audiobook requires a narrator. Absent a contract stating differently, the narrator has exclusive rights to the audio narration he/she has performed.” PG in a comment on a post linked in “Of Interest”

“I write when I’m inspired, and I see to it that I’m inspired at nine o’clock every morning.” Peter DeVries

DeVries apparently stole and altered this from William Faulkner, who wrote, “I only write when inspiration strikes. Fortunately it strikes at nine every morning.”

I like DeVries’ version better, so I stole (and altered) his quote to use in the signature at the bottom of my emails: “I only write when I’m inspired, so I see to it that I’m inspired every morning at 3 a.m.” Harvey Stanbrough

The subhead on my author site at HarveyStanbrough.com is fun too: “I will lie to you. And you will enjoy it.” Harvey Stanbrough

A Tip From Yer Uncle Harv

It seems like everyone wants to compare their work with Roberts or King or whomever. I’ve even seen it in sales copy: “This is what would happen if Captain Picard was caught in a time-warp with Nora Roberts and Stephen King.”

Meh. If you want a helpful comparison, compare how well you tell a story today with how well you told one in the past. For a fiction writer, that’s the only valid comparison and the only one that should matter.

A Final Word (and Offer) on Blackwell Ops 11

Yesterday I wrote the promo doc, uploaded the thumbnail and medium-sized covers, updated the genre page at StoneThreadPublishing.com, and added the new page for Blackwell Ops 11. All of that took about two hours.

As I was doing that, I realized my next book will be in the same series (see Numbers below). For me as a writer, It's difficult to break away from writing heart-thumping action and psychological suspense as I accompany these guys and gals of Blackwell Ops on their journey.

Of course, my buddy Wes Crowley is waiting out among the mesquites between the New Mexico state line and Amarillo Texas somewhere, but he's always been patient with me.

As for the psychological suspense novel I wanted to write, duh, the Blackwell Ops series is chock full of that stuff.

That's what was wrong when I tried to start what I thought would be a one-off novel yesterday. The character wouldn't even tell me his name, remember? That's because I was about to write a story he didn't want to take part in. Again, duh.

Anyway, I'm a pretty good sales-copy guy too. If you want, take a look at the [sales copy for *Blackwell Ops 11*](#).

So *Blackwell Ops 11: Jeremy Stiles: Choices* is in the can, so remember my offer: I'd be happy to send you a PDF copy free.

I suggest reading it for the story first, strictly as a reader, strictly for heart-thumping pleasure. (Because if parts of it don't increase your blood pressure, why bother studying it to see how I accomplished that?)

Then go back and study it for pacing (sentence and paragraph lengths, cliffhangers and hooks) and for how to insert tension and suspense (um, pacing) into your stories.

No, I don't do any of that consciously as I'm writing. I do it subconsciously, but I learned consciously how to create the particular effect I want to create in the reader, and I continue learning as I go. Just trying to pass along something you can use here folks.

Please note that this offer is valid only for readers of the Journal. Please do not share it.

As a Publisher, Stick With What You Know
(Learn from My Mistake)

Wow, did I ever screw up.

How? I forgot I'm a writer first. And then I put greed above the reader. I'll never do that again.

Yesterday I realized I had put Blackwell Ops 9 into KDP Select. That effectively tied-up a series for anyone who chooses to buy books anywhere other than Amazon. And I haven't even used any of the Amazon marketing freebies. I just don't think about it. For me, marketing never passes the WIBBOW test.

As a result of my idiocy and greed, Blackwell Ops 9 won't be released from KDP Select until December 2.

Then I compounded that self-inflicted wound. Blackwell Ops 10 will be tied up in Vella for a month after the last "episode" goes live. So early to mid-November.

As you know, I finished Blackwell Ops 11 a few days ago. But I can't publish it in good conscience until Book 10 is released from Vella in November. All my titles stand alone, but that particular story is better if readers can get those two books in order.

So all I can do is bite the bullet and take my licks. Unfortunately, this silliness will probably cost me a lot of readers who don't go through Amazon.

In fact, Blackwell Ops 12 (which I just started yesterday) will be published wide before those two are. If the story runs true to form, it will wrap 10 to 14 days from now.

I'll just have to wait until December 2 to publish Blackwell Ops 9. For a guy whose world generally moves at warp speed, it's gonna be torture waiting to publish that one wide. I'm even thinking about adding a brief apology to non-Amazon readers in that one before I publish it wide.

I take some solace in knowing this will never happen again. From here on out, I'll publish-wide everything I write as soon as I finish it.

That's what I get for doing something that's WAY out of my norm. I am not a businessman,. I'm just a reg'lar old workaday writer.

I am also NOT suggesting or recommending that you do the same. Hey, if Vella and/or KDP Select works for you, seriously, more power to you. If you're young enough to experiment with various marketing techniques, please go for it. I'm only saying it's a good idea to stick with what you know.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[UK: Society of Authors Questions Spotify's Publisher Deals](#) If you publish audio books, see PG's take.

[so you want to be a writer?](#) THIS! Sorry. I won't post it again. 😊 But this is just so good.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 910

Writing of Blackwell Ops 12: Nick Soldata (novel)

Day 1..... 3683 words. To date..... 3683

Fiction for October..... 35723
Fiction for 2023..... 253265
Fiction since August 1..... 138718
Nonfiction for October..... 12400
Nonfiction for the year..... 210740
Annual consumable words..... 463945

2023 Novels to Date..... 5
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 6
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 76
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 234
Short story collections..... 31

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A Quick Survey, a New Story, and a Visit

October 14, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * A Quick Survey
- * A New Story
- * The Writing and a Visit
- * Reminder
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“In my writing, I can go where I can’t go in real life. ... When I sit down to write, the characters take the reins. It’s the healthiest form of possession I can think of...” Anonymous

Note: The above quote is from an email I received a few days ago. I wanted to share with you part of the wisdom the writer passed along.

“Studying the lyrics of songs is an excellent exercise in creative writing.” Reavis Wortham (“Distilled Thoughts” in Of Interest)

“Some people you don’t have to satirize, you just quote ’em.” Tom Paxton

A Quick Survey

If any of you discovered the Journal via my posts on Twitter (X) please take a few seconds to drop me a line at harveystanbrough@gmail.com to let me know that. Thanks.

A New Story

“Jimmy the Dope” published yesterday on my [Stanbrough Writes Substack](#).

If you would like to subscribe, click the link and then the Subscribe button at the end of the story. You’ll receive a new short story every Friday, and it’s free.

Below the Subscribe button, there are other short stories you can read in most genres. Enjoy!

The Writing and a Visit

Not a great day of writing, but not bad. Made my goal of 3000 words. Without the goal pushing me a bit I would have stopped at around 2400. (grin)

My youngest son and his girlfriend arrived late last night and will visit all day today and Sunday morning. I’ll probably write in the early hours of this morning after I file the Journal, then go up to the house around 8, but that will all be bonus. If I get no writing done at all, I won’t be disappointed.

Reminder

You in the Bradbury Challenge, remember to get your data in for your writing for the week. Today is Saturday, so get it to me by tomorrow at midnight.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

Distilled Thoughts

Writing Lessons from Singer-Songwriters

The Numbers

The Journal..... 350

Writing of Blackwell Ops 12: Nick Soldata (novel)

Day 1..... 3683 words. To date..... 3683

Day 2..... 3186 words. To date..... 6869

Fiction for October..... 38909

Fiction for 2023..... 256451

Fiction since August 1..... 141904

Nonfiction for October..... 12750

Nonfiction for the year..... 211090

Annual consumable words..... 467481

2023 Novels to Date..... 5

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 6

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 76

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 234

Short story collections..... 31

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Memory from a Writer's Conference

October 15, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Memory from a Writer's Conference
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Memory from a Writer's Conference

Thanks to James Bell of The Kill Zone blog (see "Of Interest") for serving as the catalyst for this memory

There was a time when I was asked to speak at several writer's conferences all over the nation and in Canada.

At one of the larger conferences — I want to say it was in Tucson, Houston, or Oklahoma City but it might have been anywhere — I was hanging out in the lobby after a presentation.

Everywhere around me, herds of attendees were coming-from or going-to other presentations, or both.

A young writer or would-be writer approached. "I enjoyed your presentation." He seemed tentative. "But could I ask you a personal question?"

"Sure."

"I understand you're a professional writer, and I understand it's important to show up and do that every day. But you didn't mean *every* day. What do you enjoy doing during your time off?"

I smiled. "I write."

"No, I mean what do you do for *fun*?"

"I write."

"But you can't write 24/7. So really, just to escape for awhile, what do you do then?"

I laughed. "To escape? I write. Escaping is really the whole point."

"But —"

I put up one hand. "I understand what you mean, but writing fiction is the most fun I've ever had. Sure, I do other, normal, routine things like going to the store or reading or watching TV. But whenever I can, I write."

He looked skeptical. "I'm sorry, but that just seems boring to me."

“Let me put it like this. My youngest son is a radio guy. It’s his passion. I mean, when he was three years old, maybe younger, whenever we were out in the car, he was pointing out ‘radio towers’.

“In his day job, he works for a huge communications company. But even when he *isn’t* at work, he’s a HAM radio operator, or he’s setting up a radio system for someone, or he’s setting up a ‘repeater,’ whatever that is, or he’s studying to move up in his profession or as a HAM operator, or he’s tweaking something he worked on before.

“Do you know any mechanics who fix cars on their time off? Or lawyers who brush up on other cases during their time off? Of cops who respond to trouble when they aren’t wearing the uniform? Or professional bass fishermen who fish even when they aren’t on camera?”

He frowned. “Well sure, but —”

“All those people are following their passion. And writing is *my* passion. Whenever I can, whenever I’m not pulled away to do a necessary chore or fulfill an obligation or sleep, I’m writing. In a blog I post almost every day, I even write *about* writing, kind’a paying it forward.”

He frowned. “Okay, I get it. I think. Writing is my passion too. Or at least it’s what I want to do. So how can I do what you do? How do I even start?”

“Sit down at a keyboard, drop a character with any little problem into a setting, and write whatever comes until the characters lead you through to the end.”

“But how do I write a *novel*?”

“Same thing. Only the story keeps going and you keep going with it. Just write down what happens and what the characters say and do in response. That’s it.”

Noticing the number of people moving through the lobby was dwindling, I glanced at my watch. “Look, I have to get to my next presentation. It’s called Writing Into the Dark. Why don’t you come along?”

“I would,” and he jerked one thumb over his shoulder, “but I was going to attend a lecture on the necessity of planning and the value of outlines.”

“If you were writing about a week in your neighbors’ life, would you try to plan or outline that? The only value of outlines is in their power to keep you from actually writing the story.” I gestured with my head. “Come with me. I’ll tell you the truth about writing.”

He came with me. Most don’t. But you can’t save everyone. There are always people standing on the roof of their house above rising flood waters and telling the guy in the rowboat to pass on by, that they’re waiting for a helicopter.

If writing fiction is your vocation, folks, show up to work every day. If it's your avocation, figure out a schedule and stick to it.

Either way, set a daily word-count goal and, other than brief breaks, don't get up until you've reached it.

There really is nothing else to it.

Talk with you again tomorrow.

Of Interest

[How to Increase Your Productivity...](#)

[No Better Time to Publish](#)

[My Star Trek Writing: A Blast From the Past](#)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 800

Writing of Blackwell Ops 12: Nick Soldata (novel)

Day 1..... 3683 words. To date..... 3683

Day 2..... 3186 words. To date..... 6869

Day 3..... 3315 words. To date..... 10184

Fiction for October..... 42223

Fiction for 2023..... 259766

Fiction since August 1..... 145219

Nonfiction for October..... 13550

Nonfiction for the year..... 211890

Annual consumable words..... 471596

2023 Novels to Date..... 5

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 6

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 76

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 234

Short story collections..... 31

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A Tip, and the Bradbury Challenge

October 16, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Welcome
- * A Tip on Challenges
- * Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting
- * Topics and Guest Posts
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Welcome

Welcome to Gerald D and to any other new subscribers or readers of the Journal. I hope you will find it useful.

Be sure to check out the Archives and other [free downloads](#) at the Journal website.

And here's a video where [Vin Zandri and I are chatting about writing](#) and a bunch of other stuff.

A Tip on Challenges

If you're challenging yourself to write a short story every week, and if you find yourself often coming right down to the deadline, this might help:

Change your goal. Increase it. Or halfway increase it.

Say you want to write at least one short story per week. Say your "week" ends on Sunday at midnight. That is your deadline.

I suggest you reset your self-imposed deadline to Wednesday at midnight. Strive hard to write your primary story by that time. If you don't finish until Thursday or whatever, it's not a big deal. It won't cost you in productivity.

Then try to write a second story before the end of your week (Sunday at midnight). If you don't, at least you finished your main story for the week. And many times, you will finish two stories or more for the week.

The bottom line? Your inventory will grow. And I can almost guarantee some of those stories will want to be novellas or novels.

Plus if you're a participant in my reporting of your stories, you can always report more than one story in a given week if you want to.

An extra tip for masochists (grin) — If you really want a challenge that will force you to grow as a writer (and if you aren't currently writing a novel), try writing a new short story every day for a week. Or ten days. Or a month. Or a year.

You can also apply this sort of challenge to a novella or novel. Decide in advance that no matter what happens (excepting major life events or life rolls) you will take no more than one day off after you finish a novella or novel before starting the next one.

And if you're stuck for ideas, remember: All you need is a character with a problem dropped into a setting. That's all you need. If you don't "think" and just trust the characters, they will lead you through to the end.

Yes, you can. It's all a matter of priorities. Every word of fiction, every sentence and paragraph, improves your ability as a fiction writer.

Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting

Anyone can jump in (or jump *back* in) and join the challenge at any time. Even if you miss a week in your personal challenge and break your streak, you can always jump back in the next week and start a new one.

This is a great way to jumpstart your writing and get more practice pushing down the critical voice.

There's no cost.

Notice, there's no pressure re submitting or publishing either. That's up to you. The point of the challenge is to have fun. Learning to keep track of your writing is a bonus.

During the past week, in addition to whatever other fiction they're writing, the following writers reported their progress:

Short Fiction

- Erin Donoho "The Physician and the Reverend" 3300 Historical Fiction
- George Kordonis "Robot Scarecrow" 2679 SF

- Alexander Nakul “Memory Cellar” 4189 SF Mystery
- Alexander Nakul “The Labyrinth of Ghostberry” 3530 Horror
- Chynna Pace “The Other Megan” 4443 Fantasy
- Christopher Ridge “Make Them Suffer” 3200 Horror
- K.C. Riggs “Apartment 229” 1968 Ghost

Longer Fiction

- Balázs Jámor *Trilogy of the Lora Stories: Restarted* (novel) 4500 (4500 total to date) Fantasy
- Alexander Nakul *Horses of Mayhem* 3046 Historical fantasy (46107 total to date)

Topics and Guest Posts

Prompted by two other writers via email this morning, I’m setting a new policy re topics for the Journal and guest posts. I hope this won’t fall on deaf ears.

You’re all writers, so you each have a unique perspective, whether it be gender, age, culture, race, how you were brought up or whatever.

Don’t get me wrong. I love hearing from you regarding topics you would like to see in the Journal. I very much appreciate the input.

But if you feel strongly about a topic, please consider writing it yourself and submitting it as a guest post. Often, it will be a better post coming from your unique perspective instead of mine.

No length requirement. Simply stop writing when you’ve said what you have to say.

Feel free to send a brief bio with your article if you want, info on your stories or books, etc.

Thanks for reading the Journal, and thanks in advance for any ideas for posts or guest posts.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[Six Things Writers Need To Stop Worrying About](#) An oldie but a goodie.

[Free \(Fiction and Non-Fiction\) Downloads](#) Not the same as those on the Journal

[Writer Resources](#) A listing primarily of categories, each of which contains many links

The Numbers

The Journal..... 810

Writing of Blackwell Ops 12: Nick Soldata (novel)

Day 1..... 3683 words. To date..... 3683
Day 2..... 3186 words. To date..... 6869
Day 3..... 3315 words. To date..... 10184
Day 4..... 3260 words. To date..... 13444

Fiction for October..... 45484
Fiction for 2023..... 263026
Fiction since August 1..... 148479
Nonfiction for October..... 14360
Nonfiction for the year..... 212700
Annual consumable words..... 475666

2023 Novels to Date..... 5
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 6
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 76
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 234
Short story collections..... 31

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Crashing Bores

October 17, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Welcome
- * Server Downtime
- * Some Neighbors Are Crashing Bores
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“The drama of [a] scene is enhanced by allowing the thoughts and dialogue to stand out — all by simple paragraphing.” PJ Parrish (see Of Interest)

Welcome

Welcome to Juan-Pierre and to any other new subscribers or readers of the Journal. I hope you will find it useful.

Be sure to check out the Archives and other [free downloads](#) at the Journal website. And I don't do the ambush thing requiring an email address. Just click the links and a PDF will download in a new page.

And **here's a video** where Vin Zandri and I are chatting about writing and a bunch of other stuff.

Server Downtime

Apparently beginning shortly after I posted this Journal on 10/16/2023, my webhost (HostMatters.com) suffered a brief period of server downtime, at least on the servers that contain all the information for my sites.

It was an annoying event. I apologize for any inconvenience.

Some Neighbors Are Crashing Bores

A few days ago I left a comment on James Scott Bell's TKZ post titled “How to Increase Your Productivity When You Don't Feel Productive.”

Predictably, mixed in with what is probably good advice for some, he mentioned several of the myths of fiction writing in the article. I listed a link to the post in “Of Interest” only in case any of you might learn something from it.

I left the comment only to give any TKZ readers another perspective. Here it is in its entirety:

“For the readers out there.... I sit down at the keyboard, drop a character with a problem (doesn't have to be ‘the’ problem of the story, that will reveal later) into a setting, and write whatever comes.

“I plan nothing in advance, any more than I would try to plan writing an account of what happens to my neighbor and what he says and does in response. For me that's worked for over 230 short stories and 76 novels (and counting).”

Yesterday, I received a [Talkwalker](#) Alert notifying that Mr. Bell had posted a response. I'm glad he did. His response was terse served as the catalyst for this topic. It read

“Some neighbors are crashing bores.”

I responded with this:

“Yes, of course. But some lead secret lives.”

I should have added (and eventually did) what follows.

Yes, probably some neighbors seem crashing bores from our outsider, superficial perspective. But how well do we know our neighbors? Do some of them possibly lead secret lives we know nothing about? Actually, all of them do.

The truth is, we know our neighbors about as well as we know our characters from that same surface perspective. But that's before we dive into their lives and follow them around for awhile, running through their story with them.

And that's my whole point. If the characters (or neighbors) never notice my presence, then I don't affect how their story unfolds. I'm simply their Recorder, or as Stephen King refers to himself, “my characters' stenographer.”

When I approach fiction writing from that perspective — not having donned glowing Authorial Robes and not controlling every action and every word of dialogue in *their story* — the story unfolds as it should, naturally and in the characters' own voices, unencumbered by my own.

Even the stories of the most seemingly boring characters (and neighbors) are actually far more interesting than if I had forced my perception and expectations on them.

I never experience the fear of a story not being “perfect” because every reader's perception of perfection is different. I only convey the story truthfully as it unfolds and let the readers decide.

And while others are planning and plotting and outlining and revising and receiving input from critique groups and rewriting, I'm putting new words on the page at a rate of about 3000 clean, publishable words per day.

Best of all, for me writing fiction isn't laborious in the slightest. It isn't a set of steps to follow and fears to obey. To the contrary, it's the most fun I've ever had.

But to the presentation of the characters' story — Should we learn more about structure and hooks and cliffhangers and pacing and all the rest?

Of course. Despite what some would have you believe, I have never advocated not learning the craft and building on what you know.

But we've also been absorbing Story all our lives from television (and some of us, radio) and music and films and short stories and novels.

Of course we should augment all that with more knowledge.

But we should also trust what we know. And most importantly, we should practice. And practice in writing doesn't mean standing still or hovering. It means putting new words on the page.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

The Most Potent Little Gadget In Your Writer's Toolbox Good information.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 820

Writing of Blackwell Ops 12: Nick Soldata (novel)

Day 1..... 3683 words. To date..... 3683
Day 2..... 3186 words. To date..... 6869
Day 3..... 3315 words. To date..... 10184
Day 4..... 3260 words. To date..... 13444
Day 5..... 3175 words. To date..... 16619

Fiction for October..... 48659
Fiction for 2023..... 266201
Fiction since August 1..... 151654
Nonfiction for October..... 15180
Nonfiction for the year..... 213520
Annual consumable words..... 479661

2023 Novels to Date..... 5
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 6
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 76
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 234
Short story collections..... 31

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Tension, Suspense, and Craft-of-Writing Books

October 18, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * A Bit More on Tension and Suspense
- * On Craft-of-Writing Books
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“creativity is always a surprise. Nobody can just learn it and stop like nobody can learn fun and stop having fun.” Rikki Mongoose (pseudonym)

“Spielberg had trouble with the mechanical shark, and it forced him to limit its time onscreen. Rather than being a detriment to the film, the absence of the shark made everything more ominous and terrifying. What you don't see can sometimes influence the story more than what you do see.” J. Kevin Tumlinson (see “The Unseen Speaks Volumes” in Of Interest)

“For God's sake, it's only a story. We're not curing cancer here, we're making stuff up and playing with our imaginary friends.” John Gilstrap (see “Writer's Guilt” in Of Interest)

“Always do your very best. Even when no one else is looking, you always are. Don't disappoint yourself.” Colin Powell

A Bit More on Tension and Suspense

Awhile back [I wrote about pacing](#), an absolutely essential element of suspense.

And in yet another article, I wrote about [pulling readers into your story and holding them there](#). In that one, I mentioned openings, pacing again (I think) and hooks and cliffhangers.

This topic is about one kind of cliffhanger or hook, or rather how the cliffhanger or hook is delivered.

Remember, the hook and the opening are two different things. The hook propels the reader to read the opening, in which you pull the reader deep into the scene via description of the setting through the POV character's physical and emotional senses.

My novels are divided into chapters, and many of the chapters are divided into sections separated with a trio of asterisks centered on their own line between the two sections.

I've developed the habit of inserting tension and suspense at the end of not only every chapter but every section too. Especially leading into and during action scenes.

Most often, I do that with the last sentence (or sentence fragment) of the section or chapter. It's usually a terse, short (and therefore dramatic) sentence. To add further tension, it's most often set off in its own paragraph.

That final sentence always begs resolution. And the only way for readers to resolve it is to move on to the next section or chapter —

Where a hook awaits.

That hook is also often a short, terse sentence that propels readers into the rest of the paragraph and the next and the next.

The cliffhanger. It makes my readers want to know what happens next and how the cliffhanger is resolved. That propels them into reading the hook in the next section or chapter, and that drives them through the section or chapter to the next cliffhanger.

Whenever I can, I also use a short, terse sentence to end a paragraph or two even in the body of a section or chapter. Unless you do it at the end of pretty much every paragraph, the technique goes unnoticed by the reader and never gets old.

Like shorter sentences, shorter paragraphs also drive tension and suspense.

As PJ Parrish notes in her article (first item in Of Interest) a reader will read more quickly through a section that even includes MORE WORDS if they are presented in FEWER PARAGRAPHS, especially if those paragraphs separate-out dialogue from narrative.

In place of a final or opening sentence, you can use a sentence fragment. Like this one. Or like this one or “Especially leading into and during action scenes” or “Where a hook awaits” above.

Any questions, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com. I'm happy to oblige.

On Craft-of-Writing Books

There are many MANY craft-of-writing books available. I've written sixteen or so myself.

But like I said, there are tons of them out there. With the exception of mine and Dean Wesley Smith's, they all say pretty much the same things, and most of them either spout the myths or expect you to already be following the myths.

Of course, you don't follow the myths or you wouldn't be reading this, right? (grin) But you can still learn from those books. Here's my advice:

If the book is centered on a myth (e.g., how to outline or how to revise, etc.) skip it. Save your money. If you buy it and then set aside what isn't myth, you'll set aside the whole book and will have wasted your moolah.

If the book is centered on any part of the actual craft of writing — characters, setting, scene, structure, world-building, openings, hooks and cliffhangers, pacing and so on — buy it. But only if

1. The author has also written at least 10 novels and/or at least fifty or so short stories, and
2. You "feel good" in your spidey senses about it

If the author hasn't written a lot of fiction, what can s/he possibly teach you about writing fiction?

And if the book doesn't make your spidey senses tingle, don't buy it.

After you buy one or more craft books, ignore all the talk in the book about the myths. Just let your eyes glaze over and skip the parts about outlining, plotting, revising, seeking input from others (including critique groups) rewriting and anything about agents and traditional publishers.

If you do that, you should be able to glean some good information from those books without buying into all the myth crap.

[You can find my writing books at StoneThread Publishing](#). But this is not a hard sell.

Some of them are free at either the Journal website at HEStanbrough.com or on my author site over at HarveyStanbrough.com.

In fact, here are a few freebies right now. Clicking any link below will download a free PDF directly to your computer:

[Writing Great Beginnings](#)

[Top 7 Mistakes Writers Make](#) (aside from following the myths)

[The Essentials of Digital Publishing](#)

[Quick Guide to Self-Publishing & FAQs](#) (more of a pamphlet than a book)

Okay, the last two are about publishing, not writing. They're also a little outdated, but they still hold up.

Among my own craft titles that are currently not free, I most strongly recommend

[Writing the Character-Driven Story](#)

[Poetry Techniques for the Fictionist](#)

If you're still struggling with critical voice, getting it to shut up and leave you alone as you write, I also recommend

[Quiet the Critical Voice \(and Write Fiction\)](#)

And of course, any of my donors can get any of my nonfiction books in .mobi, .epub, or .pdf free of charge. Just email me.

I also recommend most of Dean Wesley Smiths WMG Writers Guides. You can find those at [WMG Publishing](#).

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[The Most Potent Little Gadget In Your Writer's Toolbox](#) I apologize for having omitted the link to this article yesterday. So here's the listing again. The article is all about the importance of paragraphing.

[The Unseen Speaks Volumes](#)

[Writer's Guilt](#) An excellent post

[1000 Dedicated Buyers? No. The Real Number is...](#)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1160

Writing of Blackwell Ops 12: Nick Soldata (novel)

Day 1..... 3683 words. To date..... 3683
Day 2..... 3186 words. To date..... 6869
Day 3..... 3315 words. To date..... 10184
Day 4..... 3260 words. To date..... 13444
Day 5..... 3175 words. To date..... 16619
Day 6..... 3649 words. To date..... 20268

Fiction for October..... 52308
Fiction for 2023..... 269850
Fiction since August 1..... 155303

Nonfiction for October..... 16340
Nonfiction for the year..... 214680
Annual consumable words..... 484470

2023 Novels to Date..... 5
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 6
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 76
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 234
Short story collections..... 31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark and adherence to Heinlein's Rules. Unreasoning fear and the myths of writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

If you find the Journal of value, you can help keep it going with either a one-time or a recurring monthly donation via debit or credit card or PayPal. [Click Here To Donate](#). Thank you!

Quiet the Critical Voice

October 19, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Welcome
- * The Writing
- * Quiet the Critical Voice
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“You will lose someone you can't live without, and your heart will be badly broken, and the bad news is that you never completely get over the loss of your beloved. But this is also the good news. They live forever in your broken heart that doesn't seal back up. And you come through. It's like having a broken leg that never heals perfectly—that still hurts when the weather gets cold, but you learn to dance with the limp.” Anne Lamott

I've never seen this sentiment expressed better.

“Flip the fear upside down. Instead of bogging down fearing whether anyone will like what you’ve written, fear how you will feel if you don’t finish the story.” Dean Wesley Smith (paraphrased)

Welcome

Goodness! Welcome to Tiffanie G, Daniel S, James G, David T and any other new subscribers or readers of the Journal. I hope you will find it useful.

Be sure to check out the Archives and other [free downloads at the Journal](#) website. And I don’t do the ambush thing requiring an email address. Just click the links and a PDF will download in a new page.

And here’s a video where [Vin Zandri and I are chatting](#) about writing and a bunch of other stuff.

The Writing

What a great writing day yesterday turned out to be!

When my wife and I went to the store shortly before noon, I had written only about 300 words, mostly as I was cycling through yesterday’s writing.

I had also played catch up with my reverse outline, which I hadn’t filled out since Chapter 2. I filled in Chapters 3 through 15, and I also wrote most of this Journal entry. I told my wife I was tempted to make it a non-writing day. Just skip it and start again this morning..

But I screwed up. I have a writing streak going. (grin)

As most of you know, my firm goal is 3000 clean, publishable words of fiction per day. Thus far on this novel, I haven’t missed a day and I haven’t fallen short of my goal.

We got back from the store around 1:30. Driven by fears of how I would feel if I broke that short streak without at least trying to reach my daily goal, around 1:45 I came back out to the Hovel and sat down at my writing ‘puter.

By 3:30 I was tired, so I checked my word count for the day.

I was only 41 words short of my goal. So not counting the 300 words I’d added during cycling, I’d written almost 2700 clean words in less than two hours. How wild is that?

And that, my friends, is how a story can pull you along when you trust your characters and just write whatever comes.

I turned back to the writing ‘puter for another 15 minutes to finish the day.

At 3:45, so two hours after I started, I had cleared my daily goal by 61 words. That isn't a lot, but surpassing the goal (and average) is what matters. So I recorded my numbers and headed up to the house.

There are a lot of writers out there who are "faster" than I am (they all write into the dark), but I'm pretty sure averaging 1330 words per hour is a personal best for me.

How to join the club of which I'm a member? Read on.

Quiet the Critical Voice

In a temporary moment of madness, I've decided to give subscribers to the Journal a free copy of [*Quiet the Critical Voice \(and Write Fiction\)*](#).

I wrote the stupid thing in the first place to help writers get over critical voice issues. So if you'd like a free copy, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com. Be sure to let me know whether you want it in .mobi, .epub, or .pdf. I'll send it right out.

If you'd rather buy it, you can [find it on Amazon](#) or [at other booksellers](#) all around the globe.

Reviews for Quiet the Critical Voice

"I read this book as the author wrote it on his website, and am now reading it again. It's not long, but direct and to the point. The advice is solid, well thought out, and more importantly, the author has been writing this way for dozens of books. It works!" DACS

"I love this book. I've been working on the same novel for 10 years. Ten. Freakin'. Years. I wish I could say I was having fun during that time. Not! Harvey's book has helped me start playing again. After all this struggling and angst and gnashing of teeth I'm finally learning to let go of my Inner Critic and just let my Creative Voice play. ... Great book on kicking the critical voice out of your head!" Sky King

"For anyone reading: immediately buy *Quiet the Critical Voice*. I haven't stopped writing since I read it a couple weeks ago. The Critical Voice will stop you any chance [it] gets. You need to stare it down and shut it up early and often." Big Philly

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[The Most Potent Little Gadget In Your Writer's Toolbox](#) A writer emailed to tell me I didn't add the link yesterday. He's right. I somehow omitted it. So here's the listing again. The article is all about the importance of paragraphing.

[The Unseen Speaks Volumes](#)

[Writer's Guilt](#) An excellent post

[Write What the Muse Tells You to Write](#)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 920

Writing of Blackwell Ops 12: Nick Soldata (novel)

Day 1..... 3683 words. To date..... 3683
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Day 3..... 3315 words. To date..... 10184
Day 4..... 3260 words. To date..... 13444
Day 5..... 3175 words. To date..... 16619
Day 6..... 3649 words. To date..... 20268
Day 7..... 3061 words. To date..... 23329

Fiction for October..... 55369
Fiction for 2023..... 272911
Fiction since August 1..... 158364
Nonfiction for October..... 17260
Nonfiction for the year..... 215600
Annual consumable words..... 488451

2023 Novels to Date..... 5
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 6
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 76
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 234
Short story collections..... 31

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Reverse Outlines, and Quiet the Critical Voice

October 21, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Welcome
- * A Tip for Reverse Outlines
- * Writing Like a Maniac
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Do something you really like, and hopefully it pays the rent. As far as I’m concerned, that’s success.” Tom Petty

“That question of identity always confused me. Who are you? Why, that’s simple. I’m Matt. But that’s just a name. There are millions of people with that name and they aren’t me.” Matt Perryman (see Of Interest)

Think of your characters. They’re more than just a name, and they will reveal all if you let them. Don’t plan or tell them who they are. Let them show you.

“You don’t have to wait to be confident. Just do it and eventually the confidence will follow.”
Carrie Fisher

Welcome

Welcome to Katy M, Kylie, Olivia, Corbin, Divyang, and any other new subscribers or readers of the Journal. I hope you will find it useful.

Be sure to check out the Archives and other [free downloads at the Journal website](#). And I don’t do the ambush thing requiring an email address. Just click the links and a PDF will download in a new page.

And here’s a video where Vin Zandri and I are chatting about writing and a bunch of other stuff.

A Tip for Reverse Outlines

Awhile back I offered to send anyone who wants them a novel/short story template I use and/or the reverse outline template I use.

It’s simply easier to start a new story on the novel template and then Save As the title of the story. The one I use is in Microsoft Word, but you can easily adapt it for use with Pages or whatever word processing program you use.

The reverse outline is invaluable to help you keep track of character and place names and descriptions, weapons (if any), vehicles, and so on from a novel.

I abhor the thought of plotting or outlining in the traditional sense, but with the reverse outline I can fill in any important details from the story after I finish each chapter.

It's far easier and quicker to glance at a reverse outline than to scroll or search back through your entire document to find whether Susie's eyes are blue or brown. The reverse outline is a simple .txt document.

You can still get either or both of these free by emailing me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

I've developed a kind of shorthand for my reverse outline.

When I've completed a chapter in which a new character or location is described, after the character's name or place name I add "desc." The period helps me find everything I've described quickly with the Find feature in Notepad. I just search for "desc." and it won't ping on words that contain "desc".

That tells me in which chapter to find that particular description.

For major recurring characters or places, I often write a description in a separate section of the reverse outline, but for lesser characters who reappear from time to time, this is a major time saver.

A New Story

["Excesses"](#) published yesterday on my Stanbrough Writes Substack.

If you would like to subscribe, click the link and then the Subscribe button at the end of the story. You'll receive a new short story every Friday, and it's free.

Below the Subscribe button, there are other short stories you can read in most genres. Enjoy!

Writing Like a Maniac

a brief guest post and testimony from Philip "Big Philly" Smith

I've been writing like a maniac since I read your Critical Voice book. A few observations and lessons in my experience these past couple weeks.

My characters are better writers than I am. It sounds like woo woo garbage, but it really feels true to say we tap into some sort of Divine Creative Voice and let these characters come to life on the page. I'm thrilled letting them tell ME the story.

That said, I realized the biggest area Critical Voice attacked me was telling me my writing voice was wrong. I love darker fiction, but I can't help but pepper it with humor, both dark and silly. I'd always quit stories in the past because my prose didn't LOOK like the "right" tone of writing.

I realized I have to write in my own unique voice because it's all I have. Let readers decide whether it's right for them or not.

A note about revisions — I realized that our method of cycling—always in creative voice—to create one clean draft is not as sloppy as some might accuse it of being. I strongly believe if you could add up all our cycling revisions, it would equal many drafts. Our fiction is far from sloppy or off the cuff. It's simply more efficiently polished.

I want to finish this novel by 11/15. I set a clear goal and challenge to do that. The lead character already identified himself as a series lead. A series is nothing I ever thought I'd write.

Thanks, Big Philly

Folks, [Quiet the Critical Voice \(and Write Fiction\)](#) is still available free for a limited time. You can read about it at the link. Or just email me to let me know you want it, and be sure to tell me which eformat you want: .mobi, .epub, or .pdf. I'll send it right out.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[Cover Design Services for Indie Creatives](#) Fast service, inexpensive pricing and GREAT covers. Strongly recommended. (Thanks to Philip S for the info.)

[Answering the Vorlon question](#) Deep insights on being human found in a mostly-forgotten gem of 1990s science fiction television. Matt's posts are always interesting. I encourage you to subscribe and exercise your mind.

[Nightmare Fuel: Iterations of the Boogeyman in \(Almost\) Every Country](#) Maybe good reference stuff for local color.

[Creators and Champions Have More in Common Than You Think](#)

[Suspenseful Words of Wisdom](#)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 990

Writing of Blackwell Ops 12: Nick Soldata (novel)

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Day 4..... 3260 words. To date..... 13444
Day 5..... 3175 words. To date..... 16619
Day 6..... 3649 words. To date..... 20268
Day 7..... 3061 words. To date..... 23329
Day 8..... 3705 words. To date..... 27034
Day 9..... 3237 words. To date..... 30271

Fiction for October..... 62311
Fiction for 2023..... 279853
Fiction since August 1..... 165306
Nonfiction for October..... 19410
Nonfiction for the year..... 217750
Annual consumable words..... 497543

2023 Novels to Date..... 5
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 6
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 76
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 234
Short story collections..... 31

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Stanbrough Writing in Public

October 22, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Welcome
- * A New Stanbrough Writing in Public Substack
- * Reminder
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Welcome

Welcome to Drew E and any other new subscribers or readers of the Journal. I hope you will find it useful.

Be sure to check out the Archives and other [free downloads at the Journal website](#). And I don't do the ambush thing requiring an email address. Just click the links and a PDF will download in a new page.

And here's a video where [Vin Zandri and I are chatting about writing](#) and a bunch of other stuff.

A New "Stanbrough Writing in Public" Substack

I currently have two substacks:

In Harvey's (Almost) Daily Journal (<https://harveystanbrough.substack.com/>) I write this Journal. It will continue as-is, morphing over time as the Journal has since I started it 9 years ago (almost to the day).

What I write in the Journal is not for myself. The quotes and feature articles and free giveaways and topics and tips and items in "Of Interest" section are me paying forward what I've learned and know to be true today.

The Journal is for those writers and would-be writers who are coming up behind me. They are for the me who existed 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 year ago.

Among the wisest things I've ever heard is that a fictionist should write stories s/he would like to read, but that don't yet exist. The same is true in instructional nonfiction. I wish fervently I'd found and started reading this Journal all those years ago.

I had found and read Dean Wesley Smith's blog. What I learned there gave me my start as a fiction writer. But today it's mostly promotion and a very thin shadow of its former self. So I'm glad you have the Journal.

Right here is the only place on the internet where you can read regularly about Heinlein's Rules as they were written, and about writing into the dark.

In Stanbrough Writes (<https://stanbroughwrites.substack.com/>) I publish a new short story each week. It too will continue in perpetuity as long as I keep writing and readers keep reading. I can pre-post stories to that one, so it's a little less time-intensive than the Journal.

Now, a New "Stanbrough Writing in Public" Substack

The notion of writing in public has always fascinated me. Doing so is the ultimate test of faith in writing into the dark. For some time I have been considering this notion.

A long while back (I believe before Substack was even a concept), I set up a website devoted to publishing clean (but unrevised and unedited) work as I wrote it.

Now, with Substack as my platform, I've decided to pull the trigger on writing in public again. I was going to wait to see how much interest there was — specifically among you, the readers of the Journal — but I decided this morning I would do it for myself. I very much enjoy personal challenges.

The process won't be quite as transparent as Harlan Ellison sitting behind a department store window and writing short stories on his typewriter (his assistant "posted" them one page at a time against the window) as onlookers watched from the sidewalk, but it will be close.

If you would like to read a novel as it unfolds, one to four chapters at a time (whatever I write that day on the novel), read the introductory post and subscribe at <https://stanbroughwritinginpublic.substack.com/p/a-new-stanbrough-writing-in-public>.

Like my other two substacks, I expect this one will remain free, although [donations are appreciated](#).

Finally, instead of waiting for the next novel to begin, I've decided to leap in.

Beginning this afternoon, I will play catch-up and publish seven chapters per day of the current novel, unrevised and unedited.

On the fourth day, I'll published whatever I've written up to the current point. With any luck, in the final post or two for the current novel, you'll see brand-new chapters.

It won't always be such a deluge. (grin)

Beginning with the next novel, you'll see whatever I actually write on each writing day (probably 1-4 chapters), fresh and new. It will be spell checked, but unrevised and unedited.

'Cause I'm writing into the dark. I hope you'll come along, judge the writing for yourself, and see what is possible.

Reminder

Bradbury participants, remember to get your info in to me by tonight (Sunday) at midnight.

Please try to use this format, no quotation marks, no punctuation:

Story Title 1234 Genre (Link if you want)

Make it easy on yer Uncle Harv. (grin)

Thanks! That's it for today.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

Full disclosure, the first four items below are links to old posts of mine that still hold up. The first three should be read in sequence.

[The Top 7 Mistakes Writers Make](#)

[10 Lesser Mistakes Writers Make](#)

[For Purveyors of the Soup Sandwich](#)

[Top 10 Proofreading Tips](#)

[How Al Capone Criminally Captured Chicago](#)

[The Myth Behind the Writer](#)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 820

Writing of Blackwell Ops 12: Nick Soldata (novel)

Day 1..... 3683 words. To date..... 3683
Day 2..... 3186 words. To date..... 6869
Day 3..... 3315 words. To date..... 10184
Day 4..... 3260 words. To date..... 13444
Day 5..... 3175 words. To date..... 16619
Day 6..... 3649 words. To date..... 20268
Day 7..... 3061 words. To date..... 23329
Day 8..... 3705 words. To date..... 27034
Day 9..... 3237 words. To date..... 30271
Day 10.... 3566 words. To date..... 33837

Fiction for October..... 65877
Fiction for 2023..... 283419
Fiction since August 1..... 168872
Nonfiction for October..... 20230

Nonfiction for the year.....	218570
Annual consumable words.....	501929
2023 Novels to Date.....	5
2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
2023 Short Stories to Date.....	6
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	76
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	234
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Commitment, Me Writing in Public, and More

October 23, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Welcome
- * Blackwell Ops 12: Nick Soldata is LIVE! (Me writing in public)
- * On Commitment
- * Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Welcome

Welcome to Sylvia A, Jason C, Bob B, Jennifer Z, Mary F, and any other new subscribers or readers of the Journal. I hope you will find it useful.

Be sure to check out the Archives and other [free downloads at the Journal website](#). And I don't do the ambush thing requiring an email address. Just click the links and a PDF will download in a new page.

And here's a video where [Vin Zandri and I are chatting about writing](#) and a bunch of other stuff.

Blackwell Ops 12: Nick Soldata is LIVE!

I posted the first TEN chapters of my current novel yesterday at my [Harvey Stanbrough Writing in Public](#) substack.

I actually slipped and posted the segment early, at around 11 a.m. From now on I'll post at 4 p.m. Arizona time.

I also posted Chapters 11 through 20 to go live at 4 p.m. today, and finally Chapters 21 through 26 (only six chapters!) to go live at 4 p.m. on the 24th. Finally caught up with myself. (grin)

I waited too long to pull the trigger on this, hence the big batches. On my next novel, I'll post whatever I write that day, usually three or four chapters. Unrevised and unedited. Just writing into the dark. In public.

On Commitment

I have a couple more guest posts in the queue, and I'll get to them over the next couple weeks. But for now....

On October 18 I read an article titled "Writer's Guilt."

The post started with, "We talk about treating the process of writing as if it were a job...."

From there the author preaches (sorry, no more appropriate word) about commitment: We made a commitment to our family, our spouse, our friends, whomever. His point is that writing fiction always should come second or even third to all of that.

Maybe the author would still feel the same if he was just another fiction writer playing in the sandbox with the rest of us. I don't know. But he isn't. He's one of the few who slipped in through the closing door of traditional publishing to land a life-changing amount of money as an advance for his first novel.

Three days after that post hit the airways, the author's take still bothered me. But I'd also listed it in "Of Interest," and just in case you read it, I wanted you to see this too:

For the professional fiction writer, sometimes the writing (just like the job of a plumber or cop or mechanic or carpenter or lawyer) has to take precedence. Because if you're serious about being a writer, writing is a commitment too.

It's all a matter of priorities in the moment. The fact that we enjoy writing doesn't make it any less important or any less of a commitment.

Absolutes never pass my test of reality. If I would be better off writing (Scott Carpenter's WIBBOW rule), I do my job and write fiction.

Fortunately, my family understands that, just as they understood when I was a cop or a jarhead and couldn't leave in mid-shift or come in from a live missile shoot to tend to their needs.

Yes, my wife and I made a commitment to each other, but we also trust in each other's judgment and, as they say, we each do what we gotta do.

I'm fortunate in that I write pretty much 7 days a week. I never received (or sought) a life-changing advance for any of my work, though I'm glad the author of the article did and I wouldn't turn it down. Make no mistake: if anyone offered me high six figures for even my Wes Crowley series, I'd sell my rights in a heartbeat. (grin)

After all, I've already had the pleasure of watching the story unfold. But I write as much and as often as I do because I enjoy writing.

Just because I work from my office near my home (about 150 feet) doesn't mean I don't love my family or want to be around them or that my commitment to them is slipping. It only means I'm at work, albeit doing what I love.

Which I guess is a long-winded way to say Different Strokes. If you're an adult, you set your own priorities and you juggle your commitments. And yes, comments are welcome.

Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting

Anyone can jump in (or jump back in) and join the challenge at any time. Even if you miss a week in your personal challenge and break your streak, you can always jump back in the next week and start a new one.

This is a great way to jumpstart your writing and get more practice pushing down the critical voice.

There's no cost.

Notice, there's no pressure re submitting or publishing. That's up to you. The point of the challenge is to have fun. Learning to keep track of your writing is a bonus.

During the past week, in addition to whatever other fiction they're writing, the following writers reported their progress:

Short Fiction

- Erin Donoho "The Christmas Gift" 2100 Historical fiction
- George Kordonis "The Invited Guest" 2234 Urban Fantasy
- Chynna Pace "Rake Day Misadventures" 9210 Portal Fantasy
- Christopher Ridge "Big Ass Spider" 3300 Horror
- K.C. Riggs "Octopus Dreams" 4179 Anthropomorphic Magic Realism (grin)
- Frank Theodat "[Wired for Compliance](#)" 1940 SpecFic

Longer Fiction

- Alexander Nakul *Horses of Mayhem* 11963 Historical fantasy (58070 total to date)

My Streak Is Ongoing

Thus far on my current novel, I've written every day and I've hit my daily word-count goal of at least 3000 words per day. Man, that feels good! (grin)

And of course, the streak drives me to keep it going. Seriously, how much fun is one guy allowed to have?

That's it for this time, but I might be announcing a new challenge (proposed by another writer) soon. Stay tuned!

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[Going Forward \(The Pulp Fictioneer\)](#) Frank T talks a little about me and the Writing in Public thing, but he also mentions some other things you might be interested in.

[Flash Sale for "The Remains" the Amazon Editors Pick, plus free Audio Codes, and New Vella](#)

[Crashed And Burned](#)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1030

Writing of Blackwell Ops 12: Nick Soldata (novel)

Day 1..... 3683 words. To date..... 3683
Day 2..... 3186 words. To date..... 6869
Day 3..... 3315 words. To date..... 10184
Day 4..... 3260 words. To date..... 13444
Day 5..... 3175 words. To date..... 16619
Day 6..... 3649 words. To date..... 20268
Day 7..... 3061 words. To date..... 23329
Day 8..... 3705 words. To date..... 27034
Day 9..... 3237 words. To date..... 30271
Day 10.... 3566 words. To date..... 33837
Day 11.... 3033 words. To date..... 36870

Fiction for October..... 68910
Fiction for 2023..... 286452
Fiction since August 1..... 171905
Nonfiction for October..... 21260

Nonfiction for the year.....	219600
Annual consumable words.....	505992
2023 Novels to Date.....	5
2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
2023 Short Stories to Date.....	6
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	76
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	234
Short story collections.....	31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark and adherence to Heinlein's Rules. Unreasoning fear and the myths of writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

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Two Glitches, an Epiphany, and NaNoWriMo

October 24, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Two Glitches
- * Welcome
- * A New Epiphany
- * NaNoWriMo Is Coming! *Duck!*
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Two Glitches

1. I learned that at least one subscriber did not receive Chapters 1 – 10 of Nick Soldata. (it's titled only Blackwell Ops: 12 Nick Soldata.) If you didn't receive it, you can view it at <https://stanbroughwritinginpublic.substack.com/p/blackwell-ops-12-nick-soldata>.

If you didn't received 11 – 20, you can view that at <https://stanbroughwritinginpublic.substack.com/p/blackwell-ops-12-chapters-11-through>.

2. Also, subscribers will receive 21 – 26 TODAY at around 10 a.m. AZ time, 27 – 30 TODAY around 1 p.m., then whatever I write today at 4 p.m. Otherwise, I'll have to wait until all of this one has gone out to start writing my next novel. And I don't want to wait. I want to keep my streak going. (grin)

Sorry for the inundation, but if I nip it in the bud this time, beginning tomorrow chapters will go out on the day I write them.

Welcome

Welcome to Carol P and any other new subscribers or readers of the Journal. I hope you will find it useful.

Be sure to check out the Archives and other [free downloads](#) at the Journal website. And I don't do the ambush thing requiring an email address. Just click the links and a PDF will download in a new page.

If you wanna see my tired old mug, here's a video where [Vin Zandri and I are chatting about writing](#) and a bunch of other stuff.

A New Epiphany

Yesterday, I wrote and then posted all-new material for the novel (four chapters, 27 – 30) an epiphany came over me: I was actually *more eager* to write than I'd been before. I honestly didn't think that was possible. But it makes perfect sense.

Writing into the dark, having zero idea where the story's going or what will happen next, is exhilarating.

And doing so in public, letting the world see that writing as it comes directly from the characters through my fingertips and out onto the page on my word processor, is even more exhilarating.

So by the simple act of trusting myself and my characters, writing into the dark and then posting it to substack as I go, might actually make me even more productive and more prolific than I've ever been before. Go figure. [Vin Zandri](#) has said he uses Vella to keep himself writing. I guess my new Writing in Public substack does that for me.

Many folks won't even try writing into the dark because they experience fear. The fear takes many forms, but most of the time it boils down to What if what I write is no good? (a value judgment) or What if the readers don't like it? (another value judgment).

I experienced that too in the beginning. But I took a deep breath and realized a story or novel is only a few minutes' or hours' entertainment for the reader, nothing more "important" than that.

That's why today I try to teach other writers that what's important is THAT you write, not WHAT you write.

And I took the plunge into writing into the dark. Though I admit I did so only to prove to myself that it couldn't possibly work for me.

Now, 76 novels, 9 novellas and over 230 short stories later, I realize that was an unreasoning fear. After all, if I “failed,” absolutely nothing bad would happen.

Nobody would come to my house to visit harm on me, and in a more literary sense, readers never remember what they read that they don’t like. They only remember (and look for more) of what they DO like. So it made sense to keep writing, keep learning, and keep turning out work that was better, bit by bit.

If you’re still frozen solid with fear at the idea of writing a story or a novel without knowing where it’s going, I urge you to take the plunge as I did only 9 years ago.

Yes, I wrote all that in only 9 years, and really in only 7 years because I took a couple of those years off.

I’m telling you, folks, letting go of all those “rules” people pound you with and Just Writing is a lot more fun than outlining, revising, seeking advice from critique groups, rewriting ad nauseam.

If you give it an honest and even skeptical try, you’ll soon find out writing into the dark is the most fun you can have with your clothes on. And you’ll thank your lucky stars you happened across it.

I promise.

I’m also very much looking forward to my next novel. No idea what it will be, but I will spell-check it and post it as I write it each day. Exhilaration cubed. It’s gonna be a ton of fun.

NaNoWriMo Is Coming! Duck!

Another writer reminded me that NaNoWriMo is on the horizon. I have to say, I’m not a fan.

Mostly because the folks who run NaNoWriMo tell participants they should “write sloppy” and “just get the words on the page.” Then they can “fix it” later. Strictly along the stiff, unbendable lines of the myths.

And I’m tellin’ you, that advice is a crock’a crap.

If you had to fill a large hole with gravel, would you load a wheelbarrow with your shovel, transport it only part way toward the hole, then dump it? Then come back “later” to load it again and carry it the rest of the way?

Of course not. That seems like a lot of extra and unnecessary work to me. I’m way too lazy to touch work twice when I don’t have to.

Write your story or novel as cleanly as you can the first time through. You can write 50,000 words in a month by devoting an hour and a half to two hours per day to the process.

You only have to write 1667 words per day to reach 50,000 words in a month. It ain't that hard, especially if you just write whatever comes. But if you only have a half-hour or an hour per day to write, use it to write. You'll be amazed how quickly the numbers add up.

If you participate in NaNo — or even if you don't — trust yourself and your characters, write whatever comes, and just have fun with it. But write it as cleanly as you can the first time through. Then publish or submit it and move on to the next story or novel.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[How to Exclaim!](#)

[What the Well-Dressed Spy May Soon Be Wearing](#)

[Don't Be Afraid to Fail](#)

[A Treatise on the State of Middle Grade and Young Adult Publishing Today](#) If you're a middle-grade or YA writer you might check this out.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1100

Writing of Blackwell Ops 12: Nick Soldata (novel)

Day 1..... 3683 words. To date..... 3683
Day 2..... 3186 words. To date..... 6869
Day 3..... 3315 words. To date..... 10184
Day 4..... 3260 words. To date..... 13444
Day 5..... 3175 words. To date..... 16619
Day 6..... 3649 words. To date..... 20268
Day 7..... 3061 words. To date..... 23329
Day 8..... 3705 words. To date..... 27034
Day 9..... 3237 words. To date..... 30271
Day 10.... 3566 words. To date..... 33837
Day 11.... 3033 words. To date..... 36870
Day 12.... 4327 words. To date..... 41197

Fiction for October..... 73237
Fiction for 2023..... 290779
Fiction since August 1..... 176232
Nonfiction for October..... 22360

Nonfiction for the year.....	220700
Annual consumable words.....	511419
2023 Novels to Date.....	5
2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
2023 Short Stories to Date.....	6
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	76
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	234
Short story collections.....	31

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Critical Voice vs. Creative Voice: How Can You Tell?

October 25, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * The Streak Continues
- * Critical Voice vs. Creative Voice: How Can You Tell?
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“It’s a rare and wonderful thing to watch a successful writer build something right in front of you. Lean into this opportunity, it’s a good one!” J. Kevin Tumlinson, on Johnny B. Truant’s post asking whether anyone wants to watch him write a novel “live” on Substack. (I guess Kevin didn’t hear about mine yet [sigh])

And the grin of the day....

“New From PerkyDan Products: A I

“My new Appropriated Intelligence machine allows anyone to become almost a writer as fast as you can tap your fingers on the ‘copy’ button. Novels, short stories, screenplays, poems, blogs, letters to the editor, and notes to that cute blonde down the street are yours instantly and in the style of your favorite writer.

“Shakespeare, Dickens, Poe, Twain, King... hell, even King James... are all yours for the plucking. And no one will ever know!

“You’ve always wanted to be a writer. Here’s your opportunity to almost get there. Remember, even if you can’t get it right, you can still get it write – with Appropriated Intelligence from PerkyDan Products.”

Dan Baldwin, PerkyDan Products

The Streak Continues

I thought I had missed my 3000-word goal yesterday, but when I did the math I surpassed it by... ready? Nine words.

I *did* send only two chapters to the readers of the Writing in Public substack though: 31 and 32. Today I’ll finish 33. Then at 4 p.m. today I’ll send whatever I write during the day.

Critical Voice vs. Creative Voice: How Can You Tell?

I received a great question from a fellow writer. Here’s an excerpt from his email:

“I have a problem finishing longer works. I’ve only ever finished short stories (55 stories in the last couple years). I’m 7k words into the ‘novel’ I wrote you about yesterday, and my lead is telling me it’s time to wrap up this mystery and move onto his next case.

“Is this my creative voice telling me I’m simply a short story writer or is it my critical voice killing me being a novelist? How do I discern?”

Great question, and one I also used to struggle with.

Short answer: I suspect it’s your critical voice.

The critical voice is always negative. Always. If something’s “telling” you to wrap up the story, that almost has to be critical voice. It’s telling you to stop writing, and creative voice would never do that.

In fact, I can’t imagine a character telling the writer the end of the story is even near. The characters are **LIVING** the story. They don’t know how or when it will end either.

The characters will lead you through to the end, but they won’t say “Hey, the end is coming” or “Hey, it’s time to think about wrapping this story.” They just won’t.

If it **IS** your critical voice, it isn’t trying to kill you being a novelist. It’s trying to kill you being a writer.

Short stories are easier to write in only one respect: You can have the whole story (or most of it) in mind the whole time you're writing. When you're writing a longer work, you really have to trust your creative voice and your characters, and Just Write.

And there's no real-world risk involved. Nobody's gonna come to your house and thump on you if they don't like your story. The story isn't important. What matters is that you enjoy writing it (and experiencing it) as you run through it with your characters.

For the writer, it's a win-win situation. Even if you never publish your story or novel, YOU are the first person in the world to have witnessed and enjoyed that story. That's pretty cool.

The only other difference between a short story and a longer work is that the short story is about One Event and the characters' reaction to it.

A novella or novel or novel series is exactly the same thing except it's about more than one event and it keeps going. And no, you won't know what the other events even are until you get there and the characters reveal them.

I know all of this from personal experience.

If I hadn't taken a deep breath and forced myself to trust my creative voice and my characters back in 2014, I still would never have written a novel.

My best advice is to let the story be however long or short it wants to be.

Would your character maybe go back to his office, do whatever he does there to pass the time, set a new record for the time he catches a tennis ball he banks off the floor and then the wall and catches? Flirts with his secretary or whatever? And then another call comes in within a day or two or a week? That's how my Stern Talbot mysteries are.

That's also kind'a what the POV characters do in my Blackwell Ops series. The POV character goes from one high-tension assignment to the next with some relaxing "down time" for the reader (climbing a hill in a roller coaster) in the times in between as readers see the guy living his non-tension life.

Then a new assignment comes in, and blam! the roller coaster plunges down a steep hill toward another set of twists and turns. If that's your POV character, maybe continue in the same book. (Many of my novels in all genres really are collections of short stories).

You can also run through several stories, each in its own novella or novel, with the same POV character. In that format, your main guy would get a new assignment with each book. Then you're back to letting the story be whatever length it needs to be.

As for how to tell the difference between critical voice and creative voice: If it's a tiny, quiet, internal voice, and if it isn't negative, it's probably the character.

Are you really bored with the story? (If so, maybe you aren't simply running through it with the characters and writing down what happens and what they say and do in response.)

Or are you just anxious to move on to the next part of the story? (If so, either close out the book and start the next one or just start the next chapter.)

I've found that if you trust the characters and just follow them through the story, they will lead you to a well-duh ending where there's no doubt in your mind.

Finally, here's some of the best advice I ever got from Dean Wesley Smith. This might be just what you need: If you get to a place where you feel "stuck," but you also feel there's more story to tell, take a deep breath and Just Write the Next Sentence, whatever comes, then the next and the next. Very soon the story will be racing along again.

I hope this helps. Any questions, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

Nothing today

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1180

Writing of Blackwell Ops 12: Nick Soldata (novel)

Day 11.... 3033 words. To date..... 36870

Day 12.... 4327 words. To date..... 41197

Day 13.... 3009 words. To date..... 44206

Fiction for October..... 76246

Fiction for 2023..... 293788

Fiction since August 1..... 179241

Nonfiction for October..... 23540

Nonfiction for the year..... 221880

Annual consumable words..... 515608

2023 Novels to Date..... 5

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 6

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 76

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 234
Short story collections..... 31

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Finished the Novel, Writing in Public, and Much More

October 26, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Welcome
- * Finished the Novel
- * In Case You Missed It
- * A Bit of Self-Promotion
- * Suspending Guest Posts
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“It’s a rare and wonderful thing to watch a successful writer build something right in front of you. Lean into this opportunity, it’s a good one!” J. Kevin Tumlinson (repeating this to fit with the info below)

Welcome

Welcome to Alexander N and any other new subscribers or readers of the Journal. I hope you will find it useful.

Get the Archives and other [free downloads at the Journal website](#). And I don't do the ambush thing requiring an email address. Just click the links and a PDF will download in a new page.

If you wanna see my tired old mug, here's a video where [Vin Zandri and I are chatting about writing](#) and a bunch of other stuff.

Finished the Novel

The novel wrapped yesterday at about 7 a.m. with only 1307 words.

I thought my little streak of writing fiction every day would end at 14 days. That would have been fine. I often take a day or two off before I begin a new novel.

But around 8 a.m., a thought popped into my head. I turned to the keyboard again and started writing.

This will (probably) be a one-off novel, though my characters have a way of starting series, and I never know until the first novel ends. (grin) But I'm not complaining. It's a good problem to have.

The title of the new novel is The Hell Minder. The word count thus far is below, in Numbers. So I met today's word count goal too, with a total of 4137 words between the previous novel and the new one. (grin) That'll work.

And as promised, I'll post whatever I write on the new novel at 4 p.m. this afternoon on the Writing in Public substack. Sounds like it might be a really good read for this time of year, what with Hallowe'en coming up. (grin)

In Case You Missed It

I learned only yesterday that despite my having posted "A New 'Stanbrough Writing in Public' Substack" in this Journal on October 22, it wasn't listed in my substack posts.

I finally figured out why. Apparently Substack tagged it as going out on October 21. And maybe didn't send it to Journal subscribers.

[If you missed it, you can read that post here.](#)

That led me to double-check to see whether they'd sent the extra posts in the Writing in Public series I sent out on October 23. I think they did, but just in case, here's every post, in order, that I've sent from the Writing in Public substack:

[Blackwell Ops 12: Nick Soldata](#) (Chapters 1 – 10)

[Blackwell Ops 12: Chapters 11 through 20](#)

[Blackwell Ops 12: Chapters 21 through 26](#)

[Blackwell Ops 12: Chapter 27 through 30](#)

[Blackwell Ops 12: Chapters 31, 32](#) (When you get there, yes, I'm aware of the typo in the title. grin)

[Blackwell Ops 12 Ends: Chapters 33 and 34](#)

And that brings it all up to date. Thanks for your patience.

If you aren't already subscribed, hit the [Subscribe button](#) at the bottom of any of those and you'll get to see the beginning of *The Hell Minder* today at 4 p.m., published on Substack as I write it.

It will be only a few chapters per day, so maybe 15 minutes of reading. I only wish some of my writing mentors had done this sort of thing.

I do realize most of you are writers

And I know better than anyone you can't sell other fiction writers on reading your fiction.

But since I'm also your writing instructor, part of the reason I'm writing into the dark in public is so you can

1. see that I practice what I preach and it actually works, and
2. so you can possibly learn something that might be new to you from the guy whom you trust to teach you writing.

Come along and have some fun. (grin)

First Review

Of *Blackwell Ops 12: Nick Soldata*—my first reader, who keeps me from looking like a complete dweeb, wrote this note:

“In reading this, I became consciously aware for the first time how everything you write—all of the descriptions of settings and people, all the activities along the way of researching the target, dealing with whatever intermediary the protagonist has to deal with for information, weaponry, etc., all of the protagonist's thought processes as he's considering his options and making his plans—all slowly but inexorably build tension and suspense until the moment of the hit.”

Thank you, Russ. Good to hear.

Suspending Guest Posts

For the time being, I'm suspending and/or postponing publication of guest posts in the Journal. Apologies for any inconvenience. I'm having trouble fitting them in.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[Wrong Number Text Scam](#)

[Vin Zandri chats with Frank Theodat](#)

[... On Intellectual Property And Ownership](#) IP defined, etc.

[Totally Different Careers](#)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 820

Writing of The Hell Minder (novel)

Day 1..... 2830 words. To date..... 2830

Writing of Blackwell Ops 12: Nick Soldata (novel)

Day 1..... 3683 words. To date..... 3683
Day 2..... 3186 words. To date..... 6869
Day 3..... 3315 words. To date..... 10184
Day 4..... 3260 words. To date..... 13444
Day 5..... 3175 words. To date..... 16619
Day 6..... 3649 words. To date..... 20268
Day 7..... 3061 words. To date..... 23329
Day 8..... 3705 words. To date..... 27034
Day 9..... 3237 words. To date..... 30271
Day 10.... 3566 words. To date..... 33837
Day 11.... 3033 words. To date..... 36870
Day 12.... 4327 words. To date..... 41197
Day 13.... 3009 words. To date..... 44206
Day 14.... 1307 words. To date..... 45513 (done)

Fiction for October..... 80383
Fiction for 2023..... 297925
Fiction since August 1..... 183378
Nonfiction for October..... 24360
Nonfiction for the year..... 222700
Annual consumable words..... 520565

2023 Novels to Date..... 6
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 6
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 77
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 234
Short story collections..... 31

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A Short Post Today

October 27, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Welcome
- * No Joy on "The Hell Minder"
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

"People don't want to buy a quarter-inch drill, they want a quarter-inch hole." Theodore Levitt

Welcome

Welcome to Irene M, Bella G, and any other new subscribers or readers of the Journal. I hope you will find it useful.

[Get the Archives and other free downloads](#) at the Journal website. And I don't do the ambush thing requiring an email address. Just click the links and a PDF will download in a new page.

If you wanna see my tired old mug, [here's a video where Vin Zandri](#) and I are chatting about writing and a bunch of other stuff.

No Joy on "The Hell Minder"

Well, I was wrong. See the quotation marks around the title? That's a hint.

"The Hell Minder" doesn't have the legs to be a novel, or even a novella. Probably never did, but it became apparent soon after I started writing it. It wrapped yesterday afternoon.

Turns out it's a short story. So this one won't be going live on the Writing in Public website, but it will appear eventually in the Stanbrough Writes (a new short story every week on Friday) substack at some point in the future.

Today's story — "By His Own Bad Mind" — is already set to go out at 10 a.m., and it's as appropriate for this time of year as "The Hell Minder" is.

Today I'll move into another Blackwell Ops novel. Seems entirely appropriate to start the 13th novel in a series during October. (grin)

To begin the paragraph above, I almost wrote "With a little luck." But we all know luck has nothing to do with it. Here's the equation: Butt + Chair + Fingers on Keyboard = Writing Fiction.

And I'm anxious to get started, so a short post today.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[Wrong Number Text Scam](#)

[John Carpenter suspends natural law until the end of October](#) All about Horror.

[Eggcorn](#) Like "plodder" for "plotter." Grin.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 310

Writing of "The Hell Minder"

Day 1..... 2830 words. To date..... 2830

Day 2..... 3178 words. To date..... 6008 (done)

Fiction for October..... 83561

Fiction for 2023..... 301103

Fiction since August 1..... 186556

Nonfiction for October..... 24670

Nonfiction for the year..... 223010

Annual consumable words..... 524053

2023 Novels to Date..... 6

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 7

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 77

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 235

Short story collections..... 31

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How to Write in the Other Voice

October 28, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Welcome
- * A New Story
- * Blackwell Ops 13: Jenna Crowley
- * Writing in the Other Voice
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Bringing good news is imparting hope to one's fellow man. The idea of redemption is always good news, even if it means sacrifice or some difficult times.” Patti Smith

Good news? See today's topic on Writing in the Other Voice. (grin)

A New Story

“By His Own Bad Mind” published yesterday on my [Stanbrough Writes Substack](#).

If you would like to subscribe, click the link above and then the Subscribe button at the end of the story. You'll receive a new short story every Friday, and it's free.

Below the Subscribe button, there are other short stories you can read in most genres. Enjoy!

Blackwell Ops 13: Jenna Crowley

The prologue and first two chapters of my new novel went live yesterday too. Again, free.

If you want to watch the story unfold in as close as you can get to real time, go to <https://stanbroughwritinginpublic.substack.com/p/blackwell-ops-13-jenna-crowley>

Again, this is free.

I don't plot or plan, and I don't revise, rewrite or edit. I do minimal cycling as I write (still in the creative voice) then publish each day's work as I write it.

If you enjoy what you see, click the subscribe button at the bottom of the excerpt and follow along.

Oh, and for any fans of Wes Crowley and the Wes Crowley saga, yes, Jenna is his descendant. She isn't quite sure whether he's her fourth or fifth great-grandfather, but she reveres him and refers to him as her Grandpa Wes. (grin) I was tickled pink.

Writing in the Other Voice

Can a male write in the voice of a female character? Can a female write in the voice of a male character?

The answer to both is Yes.

I'm writing the current novel in the voice of POV character Jenna Crowley, and I've also written Blackwell Ops novels in the voices of

- Marie Arceneaux — a Cajun, the POVC of Book 3,
- Melanie Slone — the POVC of Book 4, and
- Georgette Tilden — the wife of Operative Jack Tilden (Book 1) and POVC of Book 5.

And of course I've written from a female POV voice in other novels and short stories, including the short story that posted yesterday, "In His Own Bad Mind."

And so can you write in the other voice.

Remember, your "job" is to write in the voice of the POV character, male or female.

That's yet one more benefit of trusting yourself and your characters and writing into the dark.

If you're writing into the dark, you don't pick your POV character. You just write the story.

Believe me, I don't know what it's like to be a female. But Jenna Crowley, the POV character in my newest WIP does.

So how did I learn? The same way all of you did.

Every man out there has been around females all his life: mother, sisters, aunts, neices, nurses or doctors, store cashiers, bank tellers, et al. Females are or have been everywhere in your daily life.

And the same holds true for the women out there. Males of various ages and in various occupations and/or familial roles are or have been everywhere in your everyday life.

And whichever gender you are, you have learned and absorbed the traits and characteristics of the other gender, along with quirks, speech patterns, voice inflections, little tics and gestures, facial expressions, and so on. The list is endless. And you did all that without even knowing it.

Which brings us back to writing into the dark. If you trust yourself and what you know (even if you aren't yet aware you know it) and trust your characters, you can write anything in any voice.

If on the other hand you can't bring yourself to trust yourself and your characters — if you have to plot and plan and outline and revise and ask advice from critique-group members and rewrite and all that — You Will Never Get an Other's Voice Right.

You will think you did, and others will tell you that you did, but believe me, you didn't. You can't "think" your way into your own mind, much less the mind of anyone else, and much less the mind of anyone in the other gender.

You just can't. Because if you're plotting and planning, you're calling on the conscious, critical mind, and it doesn't have a clue about what it's like to be the other gender.

But you don't have to believe me. If you're a male (or a female) go ahead and tell a female (or male) you know what it's like to be the other gender. Chances are, they'll laugh you out of the room. And rightly so.

The conscious mind can wonder about and think about and dream up conjectures about something you will never be, but it can never TRUST that it quite believes any of its own conjectures. If it did, no revision or rewrites or checking with critique-group members would be necessary.

The creative subconscious, on the other hand, is like a curious four year old. It simply goes with the flow. It absorbs whatever's around it (the voice, actions, traits and characteristics, etc. of the other) without you even realizing it.

While we're on the topic, can you write in the voice of an-other culture?

Yes, of course. Especially if you've been immersed in that culture, or if you've spent a lot of time around others (including members of the culture) who have.

Again, subconsciously you absorb everything around you: everything you see, hear, taste, smell or touch and intuit. And you aren't "appropriating" anything. You're just telling a story.

Witness all the stories and novels I've written that are imbued with Mexico and Japan and other cultures and the people who live there.

But are there stereotypes?

OF COURSE. ALL characters (and all humans the first time you meet them) are stereotypes at first, until you hang around long enough to see how unique and authentic they are.

I'm not saying WITD is the "only way to write," though my detractors — every one of which is an outliner, planner and plotter — will tell you that I am. That is a conscious-mind conjecture, solidly based on fear of what they don't understand and will staunchly try NOT to understand. And it's just stupid. Of course there's another way to write. But it's grotesque and laborious.

I'm simply saying writing into the dark is a much more open, freeing, and fun way to write. And it's far more honest to boot. If you write into the dark, you can only write the actual, authentic story.

Or as I wrote in the brief into to the Writing in Public substack post of Blackwell Ops 13, "What you see here is what happened there."

I'm not even suggesting you actually write into the dark. I'm only saying that, for your own benefit, you should give it a real, honest try and find out for yourself.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[3 Things](#)

[The Rise of Impersonation Scams](#)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1190

Writing of Blackwell Ops 13: Jenna Crowley

Day 1..... 3815 words. To date.....3815

Fiction for October..... 87376
Fiction for 2023..... 304918
Fiction since August 1..... 190371
Nonfiction for October..... 25860
Nonfiction for the year..... 224200
Annual consumable words..... 529058

2023 Novels to Date..... 6
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 7
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 77

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 235
Short story collections..... 31

[Help keep the Journal going](#) with either a one-time or a recurring monthly donation via debit or credit card or PayPal. Thank you!

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark and adherence to Heinlein's Rules. Unreasoning fear and the myths of writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

The Fear is Pervasive, and The Known Universe

October 29, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Welcome
- * The Fear is Pervasive
- * From Dr. Mardy Groethe's Quotes of the Week
- * Map of the Known Universe
- * Reminder
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

"The only place success comes before work is in the dictionary." Vince Lombardi

The Fear is Pervasive

As I shared yesterday's substack post to my Twitter account, I noticed a post just below. I try not to notice because the fear of getting it "wrong" and the myths of writing are so pervasive.

The author wrote,

"If your character is seven years old in your first novel, CAN you skip to adulthood for Book 2? My heart just can't feel a story for him as a teen, etc. No matter how hard I try, I can't. Do all characters NEED a middle story? Especially if it's just not in the author's heart?"

See? This crap is all over the place. It's like a cancer, except it spreads faster.

One respondent, a male, wrote, "That's what flashbacks are for."

Another, a female, wrote, “The key for me is whether there are any significant events that shape him as an adult. ...”

Seriously? OF COURSE there are significant events in the character’s childhood and adolescence that shape who s/he will become in adulthood. Freakin’ DUH!

This sort of nonsense drives me crazy.

Understand, I’m not saying you should think about or figure out or divine whatever pre-adolescent and-or adolescent experiences might have contributed to the character’s behavior as an adult and then be sure to work those into the plot, either as flashbacks or in sequence and chronologically.

I’m saying it isn’t your story. It’s your characters’ story. They are actually living it. So take it easy on yourself. Run through the story with them and just write what happens and how the characters react to that. FAR easier than fretting and worrying over what to include or “what happens next.”

Even if some of it seems boring to you, the writer, when you write it, leave it alone. If it wasn’t important to the characters (and therefore wouldn’t become important to the story somewhere farther along) the character wouldn’t have included it.

My response to that writer was brief: “I suggest you stop trying to think your way through it. After all, the character, not you, is actually living the story. For a great deal more, visit <https://hestanbrough.com>.”

If I had it, I’d bet a billion dollars that writer will never show up here. The fear is just too great.

Hey, you can lead ’em to knowledge — or sometimes not — but you can’t make ’em think. Or stop thinking.

But all of that’s fine. It’s one reason I don’t read writer boards, most writer websites, and pretty much any of the “advice” books out there. I don’t need the aggravation.

It’s also why, after some would-be or brand new writer lectures me about how to write fiction, I can smile, say “Well, enjoy,” and walk away with my own knowledge intact. No doubts, no worries, no fears.

For the much larger, more all-inclusive reason, be sure to read “Map of the Known Universe” below.

Kudos and blessings on you all for having the fortitude to stand up on your own hind legs and at least try to face the unknown.

From [Dr. Mardy Groethe's Quotes of the Week](#)

“For nearly 2,000 memorable opening lines from every genre of world literature, go to www.GreatOpeningLines.com. And if you'd like to receive a daily dose of outstanding openers, follow me on [Facebook](#).

Dr. Mardy is a great source for quote and other information of interest to writers. I strongly recommend his newsletter and other offerings.

Map of the Known Universe

On the wall of my office, I used to have the National Geographic Map of the Known Universe.

On it, our entire solar system was displayed as a minuscule yellow dot labeled “Sol.” It was barely larger than a pin prick.

Our nearest neighbor, Alpha Centauri, was displayed too, and to scale it was only a quarter-inch away on the map.

Yet in reality, the Alpha Centauri system is almost four and a half light years away.

And it dawned on me that if Earth suddenly and magnificently exploded into stardust, not only would any intelligent souls on Alpha Centauri care, they wouldn't even notice.

That realization humbled me. In the overall scheme, if even our entire world is that insignificant, what possible difference can I make?

Bringing it back to our ridiculously petty human concerns, this is why it's so easy for me to say I don't really care how anyone else writes. We all write to entertain someone.

I write to entertain myself first, then any readers who sample and enjoy my work. And that's true whether I'm talking about fiction, any of my nonfiction books, or this Journal.

Might as well take the easiest path to writing and entertaining. That is trusting the characters to live the story they're living, and trusting yourself to record it accurately.

Lest you think me a sky-is-falling kind of guy, nothing could be further from the truth. To me, this isn't a bleak picture at all. It's simply a humbling fact.

And given all the discord in the States and in the world today, it makes me endlessly happy that our ineptitude at space travel will keep all that discord right here among us instead of it spreading to other worlds.

Reminder

All of you participating in the Bradbury Challenge, be sure to get your story info in to me by tonight at midnight. I'll check first thing Monday morning.

Of course, "first thing" might occur at a few minutes after midnight, but probably not while the World Series is going on.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[Six Things Writers Need To Stop Worrying About](#) This was Konrath's last blog for a long while and I've recommended it often, but he's back now. (See below)

[J A Konrath is back](#) I strongly recommend following this blog.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1010

Writing of Blackwell Ops 13: Jenna Crowley

Day 1..... 3815 words. To date.....3815

Day 2..... 3116 words. To date..... 6931

Fiction for October..... 90492

Fiction for 2023..... 308034

Fiction since August 1..... 193487

Nonfiction for October..... 26870

Nonfiction for the year..... 225210

Annual consumable words..... 533184

2023 Novels to Date..... 6

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 7

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 77

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 235

Short story collections..... 31

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On Being Unstuck in Time, a New Template, and More

October 30, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Welcome
- * Session Three Posted
- * A New Short Story, Novella, Novel Template
- * Tumbleweed (Russian Thistle) Flowers
- * On Being Unstuck in Time in a Novel
- * Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“I became my own shrink and asked myself, ‘What is your ultimate fear in writing?’ Answer is no one will read my work. Well, no one is reading it when it sits unfinished and/or unpublished, so it's a self-fulfilling prophecy.” Philip “Big Philly” Smith

Welcome

Welcome to Kimberly S, Hugh W, and any other new subscribers or readers of the Journal. I hope you will find it useful.

[Get the Archives and other free downloads](#) at the Journal website. And I don't do the ambush thing requiring an email address. Just click the links and a PDF will download in a new page.

If you wanna see my tired old mug, here's [a video where Vin Zandri and I](#) are chatting about writing and a bunch of other stuff.

Session Three Posted

I seem to be in a two-chapters-per day cycle with this novel. I posted a short prologue and the first two chapters three days ago. [You can see that session here.](#)

Then two days ago I posted Chapters 3 and 4. [You can find that session here.](#)

And yesterday I posted Chapters 5 and 6. [You can find that session here.](#)

And no, I won't be posting info on new sessions every day. (grin) I just wanted to give you a boost in case you wanted to get into this story early.

My streak of 3000+ word days is unbroken since I started my previous novel on October 13, so 17 days so far without a miss. (I only wrote 1307 words on that one to wrap it, but I also wrote another 2830 words that day on "The Hell Minder.")

Woohoo!

A New Short Story, Novella, Novel Template

I've come up with a new, simplified template for use with short stories, novellas or novels.

[To get it free, simply email me.](#) I encourage those of you who already have the old template to email me to get this new one. It's much improved.

The template is designed in Microsoft Word 2010. You might have to adjust it to suit your word processor. (I have MS 365, but 2010 still has a spell-checker that, you know, checks spelling.)

I use and recommend Georgia font face (not Georgia Pro) because it's large and easy to read. Your preferences might differ. Of course, use whatever you like.

Tumbleweed (Russian Thistle) Flowers

Anyone out there ever look closely at tumbleweed flowers? They're so delicate you can't actually feel the petals when you touch them.

My wife took this picture on Saturday with her phone. I thought I'd share it with you.



On Being Unstuck in Time in a Novel

Each morning after I post the Journal and before I begin writing for the day, I update my reverse outline for yesterday's writing. I also read through whatever I wrote the previous day, just as a reader, enjoying the story in my creative subconscious.

As I do, my fingers rest on the keyboard and occasionally they move. I allow the characters (not the writer) to add whatever I missed as I ran through the story with the characters.

That's cycling, a function of the creative subconscious, not "revising," which is a function of the conscious, critical mind. Despite what some submerged-and-drowning-in-the-myths detractors will tell you, cycling and revising are not the same thing.

I can only do that because I'm unstuck in the timeline of my novel. Not everything you read in any of my novels was written chronologically as the characters and I progressed through the story.

Sometimes as I'm writing I realize something that needed to occur earlier in the story or be foreshadowed.

In the current novel, my protagonist and POV character Jenna is approaching the gate of a country club. She has donned an accent from the deep South and is dressed alluringly to throw any men she might encounter off their guard.

Of course, men being what we are, it works. But as I was writing the next chapter, she said, "Um, you know everyone can see my face, right?"

Truedat. Everyone she met could still see her rather striking face clearly. So she could be recognized, ID'd on security cameras, and so on. Not a good situation for an assassin.

So I cycled back. In about fifteen words she added a pair of oversized black sunglasses, which she lowers and peers over at one point so a guy can see her eyelashes when she bats them at him. (grin) Yeah. We guys act like that sort of thing has no effect, but it does.

Another example I've used many times happened in another novel a long time ago. I don't even remember the title of the novel.

I was writing along when Aunt Marge heard a sound late at night. A chapter or two later, she confronted a would-be burglar in her living room and pulled a revolver from a pocket of her robe.

What? I didn't remember her putting the gun in her pocket.

So I cycled back a couple of chapters to when she heard the sound, got out of bed, and put on her robe. Only this time she also reached into the drawer of a nightstand, took out her deceased husband's revolver, and slipped it into her robe pocket.

She must've done so the first time through, but I missed it as we raced through the story. I remember kindly Aunt Marge whispering, "It's all right, dear." That was to me, not the burglar.

Of course, any readers of that novel will assume all of that was planned and tightly plotted, but nothing could be further from the truth. The whole thing was written into the dark as the story unfolded.

Again, cycling is *maybe* a very distant cousin—like a 58th cousin 172 times removed—of revision, but cycling is conducted while you’re still deep in the story and in the character’s head in the creative subconscious.

Revision, editing and rewriting are strictly functions of the conscious, critical voice, and in every case they will take you farther from, not deeper into, the authentic story.

For a great deal more on cycling or on reverse outlines, type either search term into the search box [in the sidebar at the Journal website](#).

Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting

Anyone can jump in (or jump back in) and join the challenge at any time. Even if you miss a week in your personal challenge and break your streak, you can always jump back in the next week and start a new one.

This is a great way to jumpstart your writing and get more practice pushing down the critical voice.

There’s no cost.

Notice, there’s also no pressure re submitting or publishing. That’s up to you. The point of the challenge is to have fun. Learning to keep track of your writing is a bonus.

During the past week, in addition to whatever other fiction they’re writing, the following writers reported their progress:

Short Fiction

- Erin Donoho “Santa Monica” 4400 General Fiction
- Loyd Jenkins “One Night on Dickson Street” 2700 Urban Fantasy
- George Kordonis “Quest” 1348 Dystopian SF
- Alexander Nakul “How a she-thief was robbed” 3285 Erotic Fantasy
- Alexander Nakul “Shelter on the water” 4090 Erotic Fantasy
- Christopher Ridge “The Violinists” 3300 Horror
- K.C. Riggs “The Ringer” 4441 Historical Fiction

Longer Fiction

- Alexander Nakul *Horses of Mayhem* 2372 Historical fantasy (60442 total and complete)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[Biological Responses to Fear](#) This can only help inform your writing.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1010

Writing of Blackwell Ops 13: Jenna Crowley

Day 1..... 3815 words. To date.....3815

Day 2..... 3116 words. To date..... 6931

Day 3..... 3090 words. To date..... 10021

Fiction for October..... 93582

Fiction for 2023..... 311124

Fiction since August 1..... 196577

Nonfiction for October..... 28140

Nonfiction for the year..... 226480

Annual consumable words..... 537544

2023 Novels to Date..... 6

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 7

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 77

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 235

Short story collections..... 31

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Teaching, Helping, and Don't Buy the Lies

October 31, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Welcome
- * Quiet the Critical Voice Book Offer
- * I Love Teaching and I Love Helping
- * Don't Buy the Lies
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“You can’t be scared. You have to just do what you think is right.” Vincent Zandri (see Of Interest)

Quiet the Critical Voice Book Offer

If anyone reading this has not yet read *Quiet the Critical Voice (and Write Fiction)* it’s still available free of charge directly from me. [All you have to do is email me](#). Let me know which e-format you would like.

As I was telling a writer who’s new to the Journal yesterday...

I Love Teaching and I Love Helping

Almost as much as I love writing fiction.

That’s why I occasionally give away nonfiction books and that’s why I respond fairly quickly to emails. It’s even the sole reason I write this Journal.

But I am also not attached to Outcome. I can only pass along the information. I hope you get it, and I very much want you to get it. I’ll even do anything I can to help you get it. You only have to email me and ask.

But what you choose to do — whether you choose to surrender to the myths or free yourself from them — is strictly up to you.

If you don’t get it or if you refuse to try, I won’t lie awake at night and wonder why.

Not because I’m crass and unfeeling, but because I don’t have time for that. I have another novel to write, another story to convey for my characters. Because, you know, I’m a writer.

Whether you believe what other people (including me) say to you is up to you. But I will never lie to you, and I have no ulterior motives. I know better than anyone that you can’t sell fiction to writers, even those who want to learn from you.

That’s why I’m actually writing a novel in public right now, averaging two chapters per day (about ten minutes’ reading). You can find links to the current novel in [yesterday’s post](#). Scroll down to “Session Three Posted.”

Don’t Buy the Lies

Writing into the dark isn’t a process. It’s the letting-go of a process.

I only know WITD works because about 9 years ago I took a deep breath, pulled up my big boy pants, and plunged in. I wanted to give it an honest try. Why? To prove to myself it wouldn't work.

But it did, and here we are.

In WITD, there are no rules except to let go of all the rules and all the BS people throw at you about how you “should” write.

I despise people who are always trying to “should” on someone else. Do they really even care?

Well, yes, but not about you. They care about selling you their nonfiction books on writing.

They know that chances are good, if you buy into the myths they're spewing, at least some of your hard-earned cash will go to them and their nonfiction books — all of which say exactly the same things all the other shysters' nonfiction books say.

That's another reason I give mine away free at times: because my nonfiction books DON'T say what all the others say. I'm proud of that, and I want people to know it.

I'm also very aware that I'm swimming against the stream here. And of course, it's much easier to notice the stream than it is to notice the one little guy in the world who's swimming against it.

Granted, some writers are just weak. And it's always easier to “go along to get along” with your critique group or whatever than it is to stand up and do something for yourself. Even if that something is a far easier way to write.

By the way, you're all swimming along with me, struggling against the tide of myths that comprise current “wisdom” on writing fiction. If you weren't, or if you weren't at least hoping to learn how to swim against the flow and actually improve as a writer, you wouldn't be reading this.

Even after all these years, this Journal has something under 200 subscribers.

That isn't even a drop in the water when you consider the millions of writers and would-be writers out there. And many of them, drowning in the myths, literally give-up and stop writing, either stories or novels or altogether.

That's what buying into the myths will do for you: stop you from writing. Well, unless you're a glutton for punishment and enjoy the “drudgery” of writing fiction that writers who don't write into the dark often talk about.

But you can decide to let go of all that nonsense, put your fingers on the keyboard, access your characters and their story — the story that THEY, NOT YOU are living — then trust them and yourself and just write whatever comes.

Just lend the characters your fingers. They'll do the rest.

And soon after that, you'll also learn to be detached from Outcome. You will stop worrying about sales or who likes or doesn't like your work or why.

Sure, you'll still promote your work, and with any luck, you'll tell others about this Journal. But your primary task will be to write more stories and novels. Because you aren't an advertising exec or a promoter or whatever. You're a writer.

You'll even stop reading silly reviews, good or bad, because you'll eventually come to understand that what others think of your work doesn't matter.

The story or novel has zero individual importance except the importance each particular reader puts on it. And again, that's none of your business.

Remember that you really are the worst judge of your own work. But that's true whether you love it or hate it. Because your opinion doesn't matter.

Nobody's opinion of your work matters. What's beautiful to some is ugly as a bat's butt to others and vice versa. Again, it's simply none of your business.

The only thing that matters, the only thing that's important, is that you write the next story or novel, and the next, and the next. And that matters only because you've assumed the job title: writer.

A garage mechanic isn't really a garage mechanic unless s/he repairs car engines. A lawyer isn't really a lawyer unless s/he practices law in one way or another. A doctor isn't a doctor unless s/he practices medicine or a related discipline.

Do you know anyone in any other profession who goes around saying s/he's a carpenter or a plumber or a cop or a musician or whatever else if s/he doesn't actually practice in that profession? If s/he only reads-about or talks-about or thinks-about doing what s/he professes to be?

I don't think so. And the harsh truth is, you aren't a writer unless you write.

To the story itself, YOU don't even matter. You're only the conduit, the characters' fingers.

So get over yourself already. Instead of trying to construct and control everything from some ivory tower, slip on a pair of jeans, a pair of sneakers or boots, and a t-shirt. (The ball cap or Indiana Jones fedora is optional.) Then roll off the parapet into the trenches of the story and just try to keep up as you race through the story with your characters.

Be your characters' recorder — or as Stephen King, the only Stage 5 writer working today, calls himself — their stenographer. All you have to do is write down what happens and how the characters react to it with their dialogue and actions.

It really is that simple.

All of that said, don't feel obligated to take my advice. Like I said, I'm not attached to the outcome of this post.

WITD is lying there unobtrusively against the curb, a life-changing bit of currency. But it isn't attractive because it doesn't look like all the other bills in neat, banded stacks that you've seen in movies and heard about all your life. It's wrinkled and crinkled and all balled up, but it's still literally a life-changing chunk of change.

Will you risk the split-second decision to pick it up, flatten it out and change your writing life forever?

Shrug. I dunno. That's strictly up to you.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[Heinlein's Rule Whiff and Other Rants](#)

[I Broke Almost All Of Elmore Leonard's Rules Of Writing](#)

[English poet John Keats born \(1795\)](#)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1410

Writing of Blackwell Ops 13: Jenna Crowley

Day 1..... 3815 words. To date.....3815

Day 2..... 3116 words. To date..... 6931

Day 3..... 3090 words. To date..... 10021

Day 4..... 4073 words. To date..... 14094

Fiction for October..... 97655

Fiction for 2023..... 315197

Fiction since August 1..... 200650

Nonfiction for October..... 29550

Nonfiction for the year..... 227890

Annual consumable words..... 543027

2023 Novels to Date..... 6

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date.....	7
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	77
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	235
Short story collections.....	31

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You Don't Need Thought Tags

November 1, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * You Don't Need Thought Tags
- * Death of a PC
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

You Don't Need Thought Tags

Level-up your game as a writer. You don't need "thought" or "was thinking" or any of that in your stories. You just don't.

A recent line in my current novel prompted this topic.

A little old man had just approached the POV character's driver's side window as she considered the house beyond the curb where she had just parked.

He ran his index finger in a small circle, indicating he wanted her to power-down the window.

I wrote (without the quotation marks and without italics)

"I did. And I grinned. Maybe I should ask him whether this is Timothy Sage's house."

See? You can tell immediately the third sentence in that line is unspoken thought (or if you wish, internal monologue).

But how? Why didn't I have to write

“I did. And I grinned. I thought maybe I should ask him whether this is Timothy Sage’s house.”

Because the first and second sentences, both narrative, are in past tense, the natural voice of narrative.

The third sentence, the character’s unspoken thought, is in present tense, the natural voice of unspoken thought. The reader will know the difference instinctively, without consciously realizing it.

Remember, the reader isn’t reading critically. S/he’s reading to be entertained. And if you’ve done your job as a writer, s/he’s deeply engrossed in the characters’ world.

Remember too, in recording the story, you write what happens and what the characters say and do in response (including what the POV character does, thinks or says).

Yet in unspoken thought, the character would not think “*I thought* maybe I should ask....” S/he would think only “Maybe I should ask....”

If this is a new realization for you, good. But don’t revisit earlier, already published works. Let those stand as markers of your skill at the time you wrote them. Always keep moving forward.

In your current WIP (if you have one) the story will be improved if you apply this guideline. Search for instances of “thought” and “was thinking” and delete or recast them as necessary.

Having been made aware of this guideline, your creative subconscious will apply it automatically as you write more. You might slip now and then, but when you do you will notice. And with practice (a story or two or three) you won’t have to apply it at all. It will already be there.

Death of a PC

A few paragraphs into Chapter 10, which I posted along with 9, 11, and 12 yesterday afternoon at 4 p.m. Arizona time, my little HP X360 froze up. Period.

The Alt/Ctrl/Delete combination wouldn’t even bring up the Task Manager so I could restart it. Annoying to say the very least.

In fact, I couldn’t even change what I’d just typed, the first 100 or so words of Chapter 10. I couldn’t copy/paste it. I couldn’t even scroll so I could see all of it.

So I turned to my business computer, opened the file in the much-despised Word 365, and looked over my left shoulder at the screen of the X360 as I retyped what I’d written there into the document on the business computer. Pretty much grumbling with every breath.

Then I unplugged the X360, hoping when it eventually ran out of battery life it would die and I would be able to open it again and everything would be fine. (It doesn’t have a battery

compartment available from the outside, and the bottom is screwed-down tightly with those stupid minuscule star screws, so I wasn't able to remove it.)

That done, I trudged up to the house, grumbling the whole way, to grab another computer, one that runs about as fast as bricks flow through a funnel.

But it has Word 2010 on it. It was my former (now new-again) writing 'puter. I hate standing around doing nothing, so I wrote this as I waited for my files, specifically my most recent changes to Chapter 10, to synch across Dropbox to my new writing 'puter. Then I was able to work again. Grrr.

Anyway, despite the drama, I was able to exceed my word-count goal again.

Aren't computers simply wonderful? Despite the fact that I make much of my living via the internet, sometimes I honestly wish someone would kick the Big Plug out of the wall and knock us all back into personal, face to face conversations, letter writing by hand, and some semblance of actual reality.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[Draft2Digital vs PublishDrive Review](#)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 740?

Writing of Blackwell Ops 13: Jenna Crowley

Day 1..... 3815 words. To date.....3815

Day 2..... 3116 words. To date..... 6931

Day 3..... 3090 words. To date..... 10021

Day 4..... 4073 words. To date..... 14094

Day 5..... 3447 words. To date..... 17541

Fiction for October..... 101102

Fiction for 2023..... 318644

Fiction since August 1..... 204097

Nonfiction for November..... 760

Nonfiction for the year..... 228650

Annual consumable words..... 543787

2023 Novels to Date..... 6

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date.....	7
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	77
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	235
Short story collections.....	31

[Help keep the Journal going](#) with either a one-time or a recurring monthly donation via debit or credit card or PayPal. Thank you!

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark and adherence to Heinlein's Rules. Unreasoning fear and the myths of writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

Let the Characters Speak

November 2, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Welcome
- * Let the Characters Speak
- * Update on the Laptop Drama
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“I get pleasure out of it,’ says the pugnacious Harlan Ellison about typing on his Olympia SG3. This toylike aspect, the fun of using the machine itself, is indistinguishable from its utility as a writer’s tool.” Jeff Ward (see Of Interest)

“And therefore education at the University mostly worked by the age-old method of putting a lot of young people in the vicinity of a lot of books and hoping that something would pass from one to the other, while the actual young people put themselves in the vicinity of inns and taverns for exactly the same reason.” Terry Pratchett

Let the Characters Speak

Imagine telling a friend you just returned from Mexico where you had a wonderful time witnessing Day of the Dead activities.

And the friend says, “Well, no, actually you just returned from Northern Ireland where you witnessed the aftermath that still lingers after The Troubles of last century.”

Would you accept the annoying former friend's version of the story? Or would you want to do something horrible to him?

That's how your characters feel when you step on their story too.

My current character uses phrases like "for free." I would never do that because what the speaker means is "free."

She also would never say "tepid," a variation of "warm." Due to her upbringing, she knows only cold, cool, warm, hot and scalding hot. She's probably heard the word "tepid" but she would never think of using it in a sentence. That just isn't who she is.

Likewise, she says "Wow" and "Anyway" now and then. I use "anyway" myself at times as a kind of transition, but I don't use it because she does anymore than she uses words that I use because I use them. She and I are two different characters.

And that brings us to the meat of the topic. It's the characters' story, not yours. And the characters speak with their own voice, not yours.

In YOUR story you're sitting at your computer writing down what happens in the CHARACTERS' story: the story that they, not you, are living.

Your job is to write what happens and how the characters react to it in dialogue and action as you run through the story with them. So you may do so, the characters have invited you into the story as an observer and recorder. But you are not integral to the story.

Yesterday, another writer posted an article in which he wrote that every artist has a unique creative voice. Technically, he was correct, but "authorial voice" is very much an overall consideration, like "authorial style."

For example, my own authorial voice and style stretches across all the series and one-offs I write, and across every genre I write in. Your voice and style aren't anything to worry about or fret over. They are simply part of who you are, like freckles.

Much has also been written about being sure the reader can discern (my current POV character would have said "tell" instead) one character from another. Of course, you do that at first with the character's gender and name.

You can do the same thing with a physical tag like a limp handshake or a twisted nose. Or with a repeated action tag like a character's scratching his head above his right ear or pushing her glasses up her nose, or pointing at someone as he talks, or whatever.

In other words, by writing the characters as you find them.

Just be sure to be consistent, attaching that same defining tag to the same character each time. (Another good reason to write, not make-up, what happens and to use a reverse outline.)

You can also achieve character recognition with the individual character's voice. By writing what you hear.

Even characters from the same geographical area will have minor differences in their speech patterns. Maybe one often prefaces what he says with "See," (or "See?") or follows it with the always-annoying grin and "That's my story and..." Just as if nobody else ever said that before.

In one story I wrote awhile back, one particularly annoying character who had a habit of stressing (indicated to the reader with italics, which is why I don't use italics to indicate unspoken thoughts <https://hestanbrough.com/you-dont-need-thought-tags/>) every other word or so of every sentence he ever uttered.

But as you already know if you write authentic stories into the dark, enabling readers to recognize the characters by their voice is an extremely easy thing to do. Just

- write what the characters say, and
- write it the way they say it.

No authorial intrusion, no embellishment or "improvement." Every time the author intrudes, s/he is altering and destroying the authentic story, not improving it.

Don't overlay your own voice, creative or otherwise, on the character's voice. That simply isn't your place.

If you revise what the characters say or how they say it with what YOU would say or how YOU would say it in the same situation, you're no better than one of those people who appear to listen attentive as you speak, then smile condescendingly and say something like, "I see. What you meant to say (or "were trying to say") is..."

I usually grit my teeth, smile, nod and walk away. What I would like to say is, "Um, no, you stupid [expletive deleted]. What I meant to say is exactly what I said. If I'd meant something else, I would have *said* something else."

Let your character speak. You (and your "voice") don't exist in the story. You are invisible in spirit and in actuality, like the person who sits at that little desk in a courtroom recording what's being said. S/he's there, but s/he's external to the proceedings.

Your only purpose in service to the story is to record what happens and how the characters' react. Nothing more.

Update on the Laptop Drama

Eventually the little laptop, unplugged, shut down. When I plugged it in again and turned it on, it was operable again. Yay me.

In the aftermath, I remembered I could have simply held down the power button for a few seconds (until the thing turned off) and it would have rebooted fine. (And thank to Matt P for the tip.) But I didn't think of that at the time. I was frantic over possibly losing the couple of hundred words I'd just typed.

In the interim, I also ordered another inexpensive 11.6" HP X360. The keyboard is perfect for me.

So now I'll have those two (the one that temporarily died will sit on a shelf for awhile as a second backup so it can think about what it did) plus my old writing 'puter as another backup.

Thanks to my donors and readers, all of whom helped enable the purchase.

I feel a little like Harlan Ellison, who on the date of his death had several "spare" Olympia SG3 typewriters sitting on shelves. He didn't want to risk one becoming inoperable when he had writing to do.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[Machine In Between](#)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1200

Writing of Blackwell Ops 13: Jenna Crowley

Day 1..... 3815 words. To date.....3815

Day 2..... 3116 words. To date..... 6931

Day 3..... 3090 words. To date..... 10021

Day 4..... 4073 words. To date..... 14094

Day 5..... 3447 words. To date..... 17541

Day 6..... 4403 words. To date..... 21944

Fiction for November..... 4403

Fiction for 2023..... 318644

Fiction since August 1..... 208500

Nonfiction for November..... 1960

Nonfiction for the year..... 229850

Annual consumable words..... 549390

2023 Novels to Date..... 6

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date.....	7
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	77
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	235
Short story collections.....	31

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Number Watch (You Want to Read This)

November 3, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * I Left a Comment
- * Peggy K
- * Questions
- * Number Watch
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“I suspect authors ... don't give a hoot about belief in themselves, trust in their characters, or authentic stories. They [sho use generative AI] will be marketing a product. Consumers will decide.” elliot01 in response to my comment

Maybe he's right. Maybe as an old guy who remembers Craft and is still in possession of a moral compass, I've simply been barking up the wrong tree.

I Left a Comment

Here's the comment to which elliot01 responded:

“I think I will never understand the propensity of many successful writers (and others) to teach those coming along behind them that dependence on crutches or easy ways out like generative AI instead is a good thing.

“They could just as easily attempt to instill or shore-up others’ self-confidence and teach independence rather than dependence.

“Writers who believe in themselves and trust the characters to tell the story that they, not the writer, are living will always write original, authentic stories. Those who don’t, won’t.”

Peggy K

Subscriber Peggy K asked left an excellent comment on the post “You Don’t Need Thought Tags.”

I wrote almost a whole Journal post in my response. But rather than repeat any of that here, I thought I’d just send you over there to read her original comment and my response. [Take a look.](#)

If you scroll a little farther after you read my comment, you’ll also see a comment by Balázs J whose native language is Hungarian. Of course, me being mouthy, I responded to his comment as well.

Questions

I suppose sometimes I somehow convey the sense that I’m too busy to answer your questions. Nothing could be further from the truth. I’m always willing to help those who are trying to improve their game.

If you ever have any questions for me about this Journal or about writing or editing or publishing, please don’t hesitate to either leave a comment or [email me](#).

I only write this Journal to pass along what I have learned as I’ve written and published 77 novels, 9 novellas, and over 230 short stories during the past nine years.

Number Watch

Simple math can be your friend. I’ve said many times that Average Matters. So it’s good to check in with yourself from time to time.

I can only use my own numbers to illustrate this concept, but for me they were eye-opening. You can apply this same approach to your own numbers.

If you care about your production, look for growth and ways you can improve. Strive to do better today than you did yesterday, better this month than you did last month.

As of the end of October, I’d written 315,197 publishable words of fiction in 2023. Looks impressive on the surface, but that’s only an average of 31,520 words per month, or 1051 words per day. Remember, I don’t have a day job. Writing IS my day job.

Let's break those numbers down:

In the first 7 months of the year, I wrote only 114,547 words. That's an average of only 16,364 words per month, or about 545 words per day. A meager half-hours' work.

Again, if you can only make time to write a half-hour per day, that's fine. But I don't have a day job.

Although I stumbled along during the year, only writing a little here and there, I wasn't able to start writing in earnest again until a week or so into August.

Since then, I've written 200,650 words of publishable fiction. That's better. It's an average of 66,883 words per month, or about 2,229 words per day. So about two hours' work per day.

Still, in the past three months I wrote 63% of the fiction I've written all year.

But let's zoom-in and break it down further:

August — I wrote only 37,762 words of fiction, an average of only 1259 words per day (about an hour's work).

September — I doubled my production to 65,233, an increase of just under 59% and an average of 2174 words per day. Getting better.

October — largely because I rededicated myself to my daily word count goal — the total jumped to 101,102 words. That's an increase of another 64%, and an average of 3370 words per day.

Not including writing the Journal and responding to emails, and because of the cleaner, more efficient way I write now, that's still only about five hours or work per day. Not a bad gig for a day job if you can get it.

But again, all of these are averages. There were days in August, September and October when I didn't write at all because I allowed something else to take precedence. We all set our own priorities.

I'm very much looking forward to the rest of the year. I hope in your writing you're looking forward too.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

Nada.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 810

Writing of Blackwell Ops 13: Jenna Crowley

Day 1..... 3815 words. To date.....3815
Day 2..... 3116 words. To date..... 6931
Day 3..... 3090 words. To date..... 10021
Day 4..... 4073 words. To date..... 14094
Day 5..... 3447 words. To date..... 17541
Day 6..... 4403 words. To date..... 21944
Day 7..... 3025 words. To date..... 24969

Fiction for November..... 7428
Fiction for 2023..... 326072
Fiction since August 1..... 211525
Nonfiction for November..... 2770
Nonfiction for the year..... 230660
Annual consumable words..... 553225

2023 Novels to Date..... 6
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 7
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 77
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 235
Short story collections..... 31

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What I've Learned

November 4, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * A New Story
- * What I've Learned

- * Adios, “Of Interest”
- * Adios, “Numbers”?
- * Support the Journal
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“The best way to make a dream come true is to wake up.” Dame Anna Wintour

A New Story

“Avoidance” came out yesterday on the [Stanbrough Writes substack](#).

By the way, if you wonder about every word of the story coming through the POV character even when you write in third-person, it’s a good one to look at.

If you would like to subscribe, click the link above and then the Subscribe button at the end of the story. You’ll receive a new short story every Friday, and it’s free.

Below the Subscribe button, there are other short stories you can read in most genres. Enjoy!

What I’ve Learned

Here comes one of those “back in the day” speeches.

You know, like the stories from those gnarled old-timers who “back in the day” walked uphill to school both ways through three-foot snowdrifts and were dang-well glad (dagnabbit) for the opportunity? (grin)

I first stumbled across Dean Wesley Smith’s website almost ten years ago. I’d met him before, but I didn’t even know he had a website.

Here’s the sum-total of what I learned directly from him that made sense and enabled me to start writing fiction:

- Heinlein’s Rules
- The basic concept of Writing Into the Dark

After all, how can you possibly outline and plot and plan a story that hasn’t happened yet? Try it with your neighbors life or even your own and see how it works out.

As I continued to read his blog over the next few years, I picked up these essentials:

- That first- or third-person, every word of the story must come through the POV character(s).
- That nothing in the story (even in a white-out snowstorm) happens against a blank background.

- That surely the characters are wearing SOMething.
- That surely the characters have facial features.
- That the more you control what the reader sees, hears, smells, tastes and feels as s/he reads, the deeper s/he will be engaged in your story.
- Write the next sentence — When you are (or the story is) stuck, don't think or wonder. Just trust the characters and write the next sentence that comes, then the next and the next. Soon you (it) won't be stuck.
- That practice does not mean hovering over one work, revising and rewriting. It means putting new words on the page.
- Oh, and that Writers Write.

That's it. Everything else, I learned on my own. But all of it stemmed from those basic concepts.

Seven months after I started reading Dean's blog, and the day I hit 10,000 words on my first novel, I emailed Dean to express my undying gratitude for showing me the light

He responded, "Hey, that's on you. I only pointed-out a door that you'd never noticed before. You're one of the few who opened it and walked through. You did the work."

He also said the ideas, even writing into the dark, weren't original to him. Others had shown him the same things he showed me.

That's the moment when this Journal was born.

What I offer you in the Journal is either what Dean paid-forward to me — once I had practiced it enough to make it my own — or new epiphanies and realizations I experienced as I practiced my profession as a prolific fiction writer.

You'll get some of the concepts easily and readily. Others you'll have to see a few times until something finally clicks and you "get" it. At least that's how it was for me.

Most of what I've learned is compiled in a compact, reader friendly form in four books:

- [Punctuation for Writers](#) (second edition),
- [Quiet the Critical Voice \(and Write Fiction\)](#),
- [Writing the Character-Driven Story](#), and
- [Poetry Techniques for the Fictionist](#).

Yes, poetry techniques. Because even if you don't write or read poetry, poems and stories really are all written in the same language.

None of those books spout the same old stuff you'll find in 99% of how-to writing books out there.

You can find them on Amazon or in any venue where ebooks are sold. Or [you can email me](#).

Adios, “Of Interest”

I’ve thought about this for awhile. I’ve decided to remove the “Of Interest” section from the Journal.

Some of you can still learn some things from the sites I regularly listed in “Of Interest,” but you might learn even more without me serving as a gatekeeper and go-between.

Dean Wesley Smith mostly promotes his own work these days. TKZ is all but completely immersed-in and propagating the myths of fiction writing. And The Passive Voice is leaning harder and more frequently into the “benefits” of using the crutch that is generative AI.

Unless you’re a solid [Stage 4 writer](#), I recommend subscribing-to or regularly checking the following websites, ranked in order of importance:

- [Vin Zandri](#)
- [Dean Wesley Smith](#)
- [Sue Coletta’s blog](#)
- [Garry Rodgers’ blog](#)
- [The Passive Voice](#)
- [Johnny B. Truant’s The Art of Noticing Series](#)
- [Kill Zone](#) (but always skeptically)

I also recommend the politically unbiased newsletter at [1440](#). Many great idea-generating articles.

Finally, I strongly recommend reading Stephen King’s fiction, even if you believe he writes only horror (he doesn’t). He is the only Stage 5 writer writing today.

If and when new and informative websites come to my attention, I’ll mention them in the body of this Journal.

Adios, “Numbers”?

If seeing my numbers reported here every day helps you or motivates you in any way, leave a comment or email me to let me know that.

Please do NOT feel you have to respond in the affirmative. I’ll still keep my spreadsheet. I just won’t report numbers here every day.

If I don’t receive enough support for keeping that section, I will discontinue it as well.

Support the Journal

If you find this Journal of use, you can support it in either of two ways.

Share — There is a Share button at the bottom of this post. If the Journal helps you, please take a moment to punch that button and share it on social media or via email.

Bling — If you can afford any amount, you can support the Journal with a one-time or monthly donation via debit or credit card or PayPal. [Donate Here](#).

Talk with you again soon.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1060

Writing of Blackwell Ops 13: Jenna Crowley

Day 1..... 3815 words. To date.....3815
Day 2..... 3116 words. To date..... 6931
Day 3..... 3090 words. To date..... 10021
Day 4..... 4073 words. To date..... 14094
Day 5..... 3447 words. To date..... 17541
Day 6..... 4403 words. To date..... 21944
Day 7..... 3025 words. To date..... 24969
Day 8..... 3199 words. To date..... 28168

Fiction for November..... 10627
Fiction for 2023..... 329271
Fiction since August 1..... 214724
Nonfiction for November..... 3830
Nonfiction for the year..... 231720
Annual consumable words..... 553225

2023 Novels to Date..... 6
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 7
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 77
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 235
Short story collections..... 31

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One Major Glitch

November 5, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Welcome
- * The Writing
- * One Major Glitch
- * Writing in Public
- * Reminder
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Sometimes old times are the best times because the edges have worn off the memories.”
Tiffanie Gray

“Usually now a title comes to me on Monday morning (sometimes earlier). Only after I start writing do I find out what the story is about. This week I didn't know how the title was related to the story until the last couple hundred words. Cool.” KC Riggs

Very cool. (grin)

“You know , those horror stories even smell different, like raw liver. The cowboy story smells like a cedar chest.” Reader and poet Nan Dozier in an email after reading “Avoidance”

“I wrote you once in a mood of rough sarcasm that the technique of fiction had become so highly standardized that one of these days a machine would write novels.” Raymond Chandler, in a 1947 letter to his editor (The Letters of Raymond Chandler)

Welcome

Welcome to Teresa BP and any other new subscribers or readers of the Journal. I hope you will find it useful.

Get the Archives and other [free downloads at the Journal website](#). And I don't do the ambush thing requiring an email address. Just click the links and a PDF will download in a new page.

If you wanna see my tired old mug, here's a video where [Vin Zandri and I are chatting](#) about writing and a bunch of other stuff.

The Writing

The current novel passed into Short Novel range day before yesterday (25,000 to 44,999 words). I always feel more comfortable after that happens.

That's when I know the thing is going to be a novel instead of a novella, so after I pass that magic number it's easier to just let it run 'til it wraps.

Here are the fiction lengths I use to define what I've written. I use these mostly to price my work:

To 1999 words Short-short Story
2000 to 7999 Short Story
8000 to 14999 Novelette (Long Short Story)
15,000 to 24,999 Novella
25,000 to 44,999 Short Novel
45,000 to 79,999 Novel
over 80,000 Long Novel

Again, these are the lengths that define my work and help me with price points for licensing them. You do what works for you.

One Major Glitch

There was one major glitch in Friday's Story of the Week, "Avoidance." Because I was so deeply engrossed in the story as I wrote it, I didn't notice it until it was already posted. Thus far, no reader has mentioned it either, I hope for the same reason.

The first few people who email to tell me what that glitch is will win a free book. You may take your pick of the first novel in any of my series, any one-off novel, or any nonfiction book I've written.

You can find all of those at StoneThreadPublishing.com.

[You can read or re-read the story here](#). Good luck!

Writing in Public

After the current novel wraps, I'm going to suspend Writing in Public until I start either a one-off novel or novella or a novel in a different series. So if I go right into another Blackwell Ops novel, I won't post it there.

To remain true to the concept of writing in public, I don't want to post any previous works there either. But I do want to showcase my writing for readers, so I'll show them (and you if you're watching) something in a different vein.

All the Blackwell Ops series have either been short stories (3) or novels (13 when this one wraps). And each novel is a series of short stories. The operative lives life, receives an assignment, does the necessary research, makes the hit and the egress. Lather, rinse, repeat.

Each operative is different, and each hit and egress is different, but it still feels a little like I'm in a rut after awhile and I have to take a break from writing them. (grin)

Sites to Visit

[Yesterday under "Adios, 'Of Interest'"](#) I mentioned Vin Zandri and provided a link to his website. That link will lead you to his (almost) daily podcast or VLOG (video blog).

Vin is a great action-adventure, suspense thriller writer and a knowledgeable and personable human being. Here's [a more direct link to his YouTube channel](#).

If you subscribe now, you won't miss "one single, solitary, exciting episode of The Writer's Life." (grin)

Vin graciously had me on his show awhile back in [Episode 815](#). We're going to do it again on the Marine Corps' 248th birthday. I'll announce it here when it goes live.

Yesterday I also failed to mention [Dan Baldwin](#). Dan's brain is a little slanted, but his heart's in the right place. Or it was the last time he whipped out his knife and checked.

If you aren't following [Dan on Facebook](#) you're missing out on a real treat.

Finally, the day after I dropped "Of Interest" from the Journal, James Scott Bell came up with a jewel all writers should read: [The Book Biz is A-Changin'](#).

Reminder

All of you in the ongoing Bradbury Challenge, be sure to get your numbers in to me by tonight. I'll check tomorrow morning, of course, but sooner is always better.

Talk with you again soon.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1060

Writing of Blackwell Ops 13: Jenna Crowley

Day 1..... 3815 words. To date.....3815
Day 2..... 3116 words. To date..... 6931
Day 3..... 3090 words. To date..... 10021
Day 4..... 4073 words. To date..... 14094
Day 5..... 3447 words. To date..... 17541
Day 6..... 4403 words. To date..... 21944
Day 7..... 3025 words. To date..... 24969

Day 8..... 3199 words. To date..... 28168
Day 9..... 3833 words. To date..... 32001

Fiction for November..... 14460
Fiction for 2023..... 333104
Fiction since August 1..... 218557
Nonfiction for November..... 4700
Nonfiction for the year..... 232590
Annual consumable words..... 562187

2023 Novels to Date..... 6
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 7
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 77
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 235
Short story collections..... 31

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I Believe in You

November 6, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Welcome
- * I Believe in You
- * It's Never Too Early
- * It's Never Too Late
- * When I Was a Child
- * Bradbury Challenge
- * The Novel Wrapped
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Believing in people before they have proved themselves is the key to motivating people to reach their potential.” John C. Maxwell

“In the end it is important to remember you cannot become what you need to be by remaining what you are.” Max De Pree, as reported by David Taylor, Ed.D.

Welcome

Welcome to Zacha F and any other new subscribers or readers of the Journal. I hope you will find it useful.

Get the Archives and other [free downloads at the Journal website](#). And I don't do the ambush thing requiring an email address. Just click the links and a PDF will download in a new page.

If you wanna see my tired old mug, here's [a video where Vin Zandri and I are chatting about writing](#) and a bunch of other stuff.

I Believe in You

Every one of you has the potential to be a great fictionist, a great writer. If you didn't, you wouldn't be reading this.

There was a time when William Shakespeare, Stephen King, Ernest Hemingway and [insert name of your favorite author] didn't even know the alphabet, much less anything at all about the craft of writing.

There was a time when none of those authors had written even one line of a poem or of a story or play or novel. And look at them now.

I believe in you. I write and post this Journal not in the hope of eliciting that potential, but in the hope that one day you will elicit it from yourself.

It's Never Too Early

to put off until tomorrow what you could do today. As Margaret Atwood wrote, “Potential has a shelf-life.”

What she failed to add is that Life has an expiration date. Don't drag your feet when you could be racing forward, eagerly anticipating whatever will happen next.

It's Never Too Late

unless you're on your way to a funeral or a crematorium and you're the guest of honor.

If you're a writer, every day that you don't write is a regret.

If you hear yourself making excuses or coming up with reasons, a regret is just around the corner.

The conscious, critical mind will encourage excuses, fill you with reasons, and downplay any regrets. But you still will not have written. You still will not have accomplished a poem, a story, a novel.

And you're the only one who can.

When I Was a Child

I was heavily influenced by music, specifically the lyrics of songs I heard. One such song was Woody Guthrie's "Lonesome Valley."

Taken out of their religious context, the influential lines were

"Nobody else can walk it for you,
They can only point the way."

When I was around 12 years old, I was also heavily influenced by a "filler" that appeared at the bottom of a column in the Lubbock Avalanche-Journal (newspaper): "Live your life so that when you're alone, you're in good company."

Five decades later, character Wes Crowley mentioned to me in passing one day, "Upright is not a matter of degree."

For writers, both of those sentences translate easily: "Writers write."

I believe in you, but much more importantly, I wish for you that you believe in yourself.

Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting

Anyone can jump in (or jump back in) and join the challenge at any time. Even if you miss a week in your personal challenge and break your streak, you can always jump back in the next week and start a new one.

This is a great way to jumpstart your writing and get more practice pushing down the critical voice.

There's no cost.

Notice, there's also no pressure re submitting or publishing. That's up to you. The point of the challenge is to have fun. Learning to keep track of your writing is a bonus.

During the past week, in addition to whatever other fiction they're writing, the following writers reported their progress:

Short Fiction

- Erin Donoho "Nichole," 2600 words, YA
- George Kordonis "Cold Weather Blues" 2678 Dark Fantasy
- Christopher Ridge "It's Not the Body..." 1800 Horror
- K.C. Riggs "Todos los Santos" 4658 General

With the time change on Nov 5 for almost everywhere but Arizona, I think I pulled the trigger on this post a little early for Chynna Pace. If so I'll include this week's and next week's story info for her in next week's report.

Heather H, Loyd J, Bill S, Philip S, and anyone else — [email me](#) if I can help.

Longer Fiction

- Alexander Nakul *The Meerkat Watch* 5061 Urban fantasy (5061 total to date)

The Novel Wrapped

I sent the finished novel to my first reader yesterday at 1 p.m. The last three chapters went live on the [Writing in Public](#) substack yesterday afternoon at 4 p.m.

If I start a new one-off or a new novel in one of my Mystery, Western, Action-Adventure or Science Fiction series, I'll upload each day's work to the Writing in Public substack. If it's another Blackwell Ops novel, I won't

To any of you who've been along for the ride thus far, thanks.

My 3000+ words-per-day of writing ended yesterday at 25 straight calendar days with two novels and a short story. Today I'll get covers and promo docs done for the two novels, add them to the StoneThread Publishing website and publish them to Amazon and Draft2Digital.

Then I'm blessed to spend the rest of the day celebrating my youngest son's birthday with him.

From here on out, I hope to maintain that streak on writing days.

Talk with you again soon.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 940

Writing of Blackwell Ops 13: Jenna Crowley

Day 1..... 3815 words. To date..... 3815
Day 2..... 3116 words. To date..... 6931
Day 3..... 3090 words. To date..... 10021
Day 4..... 4073 words. To date..... 14094
Day 5..... 3447 words. To date..... 17541
Day 6..... 4403 words. To date..... 21944
Day 7..... 3025 words. To date..... 24969
Day 8..... 3199 words. To date..... 28168
Day 9..... 3833 words. To date..... 32001
Day 10.... 3048 words. To date..... 35049 (done)

Fiction for November..... 17508
Fiction for 2023..... 336152
Fiction since August 1..... 221592
Nonfiction for November..... 5640
Nonfiction for the year..... 233530
Annual consumable words..... 566175

2023 Novels to Date..... 7
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 7
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 78
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 235
Short story collections..... 31

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Branding and Covers

November 8, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Revamping a Series Brand
- * Is Rebranding Worth It?
- * Size and Placement of Author Name
- * The Numbers

Revamping a Series Brand

Since I'm in actual "work" mode right now — and having compared the covers of the last two books in the Blackwell Ops series with the first eleven — yesterday I decided to spend at least the day revamping the series brand.

Basically, I created new covers for the first eleven novels. I changed a few of the less-intriguing cover photos for new ones.

I also updated the color and placement of the series title at the top of each cover, and the presentation of the author name at the bottom.

I also changed the "author of" tag below the author name on some of the covers. Now each Blackwell Ops cover is also an advertisement for my other series in Western, Action-Adventure, Mystery and SF genres.

Once I made all the changes to the covers themselves, I uploaded the new 180 pixels-wide thumbnail covers and the 300-wide covers to StoneThread Publishing for placement on the genre page and individual book pages respectively.

A lot of work, but the hours were worth it. The longest it took to change a cover (when I had to search for, crop, and apply a new cover pic) was about an hour. The shortest time, when I only had to swap out the new series and author presentation, was about a half-hour.

Is Rebranding Worth It?

Would I have rather been writing new fiction? Very much.

But would I have been *better off* writing (Scott Carpenter's WIBBOW rule)? Nah. I'll trade 11 updated covers to rebrand a full series for a 3000-word day of writing in a heartbeat.

As a bonus, I also created and tweaked a template for future Blackwell Ops covers in the program I use to create them. So any new covers will automatically be branded as I create them.

This morning I was up early. I spent the first two hours of the day uploading the revamped 2000-wide covers to Amazon and D2D. I'm just glad it's all over.

Sometime in the future I'll have to revamp the Wes Crowley saga and the gap series too. I'll probably smooth the gap series into the saga as I do that so potential readers can read smoothly from Book 1 through Book 22 or 23 (by then, I hope).

To see the newly revamped Blackwell Ops covers plus the already-branded covers of the Nick Spalding short (4-book) series and the covers of nine stand-alone novels, visit [StoneThread Publishing](#).

Size and Placement of Author Name

Awhile back I was talking with a writer about the size of the author name. I told her it, like the title, should be large enough that it's readily visible even in the thumbnail version to the browsing reader.

But as with every guideline, there are exceptions. So I'll say this: If you make the title and/or reader name too small to be readily visible in the thumbnail, do so for a specific reason, NOT because of humility or self-doubt.

I found an example among my own books.

If you look at the book page for [The 13-Month Turn](#) (SF) you'll see that my author name is relatively tiny. There's a massive black space at the bottom where I could have put my "usual" author name in the usual size.

In that particular case, I decided the author name, like the article that begins the title, should be smaller. I did that to further convey the vastness and emptiness of space around the cover pic, a quarter-moon shot of Luna. I didn't even add an "author of" tag. Drop by and see what you think.

Re placement, always try to work around the cover art. For example, try never to place the title or cover name (or any other text) across the picture when you can help it. And most of the time you can. When you can't, minimize the damage as much as possible.

The Purpose of the Cover Isn't to Convey the Story

The purpose of the cover is to make the potential reader want to read the sales copy, which in turn makes the reader want to buy the book.

To that end, your cover should strongly convey the genre and maybe the mood or tone of the story, but not the story itself.

For excellent reference on how to write effective sales copy, I strongly recommend you buy a paper copy of Dean Wesley Smith's excellent [How to Write Fiction Sales Copy](#), a WMG Writer's Guide. Seriously, if you don't have it, you're missing out.

Any questions on any of this, leave a comment or [email me](#).

Talk with you again soon.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 780

Writing of

Day 1..... XXXX words. To date..... XXXXX

Fiction for November..... 17508
Fiction for 2023..... 336152
Fiction since August 1..... 221592
Nonfiction for November..... 7310
Nonfiction for the year..... 235200
Annual consumable words..... 567845

2023 Novels to Date..... 7
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 7
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 78
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 235
Short story collections..... 31

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Giant Panda Story, and a New Novel

November 9, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Giant Panda Story
- * A New Novel
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Imagination will often carry us to worlds that never were. But without it, we go nowhere.” Carl Sagan

“Time is free, but it's priceless. You can't own it, but you can use it. You can't keep it, but you can spend it. Once you've lost it you can never get it back.” Harvey Mackay

Giant Panda Story

“The Smithsonian National Zoo in Washington, DC, bid farewell yesterday to three giant pandas, who left on a 19-hour plane ride to Chengdu, China, dubbed ‘the Panda Express.’

“The departure of the two adult pandas, 26-year-old Tian Tian and 25-year-old Mei Xiang, and their 3-year-old son, Xiao Qi Ji, marks the end of more than 50 years of giant pandas being hosted at the zoo.” as reported in **1440 Daily Digest**.

There you go. A story idea fresh from the news. Every edition of this thing is chock full of story ideas, and best of all, no political biases.

A story is fiction.

Were the pandas regular passengers, strapped into seats? Perhaps First Class?

What was their reaction as they were strapped in? As the plane started down the runway? As it lifted off? As the plane ascended and air pressure changed (ears popping, etc.)?

The same questions apply if they were put in cages in the hold or in the back of the plane.

A New Novel

I glanced back at Rose Padilla, a novel I started a few months back. It will be the tenth installment of the Wes Crowley gap series and number five in the Santa Fe subseries.

As I read over what little I’d already written, I still liked the idea of it, but something didn’t feel right. Rather than trying to figure it out, I decided to simply delete what I had written earlier (only several thousand words) and recast it from scratch. I like to keep moving forward, not back.

Once I started writing the story, I was so engrossed in it that I almost forgot to file today’s edition of the Journal. (grin) That is as it should be.

As I did with my previous novel, I’ll also post each day’s writing to the Writing in Public substack. So if you’ve ever been interested in checking out the Wes Crowley saga, this would be a perfect opportunity.

(The very first book in the overall saga, Rise of a Warrior, is also available free. Just email me if you’d like a copy. Remember to tell me which eformat you would like.)

I’ll begin reporting numbers on it tomorrow.

Talk with you again soon.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 440

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... XXXX words. To date..... XXXXX

Fiction for November..... 17508
Fiction for 2023..... 336152
Fiction since August 1..... 221592
Nonfiction for November..... 7750
Nonfiction for the year..... 235640
Annual consumable words..... 567285

2023 Novels to Date..... 7
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 7
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 78
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 235
Short story collections..... 31

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A Great Start and a Great Question

November 10, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Welcome
- * Great Start on the New Novel
- * A Great Question
- * A Recommendation for a WordPress Theme
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Publishing a volume of verse is like dropping a rose petal down the Grand Canyon and waiting for the echo.” Don Marquis

Welcome

Welcome to William P3 (grin) and any other new subscribers or readers of the Journal. I hope you will find it useful.

Get the Archives and other [free downloads at the Journal website](#). And I don't do the ambush thing requiring an email address. Just click the links and a PDF will download in a new page.

I also recommend reading ["I Believe in You"](#).

If you wanna see my tired old mug, here's a video where bestselling author **Vin Zandri and I are chatting about writing** and a bunch of other stuff.

We plan to do that again today. I'll post the link here in the Journal after the fact.

Great Start on the New Novel

Even having deleted what I'd written the first time I tried this novel a few months ago (see "A Great Question" below), the general situation was fresh in my mind, partly because it bled over from the previous novel in the Gap series.

So I got a really good start on it, ending the day with a little over 4000 words. My daily goal remains the same: 3000 words per day or more of publishable fiction. And I'm no longer including words I've written and then cut. Only what I write that will be included in the finished product.

I also posted the first four chapters on the **Writing in Public substack**. You can read them there.

As I mentioned yesterday, if you've ever been interested in checking out the Wes Crowley saga, this would be a perfect opportunity.

The very first book in the overall saga, *Rise of a Warrior*, is also available free. Just email me if you'd like a copy. Remember to tell me which eformat you would like.

Of course, this is also an excellent chance for you to see whether I practice what I preach. (grin)

A Great Question

I got a great question on yesterday's post. Big Philly wrote

"How do you discern when it's OK to delete/scrap a manuscript and start over? I'm curious to know so as to still comply with Heinlein's Rule #2 and avoiding Critical Voice Rewriting."

Actually, he answered his own question. And I'm sure he would have realized that if I hadn't been so quick to respond:

“When you **think** you can ‘fix’ an older manuscript fragment by rewriting it, that’s always the critical voice talking. And that’s when I grin, scrap it, and start over.

“To a writer, words are the same as nails to a carpenter or a construction foreman. If you find a bent one, or a box of bent ones, you throw it out and get a new box.

“And for the record, Heinlein himself admitted to breaking his own rules (except Rule 3) several times.

“If you start a story and it doesn’t work, obviously you won’t finish it so just pitch it out. Then, if the idea of it still appeals to you, start over. If it doesn’t, start something else.”

This is exactly what I do, and it works.

Yes, I know. I can almost hear some of you saying, “Well, it works for *you*.”

But if you write into the dark and trust your characters, it will work just as well or better for you. But I’m not asking you to believe me. Just take a deep breath and try WITD for yourself.

A Recommendation for a WordPress Theme

I got another great question. Not about writing but about websites. My friend Patrick D was intrigued with how StoneThread Publishing is so responsive. (My other websites are also fully responsive.)

Whether you’re looking at any of the genre pages on a large-screen monitor, a laptop, a tablet, or a phone, you’ll still see all the book covers in their original alignment, only in a smaller size.

In other words, they don’t remain the same size and force you to scroll side to side.

As I told Patrick, to get that kind of functionality and a great deal more, visit [Generate Press](#). The developer, Tom Osborne, is a great guy who answers his own emails. I like that.

Several years ago, I got in on the ground floor and got the Lifetime membership at a great price. I’ve been so pleased over the years that from time to time I send Tom a donation just because.

I use Generate Press and the GP Premium plugin on all of my sites (six) plus a few sites I built for clients back when I was still doing that. It is perfect.

Talk with you again soon. I can’t tell you how very good it feels to be reporting fiction numbers again after my three-day layoff. (grin)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 810

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4086 words. To date..... 4086

Fiction for November..... 21594
Fiction for 2023..... 340238
Fiction since August 1..... 225678
Nonfiction for November..... 8560
Nonfiction for the year..... 236450
Annual consumable words..... 573181

2023 Novels to Date..... 7
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 7
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 78
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 235
Short story collections..... 31

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A Writing Frenzy and More

November 11, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * A New Story
- * I Also Released
- * Of Interest?
- * Vin Zandri and I
- * More Thoughts on Scrapping a Manuscript
- * A Writing Frenzy
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“This will remain the land of the free so long as it is the home of the brave.” Elmer Davis

Happy (Thoughtful) Veterans Day — or as Marines used to refer to it, Marine Corps Ball Recovery Day.

A New Story

“A Matter of Survival” published yesterday on my [Stanbrough Writes substack](#).

If you would like to subscribe, click the link above and then the Subscribe button at the end of the story. You’ll receive a new short story every Friday, and it’s free.

Below the Subscribe button, there are other short stories you can read in most genres. Enjoy!

I Also Released

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 of Rose Padilla yesterday on my [Writing in Public substack](#).

Of Interest?

Just wondering, would any of you prefer that I bring the Of Interest section back to the Journal?

If so, please either leave a comment or [email me](#). If I do bring it back, I’ll add it only when I think the article I link to is very important.

Vin Zandri and I

[NY Times and USA Today bestselling author Vin Zandri](#) and I are at it again.

Yesterday Vin had me on the show again, and from what I could tell on my side of the camera, it was a success.

It was at least a lot of fun. I even gave a guided tour (sort of) of the Hovel. To check it out, follow this link to [The Writer’s Life](#).

More Thoughts on Scrapping a Manuscript

Yesterday I talked about tossing out a manuscript that isn’t working. Then, if you like the idea, you can recast it fresh. New start, new opening, new everything. I only had to do that but a few times, but when I’ve had to, I have zero problem with it.

Why? Because to a professional writer, words are only tools. Like nails to a carpenter. If you get a box of bad ones, you throw them out and open a new box.

Now Vin Zandri’s offered his take on the same topic. I encourage you to watch and listen to Vin’s video on [“Scrapping a Manuscript and Mickey Spillane”](#).

A Writing Frenzy

I'm currently, and happily, in a writing frenzy.

I mentioned above that I've only had to toss out a manuscript because it wasn't working and start it over from scratch only a few times.

I've never been happier that I did so than I am with the current novel. It's racing along like I hoped it would do the first time.

It's running so fast and so well that when I'm "through" for the day at 4 p.m. I don't want to stop and go to the house. I want to keep writing, keep letting it run. My only solace is knowing it will run again the next day. What a blast!

I'm also in a publishing frenzy. With novels currently scheduled for release on November 13, 20, 27, and December 4, when I finish this one I'll schedule it for release on December 11.

I'm writing a new novel about every ten to fourteen days and releasing one every week. So soon I'll catch up with myself and begin releasing them as I finish them.

It will be interesting to see when the finish date (the day I get the mss back from my first reader) and the release date are one and the same.

And of course, I wish the same for you. And if you want me to, I'll help you get there.

I'm not offering a paid course or mentorship. Per the WIBBOW rule, I don't have time for that.

But I'll keep publishing this Journal, and I'll keep responding to emails and any questions you ask. *Quiet the Critical Voice* is still free and yours for the asking. You only have to email me.

Probably aside from you, nobody else cares as much about your success as a fiction writer as I do. So let me have your questions, concerns and doubts. Chances are, I've had them myself from time to time and found a way to overcome them. And I'm more than willing to share HOW to overcome them. You only have to ask.

Talk with you again soon.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 710

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4086 words. To date..... 4086

Day 2..... 3609 words. To date..... 7695

Fiction for November..... 25203
Fiction for 2023..... 343847
Fiction since August 1..... 229287
Nonfiction for November..... 9270
Nonfiction for the year..... 237160
Annual consumable words..... 577500

2023 Novels to Date..... 7
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 7
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 78
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 235
Short story collections..... 31

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(Morbid?) Research

November 12, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Welcome
- * Happy Diwali
- * (Morbid?) Research
- * By Popular Request
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“A step backward, after making a wrong turn, is a step in the right direction.” Kurt Vonnegut

“Proofread carefully to see if you any words out.” Dave Barry

“The recast of an idea is how I do things when a manuscript isn't working. I also switch from prose to screenplay and visa versa on ideas that don't seem to work in one format and much of the time that helps a lot.” Matthew Gordon Pettipas

“The big news of 2006 is that I'm still alive. After being in hospice waiting to die, I said, 'To hell with it. I'm going to write a book'.” Art Buchwald

Wish I'd seen this quote when I wrote ["It's Never Too Late"](#).

Welcome

Welcome to George(? geo974...) and any other new subscribers or readers of the Journal. I hope you will find it useful.

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I also recommend reading ["I Believe in You"](#).

If you wanna see my tired old mug, catch this half-hour video where [Vin Zandri and I are chatting about writing](#) and a bunch of other stuff.

And here's a second video of us chatting at [The Writer's Life](#).

Happy Diwali

This five-day festival of lights begins today. For anyone who hasn't heard of it, Diwali is celebrated by over 1 billion people worldwide of the Hindu faith.

From the article I've linked to below, "The holiday celebrates the victory of light over darkness, good over evil and knowledge over ignorance." I'm all for that.

Since the Journal now has a worldwide reach, I wanted to mention it. Click this link to learn more about [the history of Diwali](#).

(Morbid?) Research

If you're writing a story in which the preparation of dead bodies is necessary, check out this video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lv_SuYmu8DY. A mortician shows every step a body goes through at a funeral home.

By Popular Request

I've decided to reinstate the Of Interest section in the Journal. You'll find it below.

Of course, I curated the links. Other things might interest you, so don't be shy about visiting **the sites I mentioned** in an earlier edition of the Journal.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

Last Day Of Sale!

Motivational Monday 2024 Is Live!

Genre Juggernaut: Measuring “Romance”

The Numbers

The Journal..... 400

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4086 words. To date..... 4086
Day 2..... 3609 words. To date..... 7695
Day 3..... 3971 words. To date..... 11666

Fiction for November..... 29174
Fiction for 2023..... 347818
Fiction since August 1..... 233416
Nonfiction for November..... 9670
Nonfiction for the year..... 237560
Annual consumable words..... 581871

2023 Novels to Date..... 7
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 7
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 78
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 235
Short story collections..... 31

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Personal Challenges, Studying Fiction, and on Critics

November 13, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Welcome
- * On Personal Writing Challenges
- * When You Study Fiction, and on Critics
- * Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.” Maya Angelou

My corollary — Keep learning. Your best today must be better than your best yesterday.

“The [Bradbury] challenge is the best practice for WITD for me. I can really give up attachment and let the characters and story go.” KC Riggs

Welcome

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If you wanna see my tired old mug, catch this half-hour video where [Vin Zandri and I are chatting about writing](#) and a bunch of other stuff.

And here's a second video of us chatting at [The Writer's Life](#).

On Personal Writing Challenges

The purpose of any personal writing challenge is to stretch yourself. Not to “the limit” because there are no limits, or there are only self-imposed or self-accepted ones.

A challenge is more to get your writer's blood pumping a little harder. To keep you upright in the saddle and plodding forward even when you're tired and don't really care whether you finish the ride.

My own current personal challenges, both writing and business, are

- Writing 3000+ words per day every day — I’ve already revised this one to every writing day, but I also strive to maintain an average of at least 3000 words per calendar day (see the next entry). Two mantras help with this: Keep Coming Back and Writers Write.
- Writing every day — Life happens, so I constantly fall off this one and climb back on. The climbing back on is what matters.
- Posting to the Writing in Public substack — As I’m writing a new novel, I post whatever I’ve written that day, every day. The primary purpose is to drive me to the keyboard even when I don’t feel like it (which thankfully is rare).
- Posting a new short story every week on the Stanbrough Writes substack — The stories are written, but I have to remember to read over them and post them, usually several in advance.
- Learning at least one new thing about the craft every day — This is essential to keep moving forward and getting better at the craft. Moving backward or marking time in place is not an option.
- Juggling time — This is based on two precepts:
 1. If I’ve done it before, I can do it again, and
 2. I can always do One More Thing

In fact, I’m considering starting up my YouTube channel again. (grin) Probably for thoughts on writing, maybe things I forget to include in the Journal.

Whatever you write — short stories or novels or plays or scripts or songs or poetry — if you set personal challenges for yourself, your work will benefit.

When You Study Fiction, and on Critics

I often advise you to read fiction by top authors whose work you enjoy, first strictly for pleasure.

And yes, I also encourage you to read my fiction. To me, it just stands to reason that if you learn about writing fiction from me, you would also want to know whether I put into practice what I preach about in the Journal. (grin)

Awhile ago, a writer friend told me he loved the way my characters described a feature in the distance as the characters approached it. “I’m gonna steal that,” he said.

We joked about him “stealing” it, but the truth is, he had already stolen the technique, if not the particular words.

It had already sunk into his creative subconscious, and it’s still there.

How to Study

In any story or novel you read, as you come across a particular passages that blow you away — be it a passage that amazes you or an opening that intrigues you and pulls you into the story or a chapter cliffhanger that forces you to turn the page and begin the next chapter — mark it with a dogeared page or a slip of paper or an annotation on the ebook.

Then, after you've finished reading the for pleasure, go back and study the passages you've marked.

You aren't studying them to "copy" the author's style or to mimic his or her words. You study those passages to attempt to understand HOW the writer blew you away. What exactly about the passage or how it was presented affected you so strongly as a reader?

As you figure that out, what is important to your understanding will seep into your creative subconscious and become part of how you write. It will become part of your own style.

Above all else, DON'T go into the study of a specific genre or of fiction in general seriously.

ALL fiction — despite anything ever written about any of it by any critic — is only "important" as a few minutes or a few hours of entertainment, nothing more.

Plus, if critics knew anything that matters about fiction, they would be writing it, not talking about it.

Now, having written the word "critic" several times, I have to go wash my hands. To be safe, I'll wash-out my mouth too, and scrub my palate and tongue.

Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting

Anyone can jump in (or jump back in) and join or rejoin the challenge at any time.

This is a great way to jumpstart your writing and get more practice pushing down the critical voice. (See KC's quote in the Quotes of the Day above.)

There is no cost.

Notice, there's also no pressure re submitting or publishing. That's up to you.

The point of this challenge — the point of all writing challenges — is to have fun and grow as a writer. Learning to keep track of your writing is a bonus.

During the past week, in addition to whatever other fiction they're writing, the following writers reported their progress:

Short Fiction

Erin Donoho "Two Friends" 832 Historical
George Kordonis "Just Cause 3853 Suspense
Chynna Pace"
Christopher Ridge "Drumstix 4200 SF
K.C. Riggs "Las Tres Cruces" 2904 General Fiction

Longer Fiction

- Alexander Nakul *The Meerkat Watch* 1000 Urban fantasy (6061 total to date)

Congrats to all of the above for still being in the mix.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

Biological Responses to Anger

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1050

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4086 words. To date..... 4086

Day 2..... 3609 words. To date..... 7695

Day 3..... 3971 words. To date..... 11666

Day 4..... 4129 words. To date..... 15795

Fiction for November..... 33303

Fiction for 2023..... 351947

Fiction since August 1..... 237275

Nonfiction for November..... 10720

Nonfiction for the year..... 238610

Annual consumable words..... 587050

2023 Novels to Date..... 7

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 7

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 78

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 235

Short story collections..... 31

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Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark and adherence to Heinlein's Rules. Unreasoning fear and the myths of writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

Story Ideas from Pictures

November 14, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Welcome
- * Leave the Character in the Shower
- * Story Ideas from Pictures
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Stephen King writes to feel ‘the exhilaration of leaving ordinary day-to-day life behind’.” from his newsletter announcing a new short story collection, **You Like It Darker**, coming May 21, 2024

You can order this in ebook, hardcover, unabridged CD or unabridged audio download at [Simon & Schuster](#).

Welcome

Welcome to Jim M and any other new subscribers or readers of the Journal. I hope you will find it useful.

Get the Archives and other [free downloads at the Journal website](#). And I don't do the ambush thing requiring an email address. Just click the links and a PDF will download in a new page.

I also recommend reading [“I Believe in You”](#).

If you wanna see my tired old mug, catch this half-hour video where NY Times bestselling author [Vin Zandri and I are chatting about writing](#) and a bunch of other stuff.

And here's a second video of us chatting at [The Writer's Life](#).

Leave the Character in the Shower

We might differ on this, but stepping into the Hovel, sitting down at my writing 'puter and seeing a chapter title with nothing beneath is sometimes a stumper for me. Especially if the end of the previous chapter doesn't lead directly into the next, as it does when a major scene runs longer than one chapter.

Many years ago, I got to see professional SF writer CJ Cherryh on stage at ENMU in Portales NM. I don't remember a lot about the event, but one thing she said stands out. Ms. Cherryh doesn't personally believe in writer's block (neither do I), but she said if it strikes you occasionally, "Leave your character in the shower."

Several members of the audience tittered and chuckled.

She said, "No, really. If you're coming to the close of your writing day, put your character in the shower. Then when you come back, you'll have to write him out of the shower before the story can continue. And that will get you back into the flow of the writing."

That made perfect sense to me.

When I first started writing novels (they were westerns set in the late 1880s), toward the end of the day I would have Wes or whomever get off his horse, strip down and get in the shower.

Yes, it was an imaginary shower, and yes, it had popped up, glass walls, sliding door, drain and all, right in the middle of the desert or plains.

Of course, the next day I'd get rid of the shower scene (trust me, there are no showers out in the open desert), but not before I wrote him out of it. Then I'd continue with the story. And it flowed. My first novel took 29 days to write. Only one novel since then took as long as 32 days, but that one was my longest at something over 100,000 words.

Today I do the same thing, only without the shower.

Most days, Even if I've just ended a chapter, I'll add the header for the next chapter and at least write the hook and the opening for the chapter. I'll get just far enough along that the story is flowing, and then I'll stop, save my work, and head up to the house.

Same effect, except the next day I don't have to delete the shower scene. I just read over the opening of the chapter, then keep writing when I get back to the white space. Try it. It works.

Story Ideas from Pictures

In today's Of Interest is a link to Johnny B. Truant's latest post in his "Art of Noticing" series, and it's a good one. He even offers you three story ideas and displays the picture that served as the catalyst for them.

Most of my novels are in series, so the ideas for them are simply the next one in the barrel. But I often write short stories (and novels that began as short stories) based on paintings and prints that I buy, mostly at garage or estate sales, and stock photos I download from the internet.

Especially when I need to write a short story for a curated anthology or a challenge, I go to images first for story ideas.

And re the paintings and prints I buy, I never buy one unless I see at least one story unfolding in it.

In fact, I've written several stories based on one print of an old hotel in probably World War I Spain or maybe Italy. I bought it for a dollar or something at a thrift store.

One began with an imaginary guy surreptitiously looking out of a second-story window in the hotel. That one was a modern-day political intrigue story. In fact, I caught a lot of flack from members of the "cancel culture" over that one. You know. The folks who see themselves as the General Managers of the Universe.

(No, I didn't care. They're like a 20-something year old living in his parents' basement and giving them life advice over supper every night. Most of them aren't old enough yet to have firmly developed a blood type. (grin)

Another story began with two imaginary characters seated outside at one of the small, round café tables sitting to either side of the entrance to the hotel.

Another started with the imaginary desk clerk inside the hotel. Another began with a wounded soldier leaning against the back wall of the hotel in the alley, and a young woman racing frantically along the alley to see him and be with him before he died.

In another story, a young woman stepped out of that same hotel and spotted a good-looking guy across the street. Tired-of and bored-with her parents' aristocratic life, that one led to the short, four-volume Nick Spalding action-adventure series.

And from a different picture I took myself at the ruins in the ghost town of Charleston, Arizzona, a short story that evolved into what will soon be the 22-volume Wes Crowley saga.

Especially if you believe in yourself, trust your characters, and write into the dark, you really never know where a story or novel will go or where it will lead you. And it can all begin with the simple act of looking at a picture or part of a picture.

So if you're ever feeling stuck for a story idea, look around you. Maybe even at the pictures on the walls of your house. Oh, and I'd be happy to share the print of the old hotel with you as a snapshot. Just [email me and request the hotel picture](#).

Talk with you again soon.

Tomorrow: A Bittersweet Realization

Of Interest

[An Image is Worth a Thousand Tales](#) I often get story ideas from paintings and prints I buy and stock photos I get from the internet.

[Stephen King on Chasing Life with Dr. Sanjay Gupta](#) — video and transcript

[Book Tour: At Home with Stephen King](#)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1170

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4086 words. To date..... 4086

Day 2..... 3609 words. To date..... 7695

Day 3..... 3971 words. To date..... 11666

Day 4..... 4129 words. To date..... 15795

Day 5..... 4542 words. To date..... 20337

Fiction for November..... 37845

Fiction for 2023..... 356489

Fiction since August 1..... 241817

Nonfiction for November..... 11890

Nonfiction for the year..... 239780

Annual consumable words..... 592762

2023 Novels to Date..... 7

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 7

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 78

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 235

Short story collections..... 31

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I've Fallen Ahead, and a Bittersweet Realization

November 15, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * I've Fallen Ahead
- * A Bittersweet Realization
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Change is inevitable. Growth is optional.” John C. Maxwell

“Dreaming is fine. But you have to put feet in your prayers.” Sylvia Ann Wilson Stanbrough, my paternal grandmother (1898 – 1966)

I've Fallen Ahead

and I'm only now beginning to understand what happened. So the following is in the interest of full disclosure.

I started the Harvey Stanbrough Writing in Public (SWIP) substack in order to post “live” each day whatever I wrote that day.

Of course, I only wanted to post whole chapters, but I don't always (or ever) stop writing exactly at the end of a chapter. Maybe I actually wrote three and a quarter or three and a half chapters that day. You can see how the excess could build up.

Then, in the Journal — to keep myself from getting confused and so all things would be equal — I started posting fiction numbers that reflected only what I posted to the SWIP substack. So less than I actually wrote.

As a result, the fiction numbers you've been reading for the past few days have actually been from TWO days before, not one day before.

And here we are.

Today I'm trying to play catch-up (or “catch-down” since I fell ahead and not behind?) with my numbers. The only way I can do that is to post the day's writing plus all the extra that I *didn't* report each day as I went.

So today the fiction numbers (under Numbers below) will actually reflect Day 6 (4523 words) plus all the “extra” words I wrote along the way (4173) for a total of 8696 words. So my average for the six days of writing is actually 4838 words per day. Or (on average) about 695 more words per day than I was reporting.

And at least the Journal will all be caught-up (or caught-down). Unfortunately, I can't do the same thing on the SWIP substack without overwhelming the readers. I would have to post six or seven chapters to catch up, and I'm just not gonna do that.

Chapters 17 – 19 (which I actually wrote day before yesterday) went live yesterday (Nov 14). Chapters 20 – 22 (which I wrote yesterday) will go live today (Nov 15). And whatever I write today will go live tomorrow on Nov 16.

So chances are good the novel will wrap the day BEFORE I post the final installment to the SWIP.

Weird, eh? Just thinking about it makes my mind warp. It also makes me kind'a glad the whole SWIP experiment is almost at an end. At least for awhile.

A Bittersweet Realization

I experienced a bittersweet realization two days ago as I was writing along in the current novel (at the time, a little over 23000 words in): Unless a miracle happens, this will be the final Wes Crowley novel.

For all I knew, the short story "Adobe Walls" was the end of my budding friendship with Wes.

A few months later, I thought it was over after I wrote the first three Wes Crowley novels.

Then I wrote three prequels, and then six sequels. That brought the saga to twelve novels and a satisfactory close. Then, again, I thought he was through.

The the Gap series cropped up, but now, finally, that's drawing to a close. I do suspect Wes, finally retired from law enforcement, might climb aboard his brother-in-law Miguel's primary fishing boat and find more adventures at sea, but I won't be going with him.

This novel will wrap the Gap series, which fills the 16-year gap between Book 2 (Comanche Fire) and Book 3 (Wes Crowley, Texas Ranger) of the original 12-volume saga.

Two very minor spoilers —

1. In this novel, Wes returns to Amarillo after a nearly year-long stint as a deputy US marshal for Governor Lew Wallace of The New Mexico Territory. He resigns his position and rejoins Company D of the Texas Rangers at Amarillo.
2. During his welcome-home party, one of the corporals hints that Wes himself will be promoted to the rank of corporal soon. (All of this is WITD, not planned.) Wes also learns there are four new Rangers in the company. One is very quiet and another is very loud. (Again, all WITD.)

Then I remembered, in Book 3 of the original saga, Wes is a corporal, and one of the Rangers under him is very quiet and one is very loud.

At that point I could see what was coming. Not the ending of the book, but part of the book. And very soon, the end of the series.

So I went to Book 3, found the names of the loud and quiet Rangers, and changed the names in the current novel to match.

And the story continues. But by the time this one wraps, both the corporals who “raised” Wes in the Rangers will be promoted to sergeant (they’re both sergeants in Book 3) and Wes and Mac will be promoted to corporal.

Weird how things like that work out, but it can only happen if you write into the dark.

Consider, the current story itself told me it would be the last one, and that it finally will close the gap between Books 2 and 3 of the original saga.

So there are 12 novels in the original saga, and this will be the 10th and final novel in the Gap series: 22 novels in all to tell the whole of Wes Crowley’s story.

To writerly stuff — The total word count of the 21 novels before this one is just short of a million (966,155) words of published fiction. It seems fitting to me that when this novel is finished, the total will exceed a million words. I’m a little annoyed it didn’t wait awhile and come along as my 100th novel. But I have to write ’em as they come.

Lessons for other writers? Only one that I can think of.

From the very first word of the very first novel (both overall and of what became the Wes Crowley saga) I have trusted my characters. I just wrote whatever story they were living as they lived it, as it unfolded around them.

Many writers write differently than I do. They plot, plan, revise, rewrite and insist you must do so too. They turn fiction writing into labor. Some of them even refer to it as drudgery. And that’s all fine if you want to feel mired in something all the time.

Hey, different strokes. But then, most of them quit writing altogether because the writing is work instead of fun.

Writing into the dark isn’t like that. Writing into the dark is sheer pleasure and exhilaration from the first word through the end of the novel.

However, if you can’t believe in yourself enough to even try writing into the dark, that’s on you. How you choose to write — whether you turn fiction writing into labor so you feel you’re answering some “special calling” or let go and allow it to be the most fun you’ve ever had — doesn’t harm or affect what I do in any way.

But I still hope for your benefit that you will try WITD, and that you will do so sooner rather than later. It remains the only way to record the authentic story, what actually happened in the “fictional” world as you raced through it with your characters.

After I finish the current novel, I might take a few days off to change out the covers, put all the books in chronological order, and release them all as one massive saga. Or I might not. I might just go on to the next novel, whatever it will be and in whatever universe it will occur.

At any rate, whenever I rebrand and collate the series, I plan to put the whole Wes Crowley saga on sale: one (much lower) price for subscribers to the Journal, and also a something-lower-than-retail price for everyone else for a limited time.

It’s no secret that I believe my characters actually exist, albeit maybe in a parallel world or another dimension. In fact, there’s a ver good chance my long-time friend Wes Crowley is reading this right along with you.

So if I may leave a personal note....

Thanks, Wes, for allowing me to saddle-up and ride along with you during a lot of your life. Doing so was nothing short of a high honor for me, my friend.

And thank you for teaching me that “Upright is not a matter of degree.” You’re right. In every momenI, a person either is or isn’t.

I truly hope you’re enjoying your retirement in Agua Perlado, mi amigo especial. I will miss you and Charley for a very long time. You’re one to ride the river with.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[**Astrophysicist explains the truth behind time travel**](#) In this case, “truth” is relative to knowledge. I expect I’ll talk about this in the Journal soon. Something for SF writers to think about.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1400

Writing of Rose Padilla (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4086 words. To date..... 4086
Day 2..... 3609 words. To date..... 7695
Day 3..... 3971 words. To date..... 11666
Day 4..... 4129 words. To date..... 15795

Day 5..... 4542 words. To date..... 20337
Day 6..... 8696 words. To date..... 29033

Fiction for November..... 46451
Fiction for 2023..... 365185
Fiction since August 1..... 32883
Nonfiction for November..... 13290
Nonfiction for the year..... 241880
Annual consumable words..... 602858

2023 Novels to Date..... 7
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 7
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 78
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 235
Short story collections..... 31

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Do Characters Actually Exist, and Time Travel for Writers

November 16, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Finished the Novel
- * An Excellent Question
- * Time Travel for Writers
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Only human beings, in an effort to soothe their collective insecurity, is haughty enough to put forth the assertion that they are ‘better than’ instead of ‘different from’.” Yer Uncle Harv

“Being equal does not equate to being the same. And being unequal does not render either side less important.” Same source

Finished the Novel

Well, the novel wrapped yesterday at 3:20 p.m. Also, the real title of the book presented itself.

Today I'll make a cycling pass over the last three chapters (no doubt the word count will change a bit), then upload those chapters to the Writing in Public substack to go out at 4 p.m. and send the whole manuscript to Russ, my excellent first reader.

If you're wondering, Russ doesn't critique. He simply reads the story and notes any wrong words (solder for soldier, etc.) and inconsistencies that pop out at him as he enjoys the story.

While Russ is doing that, I'll write a promo doc and design a cover (for the time being, until I rebrand the whole series). When he sends it back, I'll correct anything he catches, then publish it. And that will be that.

I plan to start a new novel as soon as an idea occurs. As I keep saying, moving forward, putting new words on the page, is what matters.

I am a writer. Writers write.

An Excellent Question

In a comment on yesterday's post, Matt P wrote,

“I have a question relating to your characters. Specifically, why do you believe they actually exist? I find it an interesting perspective and one I share in a sense so I'm wondering what made you come to that conclusion? Or was it always something you considered to be true?”

As I told Matt, I've never actually thought about this before.

Here's my expanded response:

1. Because they do.
2. Why not?

No conclusion, just a state of being. They Are. (God allegedly told Moses, “I Am.”)

I believe “my” characters (and “your” characters) actually exist for the same reasons I believe my wife or my neighbor or a hummingbird or my beloved little cat actually exists. Or dirt or trees or sky or....

After all, those also are only compilations of sensory input processed by the brain.

I believe the characters existed before I discovered them, I believe they exist now, and I believe they will continue to exist and live their lives long after I cease to exist myself.

I also consider myself fortunate that I finally worked up the courage to ask their permission to run through their lives with them occasionally, and to record their stories as I go. And that they actually invited me to do so. Among humans who “actually exist,” only my wife has extended me the same courtesy.

And I’m fortunate I was just wise enough to let the character live their own lives (as I let everyone else live theirs) instead of trying to force my “version” of it on them.

After all, my (your) parents existed before I was (you were) born. I only became aware of them all at once and then slowly over time. The same way I became aware of other people, places and things that I encountered through my physical senses. And the same way I became/become aware of the characters.

Sometime in grade school, I suppose, is when I first became aware of other people and creatures and things I would never actually see, hear, smell, touch, etc.

Like dinosaurs or the Dubai Tower or the Jaguar XKE (my favorite car, though I have never seen one in my reality) or however many billions of humans there are on Earth whom I will never actually physically meet.

I’m sure some philosopher in the past has asked whether we believe people, things, etc. exist because they actually do or because we believe they do.

To which my response would be What difference does it make?

Except that if I believed the “fictional” characters exist and that all of the others do not, some human or government entity would lock me away “for your own good.” (What they mean is “So you will stop making us feel uneasy.”) (grin)

All of which kind of leads us to today’s topic:

Time Travel for Writers

Is time travel impossible?

This is a question that is of interest to SF writers and to all writers, really. Who has never wondered what it would be like to travel through time?

But isn’t time travel impossible?

Well, yes. In the timeline in which we currently live, time travel is impossible. But it is also at least plausible.

And the fact that it is not possible proves it.

Consider the “Grandfather Paradox.” As astrophysicist Adi Foord explained in the article I linked to in Of Interest yesterday,

“The famous “grandfather paradox” is a hypothetical problem that could arise if someone traveled back in time and accidentally [ahem, or intentionally] prevented their grandparents from meeting. This would create a paradox where you were never born...: [And if you were never born] how could you have traveled back in time in the first place? It’s a mind-boggling puzzle that adds to the mystery of time travel.”

Meh. Not so mind-boggling really. The paradox is flawed.

As I wrote above, we cannot time-travel in the timeline in which we are currently living.

But there’s no law saying you have to remain in this timeline. Every time you make the smallest decision, your personal timeline changes.

And if you create a time-travel machine or device that works, that act alone will begin in a timeline in which time-travel IS possible.

Nobody else on Earth in the current timeline you stepped out of when you invented your time-travel machine will be able to travel in time. Only you.

Well, okay, unless they also invent a time-travel machine or device that works. But even then, they will have stepped into their own new timeline, not yours.

Let’s look for a moment at Time itself.

As we recognize it, Time consists of the past, the present, and the future.

We all know what the present is. It is the ever-fleeting Now, a nano-instant that follows the past and precedes “the future.” We speak of “the future” as if it, like the past, is an event. It isn’t.

We also know what the past is. It is what has already happened. It is a singular, locked-in event composed of countless lesser events. No matter how much you sometimes wish you could change it or affect it in any way, you can’t. (This is also one reason people don’t believe in time travel.)

But the future isn’t simply the other side of the past-present-future coin with the present being the minuscule edge of the coin.

The future exists only as countless possibilities that haven’t happened yet.

Every decision you make and every step you take in every moment of your life leads to a completely new future with countless other possibilities than you might have encountered if you had decided differently or stepped in a slightly different direction.

Every decision, every step, leads you into a new timeline of possibilities. That's exactly why it's so important to choose well. It's why we talk of "planning our future," a concept that is at least as faulty as time-travel.

Even the best fiction writer in the world can't write a story that hasn't happened yet. You can plot, plan, outline and make up a *false* story — a lie at best — or you can write the facts of an authentic story as it unfolds and is lived by those who are living it. But that's for you to decide.

So if you do manage to step out of our current timeline (in which time travel is "impossible," remember?) and create a time-travel machine, and if you step into that time machine and travel back to any point in the past, it is impossible to affect future events in your original timeline.

Why?

Because when you step out of your time machine, everything after that is the future in your new timeline.

Anything you do, any decision you make in the present or in the past (which becomes the present the instant you step into it), will lead to a new immediate future (a different timeline) with countless future possibilities for other timelines.

And none of them will be the future from which you traveled into the past: which has become your new present and your new future.

To see this concept in action, I invite you to take a look at my time-travel novel, [The Portals](#). It is available on Amazon and everywhere else ebooks are sold.

I also wrote a time-travel western short story — "Rider Jones and the Portal" — for a Cave Creek anthology ([Bitter Mountain Moonlight](#)) edited by Dean Wesley Smith.

If you want to play with this concept yourself as a writer, you don't have to invent a time-travel machine and neither do your characters unless they just want to.

If one of them sees a glimmering (or not) kind of frame or opening or a door out in the open, and if s/he walks through it and disappears, chances are it's a time portal.

Writing is a great way to explore the concept without having to have a degree in engineering or quantum physics, and it's a ton of fun. Like the future, the possibilities are endless.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[7 Keys to Writing the Ultimate Spy Thriller](#) Um, or just write what happens.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1610

Writing of Looking to the Future (formerly *Rose Padilla*, WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4086 words. To date..... 4086
Day 2..... 3609 words. To date..... 7695
Day 3..... 3971 words. To date..... 11666
Day 4..... 4129 words. To date..... 15795
Day 5..... 4542 words. To date..... 20337
Day 6..... 8696 words. To date..... 29033
Day 7..... 5025 words. To date..... 34058 (done)

Fiction for November..... 51566 (Guess I won NaNo.)
Fiction for 2023..... 370210
Fiction since August 1..... 37908
Nonfiction for November..... 14900
Nonfiction for the year..... 242790
Annual consumable words..... 609493

2023 Novels to Date..... 8
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 7
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 79
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 235
Short story collections..... 31

[Help keep the Journal Going](#) with either a one-time or a recurring monthly donation via debit or credit card or PayPal. You can also press the Share button at the end of this post (on Substack). Thank you!

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark and adherence to Heinlein's Rules. Unreasoning fear and the myths of writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

[Recount, Promo, and a Cover](#)

November 17, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * A Friend Is Writing in Public!
- * Recount, Promo, and a Cover
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“I continue to be mystified by Chat GPT, because bullshitting vaguely plausible sounding answers based on no understanding of the question is something humans do exceedingly well, and will do free.” Falling Diphthong (username) in a reply on [Askamanager.org](https://askamanager.org) Thanks to Gary for the tip.

A Friend Is Writing in Public!

Hey, if you're a fan of those who have enough belief in themselves to write in public, you're in luck.

I *STRONGLY* recommend Philip Michael Smith's new substack *As My Cigar Gently Weeps* and his first shot at writing in public with [Sinners: A Noir Crime Thriller](#). I just read the first chapter. This guy knows how to write.

Take a gander, and if he pulls you into the story, hit the little heart at the bottom and take a few seconds to leave a comment with your support.

Just so you know, there's some language, but it's a noir story. Duh. None of the language is used gratuitously, and I don't doubt for a second it's what the character actually said.

Recount, Promo, and a Cover

While cycling back over the last three chapters of *Looking to the Future*, I added over 800 words to the last Wes Crowley manuscript. In fact, the last three chapters became the last *four* chapters.

So I counted yesterday as another writing day. See the Numbers below. Now I'm done. (grin)

My first reader, Russ, also got the manuscript back to me in the early afternoon. And for the first time ever, he caught *nothing*! I was amazed.

I'm pretty much famous among first readers for omitting the D at the end of past-tense words and adding an S to singular nouns. Or writing “when” when I meant to write “went.” Things like that. (grin)

Anyway, I published the book for pre-order to Amazon and D2D by 1:15 p.m. yesterday.

You can see the cover and the sales pitch on the book page at [Looking to the Future](#). I think when I rebrand the series I'll do so with a similar cover for all 22 books.

Best of all, there's no reason I can't start writing again by today at the latest. Well, after I publish this edition of the Journal and finish setting up a new laptop.

If you followed along with the story on the Writing in Public substack, thank you, and I hope you enjoyed the story.

And if you want to see what grabbed me about Wes Crowley in the first place, I'm still giving away the very first book in the overall saga (chronologically), *Rise of a Warrior*. If you'd like a copy, [email me](#).

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[Episode No. 843: The Professional Writer](#) For me, an "author" is a person who "has written." A writer is a person who writes. A professional writer is a person who shows up, like s/he would at any other job.

[One Well-Chosen Detail: Write Juicy Descriptions Without Overwhelming Your Reader](#) In case you want this. I write through the POV character's physical and emotional senses. If s/he notices something, it goes in. If s/he doesn't, it doesn't. That's why my readers feel they are in the scene with the character.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 550

Writing of Looking to the Future (WCG10SF5)

Day 1..... 4086 words. To date..... 4086
Day 2..... 3609 words. To date..... 7695
Day 3..... 3971 words. To date..... 11666
Day 4..... 4129 words. To date..... 15795
Day 5..... 4542 words. To date..... 20337
Day 6..... 8696 words. To date..... 29033
Day 7..... 5025 words. To date..... 34058
Day 8..... 0802 words. To date..... 34860 (done)

Fiction for November..... 52368 (Guess I still won NaNo.)
Fiction for 2023..... 371012

Fiction since August 1.....	38710
Nonfiction for November.....	15450
Nonfiction for the year.....	243340
Annual consumable words.....	610845
2023 Novels to Date.....	8
2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
2023 Short Stories to Date.....	7
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	79
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	235
Short story collections.....	31

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Faux Instructors, and Passive Constructions

November 18, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Welcome
- * A New Story
- * Yesterday
- * A Rant: Faux Instructors
- * Passive Constructions
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“You should go to your doctor and have your mouth sewn shut rather than hold forth to other writers on a topic you don't know intimately.” Me, in a post about five years ago

Welcome

Welcome to Brien C and any other new subscribers or readers of the Journal. I hope you will find it useful.

Get the Archives and other [free downloads at the Journal website](#). Just click the links and a PDF will download in a new page.

I also recommend reading [“I Believe in You”](#).

Oh, and check out this half-hour video where bestselling author Vin Zandri and I are chatting about writing: [The Writer’s Life](#).

A New Story

“The Odd Task” published yesterday on my [Stanbrough Writes Substack](#).

To subscribe, click the link above and then the Subscribe button at the end of the story. You’ll receive a new short story every Friday, and it’s free.

Below the Subscribe button, there are other short stories you can read in most genres. Enjoy!

Yesterday

I didn’t write fiction yesterday, but I did get through a backlog of other stuff.

The only pertinent part of that was setting up my “new” writing ‘puter. While I was deciding which folders and files to keep on my it, I ran across a .txt file I wrote sometime in the past about Faux Writing Instructors.

I despise those folks. They cost young writers and would-be writers who don’t know any better a TON of time. Plus, people like me have to come along behind them and clean up their mess.

Have you ever tried to convince someone that the information they paid good money for is so much bullflop? They’re resistant to say the least. I don’t really blame them, but you have to get over stuff like that.

Anyway, I did a quick search of the Journal and didn’t find the post anywhere. So I thought I’d go ahead and post it today:

A Rant: Faux Writing Instructors

There are dozens of them out there. Maybe hundreds. Maybe thousands. So-called writing instructors who tell you things like

- get rid of all instances of “was” because it creates passive construction. (Um, no, it doesn’t.)
- get rid of all gerunds (some of them actually say “ing’ words”) because they create passive construction (No, they don’t.)
- get rid of all instances of “had,” again because it creates passive construction. (Again, no, it doesn’t.)
- get rid of all adverbs (or “all” anything, for that matter).

Any advice to “always” or “never” or anything else absolute regarding the language is ludicrous at best. Words are your tools. Use them as appropriately as you can to convey your characters’ story.

Among faux instructors, my personal favorites are the spitwads (yeah, I substituted a “p”) who say things like

- “I can’t explain passive construction (or “show-don’t-tell” or any number of other things), but I know it when I see it.”

No, they damn well don’t. If they did, they would do their job and explain it. With examples.

As I wrote earlier, these kinds of people annoy me. They should receive jail time for impersonating a writing instructor.

Yes, I’m serious. It should be a felony to say false things that directly affect other peoples’ lives and can lead them astray for years.

At the very least, faux writing instructors should all get in a big circle, join hands, and Shut The Hell Up. They rank right up there with “developmental” editors, book doctors, critics and critiquers, and others who think they somehow know your characters and your story better than you do.

If you EVER pay money for a writing course, and if the instructor says, “Wull, I can’t really explain [fill in the blank],” that should set off a warning bell in your head. And if he says “But I know it when I see it,” you should stand up, demand your money back Right Now and leave the class.

Because whatever he DOES know, he will poison your writing with all the things he DOESN’T know.

I’ve taught dozens of private writing seminars and presented hundreds of classes and sessions at writers’ conferences over the years, and I never said anything, not once, that I didn’t know to be absolutely true. And no, I don’t mean “just for me.”

When someone asks me a question, if I don’t know the answer, I *tell* them I don’t know the answer. Then I look it up, practice it, use it, and make it my own so I understand it thoroughly. THEN I pass it along.

In other words, I don’t just make something up or wave jazz-hands and slip to one side behind “But I know it when I see it.”

In every seminar I’ve ever taught, I tell my students to Question Everything, whether they hear it from me or any other instructor. Especially if the concept is not clear in their mind.

The instructor’s JOB is to know the topic and convey facts and examples to students. If the instructor can’t explain something, he has no business teaching it in the first place.

And when those people say “Get rid of all [fill in the blank] because it creates passive voice,” they flat don’t know what they’re talking about.

Passive Constructions

Listen. You can’t “fix” a passive construction by getting rid of ANYthing.

In a passive construction, the subject either disappears or becomes the object of the preposition “by” at the end of the sentence. (I call this a “by phrase” so I don’t have to keep writing “a prepositional phrase that begins with the preposition ‘by’.”)

“Joe delivered the pizza” is an action sentence.

How can you tell? Because “delivered” is an active verb. The subject (Joe) did something (delivered) to something (the pizza, which is the direct object).

If you want to make that a passive construction, you have to write it in one of two ways:

Either “The pizza was delivered by Joe.” (Hear how awkward that is? And see how that construction moves the subject of the sentence to the end and makes it the object of the preposition “by”?)

Or “The pizza was delivered.” (This is exactly the same thing, but now the culprit who performed the action is completely hidden. This is called an “implied by-phrase.”)

The word “was” doesn’t form a passive construction. “Was” is a state-of-being verb, and it’s necessary. I defy you to describe a state of being without using either “was,” “is,” or “had been.” For example, try to describe the population of your city or town without using a state-of-being verb.

The state-of-being verbs are am, is, are, was, were, be, being, and been, sometimes accompanied by has or have.

And in the case of the two examples above, “was” is also a linking verb, linking “pizza” to the predicate adjective “delivered.”

So there you go. Everything you never wanted to know about passive construction.

If you really want to check your work for passive constructions, look for any sentence that contain the verb “was” or “had been” *AND* an implied or actual by-phrase. Because it’s that by-phrase, not “was,” that creates passive voice.

That by-phrase is what you need to avoid. You know, when you can.

While looking to see wether I'd posted this topic before, I did run across a post that expands the topic in the old pro-writer blog over on HarveyStanbrough.com. That was back in July 2018. To read that one (complete with real-life examples), click [Have a Clue](#).

Note: If you do visit that post, the second buy link for Punctuation for Writers no longer exists.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[“Can’t Put the Book Down”](#) This! All about pacing from back when TKZ was useful.

[Why People Read Books? Statistics on Consumer Behavior of Readers](#)

The Numbers

The Journal.....	1320
Writing of	
Day 1..... XXXX words. To date..... XXXXX	
Fiction for November.....	52368
Fiction for 2023.....	371012
Fiction since August 1.....	38710
Nonfiction for November.....	16770
Nonfiction for the year.....	244660
Annual consumable words.....	612165
2023 Novels to Date.....	8
2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
2023 Short Stories to Date.....	7
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	79
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	235
Short story collections.....	31

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If you can't make a monetary donation, please click the Share button at the end of this post (on Substack) and/or leave a comment. Thanks!

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Thoughts on Pacing and Writing in Public

November 19, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * A Note on Pacing
- * Hmm. Writing in Public
- * Yesterday
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“I find ideas are the most ubiquitous things in human nature, besides the desire to procreate which starts as an idea anyway.” Michael Grant, POV character in the forthcoming *Alibi: Lesson for Elsewhere* by [Robert J. Sadler](#)

“Ants are so much like human beings as to be an embarrassment. They farm fungi, raise aphids as livestock, launch armies into wars, use chemical sprays to alarm and confuse enemies, capture slaves. The families of weaver ants engage in child labor, holding their larvae like shuttles to spin out the thread that sews the leaves together for their fungus gardens. They exchange information ceaselessly. They do everything but watch television.” Lewis Thomas (1913-93), “The father of modern immunology and experimental pathology.”

“Publication is not all it is cracked up to be. But writing is. Writing has so much to give, so much to teach, so many surprises. ... It's like discovering that while you thought you needed the tea ceremony for the caffeine, what you really needed was the tea ceremony. The act of writing turns out to be its own reward.” Anne Lamott

A Note on Pacing

As I left in a comment at TKZ yesterday,

“I use a cliffhanger at the end of every major scene and the end of every chapter. Sometimes those (scene and chapter end) are the same and sometimes they aren't, depending on the story and the pacing and the characters' voice.

“And immediately following the cliffhanger, at the beginning of the next scene or chapter, I use a hook to pull the reader into the story again and propel him or her forward.

“Pacing works, and it’s among the lesser-understood and more-important crafts in the art of writing fiction, whether short stories, novellas or novels.”

If you missed the Journal yesterday, [I recommend you read that TKZ post.](#)

Of *Blackwell Ops 12: Nick Soldata* (an action-adventure suspense crime thriller), my first reader wrote this:

“In reading this, I became consciously aware for the first time how everything you write—all of the descriptions of settings and people, all the activities along the way of researching the target, dealing with whatever intermediary the protagonist has to deal with for information, weaponry, etc., all of the protagonist’s thought processes as he’s considering his options and making his plans—all slowly but inexorably build tension and suspense until the moment of the hit.”

That’s the effect of pacing.

I was more than flattered. When I read the above for the first time, It reminded me of my own reading and re-reading of *The Stand* (Stephen King’s ultimate work, IMHO) and all that I learned from it on each successive pass about writing and about why and how he did what he did.

Why successive passes? Because I wasn’t ready to learn particular concepts the first time I reread and studied it. On later rereads, I learned more and more.

That’s one reason I consider King the only Stage 5 writer writing today. Only Hemingway, especially through his *Collected Stories*, even came close to teaching me as much about writing as I learned from studying King’s *The Stand*.

I recommend both of them.

Hmm. Writing in Public...

From the days of Harlan Ellison writing on a typewriter in a department store window and an assistant posting each page, fresh from the typewriter, on that window for the readers, writing in public isn’t an ego thing. It’s a transparency thing.

I encourage you to try it, whether to drive you to the writing computer or to shore-up your daily goals or whatever. Or try something that will nudge you to the degree you need to be nudged.

I use the Writing in Public substack primarily as another platform for teaching by example vs. via straight lecture. I hope those who followed along through Crowley and the two Blackwell Ops novels picked up something useful about the writing craft.

I would have leapt at the chance to watch Dean do that back in the day when he wrote a novel in 7 or 10 days and reported on it in his blog.

I suspect actually following along as he wrote — vs. simply reading what he reported about the writing in his blog — would have been invaluable.

I would have wanted to see *how* he wrote. Whether he drew me into the story and kept me committed. And how he did that. Not to mention how he turned a phrase, how he used cliffhangers and hooks and pacing, and so on. But Substack wasn't around back then.

And can you imagine having the opportunity to read along as King writes pretty much anything? I am so there. I'd even give up some of my own writing time for that.

As for the future of my own WIP substack, If I start a novel in a series I haven't posted to the WIP yet or if I start a one-off, I might go back to writing in public.

Or I might not.

Especially with a one-off novel, I often “write to the beginning.” Not always or even often, but sometimes I write what's given to me and kind of find the beginning of the story as I go.

When that happens, I delete whatever I wrote before that point so I won't include it in the word count for the day. But you can't go back and delete something from a post that's already gone out on Substack.

I could post the day *after* I write something, but then I wouldn't really be writing in public.

Plus posting to substack is a bit of a time suck. (grin) Posting a few chapters doesn't take long, but when I add up all the little things I do that “don't take long,” they consume a lot of time.

Yesterday

I broke one of my own rules. I went back and cycled through a story that's long-since been in the can.

I want to bring my magic realism stories forward and post them to the Stanbrough Writes substack, the one where you get a free story every Friday.

But as I started reading over it, the pacing (primarily the paragraphing) was nothing short of horrible. Usually I let anything I've written stand as a marker of my skill at the time I wrote it.

But I decided that selection of 8 or 10 stories was worth my time to update. So I updated the first one (“Eufemia and José”) and posted it to the SW substack to go live on December 22. The others will go live on the following Fridays.

But I'll update the others as I have time. Today, I want to write something new.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[Why Activism Leads to So Much Bad Writing](#) Um, because you're there to entertain, not preach.

[The Stories of William Faulkner: Mississippi's Talebearer](#)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1160

Writing of

Day 1..... XXXX words. To date..... XXXXX

Fiction for November..... 52368

Fiction for 2023..... 371012

Fiction since August 1..... 38710

Nonfiction for November..... 17930

Nonfiction for the year..... 245820

Annual consumable words..... 613325

2023 Novels to Date..... 8

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 7

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 79

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 235

Short story collections..... 31

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Crossing Genres, and Hemingway

November 20, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Correction
- * Crossing Genres
- * Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting

- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

Thanks to Bob B for the first three quotes below:

“The more [the writer] learns from experience the more truly he can imagine. If he gets so he can imagine truly enough people will think that the things he relates all really happened and that he is just reporting.” Ernest Hemingway in *Monologue to the Maestro: A High Seas Letter* (Esquire, 1935)

“After you learn to write your whole object is to convey everything, every sensation, sight, feeling, place and emotion to the reader.” Ernest Hemingway in *Monologue to the Maestro: A High Seas Letter* (Esquire, 1935)

“The best way is always to stop when you are going good and when you know what will happen next. If you do that every day when you are writing a novel you will never be stuck. That is the most valuable thing I can tell you so try to remember it.” Ernest Hemingway in response to “How much should you write in a day?” in *Monologue to the Maestro: A High Seas Letter* (Esquire, 1935)

“Success consists of going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm.” Winston Churchill (Thanks, Sam T)

Correction

Oops. In yesterday’s Journal, I quoted a line from Robjert J. Sadler’s forthcoming novel *ALIBI: Latin for Elsewhere*.

Somehow, my fingers did that thing where they substitute one word for another and I typed Alibi: LESSON for Elsewhere. Sigh.

Crossing Genres

One of the problems I’ve most often encountered with writers has to do with writing across the literary (vs. the commercial) genres. Many believe they simply can’t.

Whether you write short stories, novellas, novels, plays, screenplays, song lyrics, or poetry, it’s all fiction, and it’s all writing. So just sayin’, don’t be afraid to spread your literary wings a little.

As an aside, in the English language there are only two modes of written communication:

Prose mode, in which the writer pays no attention to the meter (rhythms) inherent in the language, and

Verse mode, in which the writer pays meticulous attention to the rhythms (as set by the meter) inherent in the language and uses them to his or her advantage.

Any literary genre may be written in either mode.

For example, even a novel may be written in Verse mode, although the basic unit of the novel is the sentence, not the line.

And a poem may be written in Prose mode. This is commonly called “free verse”.

The primary difference among the various literary genres is the basic unit inherent in the form. Short stories, novellas, novels, plays, screenplays, essays and so on — regardless of which mode they’re presented in — are based on the **sentence**.

But the basic unit of Poetry (remember, it’s a genre, not a mode) is the **poetic line**.

I’ve written the same POV character in short stories, novellas, novels, songs, poems, and (unproduced) plays. I haven’t attempted a screenplay yet, and probably never will (or write another stage play) because I find the format annoying.

Likewise, one of the problems I’ve most often encountered with readers is *reading across commercial genres*.

As a writer in the Western, Science Fiction, Science Fantasy, Action-Adventure, Mystery and Suspense/Thriller genres, I encounter that one a lot.

Don’t get me wrong. If you really don’t enjoy being scared (or grossed) out of your wits, okay, don’t read Horror. (As a reader, I personally love suspenseful horror, but I avoid the slash-and-gash stuff).

If traditional, bodice-ripping Romance isn’t your cuppa, don’t read Romance. If shoot-’em-up westerns are your thing, don’t read those either.

As a reader, I’m not a fan of traditional Romance stories, yet there’s a romance element in almost everything I write.

But otherwise, if you find a talented author whose works really engage you one genre, I encourage you to read that author’s other works in other genres.

Because it’s all written by the same guy or gal in that writer’s voice or style. Next to the story itself, how the story is presented (the author’s voice or style) is why you find the story so engaging in the first place.

But not only readers can take a lesson from this.

Writers, if you love to convey the stories of your characters, and if sometimes some of those characters veer off into living stories in other genres, I recommend you run with it and see where it goes.

Your very first Romance featuring a POV character who first introduced himself or herself to you as a cold-blooded killer might well be the novel that engages Romance readers and pulls them over to the Thriller or Action-Adventure side of your work.

Or the first Thriller you write that features a descendent of her great-great-great grandfather who was a Texas Ranger in the late 1800s, might be the book that moves your Western readers into the Thriller-Reader category.

You just never know when or where your next sale might happen or where your popularity as a writer might balloon or skyrocket.

So don't be afraid of writing in different genres, all under the same name, of course, to help with bleed-through.

Instead of being unsure and frightened of writing or of writing in a different genre, be unsure and exhilarated.

Again, THAT you write is what matters. What you write, not so much. A good story is a good story. And it's all only entertainment.

Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting

Anyone can jump in (or jump back in) and join or rejoin the challenge at any time. There's no cost.

During the past week, in addition to whatever other fiction they're writing, the following writers reported their progress:

Short Fiction

George Kordonis "MatchMaker Inc." 5433 Urban Fantasy
Alexander Nakul "Under the Lighthouse" 1319 Historical Fantasy
Alexander Nakul "Elf Passion" 12421 Erotic Fantasy,
Christopher Ridge "The Baby 3200 Horror
K.C. Riggs "Invisi-bled" 1412 words General

Longer Fiction

Alexander Nakul *The Meerkat Watch* 4418 Urban fantasy (10479 total to date)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[Hemingway-Monologue-to-the-Maestro](#) Clicking the link will download a PDF document. This is a must-read for anyone serious about the craft of writing. (Thanks to Bob B for sending this.)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1030

Writing of

Day 1..... XXXX words. To date..... XXXXX

Fiction for November..... 52368

Fiction for 2023..... 371012

Fiction since August 1..... 38710

Nonfiction for November..... 18960

Nonfiction for the year..... 246850

Annual consumable words..... 614355

2023 Novels to Date..... 8

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 7

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 79

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 235

Short story collections..... 31

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Writing in Public: The Saga of Maldito

November 21, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * In Case You've Wondered
- * Writing in Public: The Saga of Maldito
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“90 percent of design is typography. And the other 90 percent is whitespace.” Jeffrey Zeldman

In Case You've Wondered

I haven't started a new novel yet because I'm up to here in another project. Once I get my teeth into something, it's difficult to let go until I'm finished. (grin)

Especially when I enjoy it. I'm having fun *and* I'm increasing my inventory. Those are the only two requirements of writing fiction as a day job.

Remember I said I was cycling over some of my old magic realism short stories to bring them up to date with my skill level now as opposed to when I wrote them back in 2014?

That's what I'm doing. I'm reading each of them, and mostly reparagraphing them for pacing. Today, I know pacing, cliffhangers and hooks intimately.

Back in 2014, I had no clue.

So I'm reading them for pleasure, a function of the creative subconscious. And I'm cycling as I go.

As I read, my fingers rest on the keyboard. As a new paragraph should begin, my right pinkie hits the Enter key. Occasionally the characters insert or change a word here and there.

BUT — I know that I won't slip into editing (critical mind). If I thought I might, I wouldn't touch the stories. I would let them stand as a marker of my skill level back when I wrote them.

And because individual stories and novels are not important in the slightest, that's exactly what I do with most of my work. I advise you to do the same.

Note: I very seldom “look back” and do something like this, and unless you've rid yourself of all the myths, I advise you never to do it.

But I mentioned that I'm also increasing my inventory. How?

First, because I want to get them out as quickly as possible, I've decided to post them to my Writing in Public substack. They will go live beginning today at 4 p.m. (See below for more details.)

Even for those who have read them before, reading them again will be a brand-new experience. They will be a great deal easier to read than they were in their original form, and a great deal more entertaining.

Second, when I've finished, I will also publish them again in a new, fairly long collection (at least ten stories). I'm not sure of the title yet.

And third, they will also go live, albeit one story per week, on the Stanbrough Writes substack (free short stories) beginning on December 22.

Even as much as I'm enjoying re-reading these particular stories, it will feel wonderful to begin putting new words on the page again.

That will happen sooner rather than later.

Writing in Public: The Saga of Maldito

Just a heads-up.

As I mentioned above, since I'm breathing new life into this series of magic realism short stories (and maybe writing another story or two to go with them) I've decided to post them "live" on my Writing in Public substack.

[The Saga of Maldito: 1](#) (Eufemia and José) will go live today at 4 p.m.

If you are already subscribed to Writing in Public, you will receive the story in your inbox. If you are not subscribed and would like to read it, click the link above. If you want to subscribe, share the post, or leave a comment, click the appropriate link at the end of the story.

Each story stands alone, but each is also interrelated to those that follow it. In this way, the overall saga is similar in form to Isabel Allende's *The Stories of Eva Luna*. If you enjoy magic realism, I encourage you to look up that book.

Here's the introduction I wrote for this series of stories on Substack:

This short magic realism saga consists of several interrelated short stories that I have recently brought back to life. I wrote them originally in 2014 under a persona and pseudonym.

The first five stories are autobiographical. They are the story of the early life of Gervasio Arrancado, which roughly translates "Warrior Torn Off."

The final stories are not directly about Maldito, but they are related to the first five in different ways, as you will see. If you enjoy magic realism and tall tales, I hope you will enjoy these.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[Dead Right – Guest Post by Dr. Betty Kuffel](#)

[The Devil's in the Details](#)

[Hemingway-Monologue-to-the-Maestro](#) A must-read for anyone serious about the craft of writing. I've also added this as a free download to the Archives page at the Journal. (Thanks to Bob B for sending this.)

[Typography](#) Interesting photos.

The Timeless Power of Universal Themes in Fiction

The Numbers

The Journal.....	1030
Writing of	
Day 1..... XXXX words. To date..... XXXXX	
Fiction for November.....	52368
Fiction for 2023.....	371012
Fiction since August 1.....	38710
Nonfiction for November.....	19750
Nonfiction for the year.....	247640
Annual consumable words.....	615145
2023 Novels to Date.....	8
2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
2023 Short Stories to Date.....	7
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	79
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	235
Short story collections.....	31

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Carving Out Time for Writing

November 22, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Carving Out Time for Writing
- * Yesterday

- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Carving Out Time for Writing

Sometimes, some folks who are fiction writers or who aspire to be fiction writers complain that they just can't find the time. I understand.

Once upon a time, that was even a problem for me. Sort of. In my case, I learned to prioritize. You have seen the results.

Years ago, somewhere in his blog, Dean Wesley Smith mentioned a great way for you to see where your time goes each day. Sometime in the past 9 or 10 years I blogged about it too.

I looked for both and found neither, so I was going to write a whole long thing here about it.

Then I stumbled upon a post Dean wrote titled "[Time Management and Free Lecture](#)". The offer is still good, and I see no need to reinvent the wheel.

To see Dean's free lecture titled "Carving Out Time to Write" —

1. If you already have a Teachable account, [click here](#). The whole lecture is only 8 videos, each around 10 minutes long.

2 If you don't have a Teachable account yet (it's free) visit Teachable.com and sign up. Or [click here to go straight to Dean's offerings](#), or click the link above to go to that particular free lecture.

Once you get your time under control, you'll only have to decide what takes priority in your life.

Yesterday

First I finished refreshing the last of the eleven magic realism short stories. I also got them posted and scheduled on the Writing in Public website. [You can read the first installment here](#).

The first six stories comprise the Saga of Maldito. They also comprise a short novel of a little over 34000 words. Although each story stands alone, the whole story is better if read in sequence.

The next two or three stories in the series are tenuously related to characters in the saga in one way or another, and the others are just really good magic realism stories.

One note: If you believe from previous experience you don't "like" magic realism. I urge you to give these a try.

Magic realism often gets a bad rep as “literary” fiction, complete with massively long (and difficult to read) paragraphs. Writers of literary fiction use longer paragraphs to force the reader to slow down and read the individual words.

I don’t have that problem. I want you to read the Story.

From a genre standpoint, my magic-realism stories are more closely related to commercial fantasy than to the “literary” genre. But if you enjoy reading “literary” fiction, you’re in for a treat too.

Second, toward the end of my day, I wrote the opening for a new Blackwell Ops novel, but one with a difference. The POV character is hinting this one will be part crime thriller, part action-adventure, and part time-travel SF. Might even be a little magic realism scattered in. Should be a ball to write. (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

Nada.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 500

Writing of Blackwell Ops 14: Charlie Task

Day 1..... 1359 words. To date..... 1359

Fiction for November..... 53727

Fiction for 2023..... 372371

Fiction since August 1..... 40069

Nonfiction for November..... 20250

Nonfiction for the year..... 248140

Annual consumable words..... 617004

2023 Novels to Date..... 8

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 7

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 79

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 235

Short story collections..... 31

Note: If you find the Journal of value and want to make a donation, please do not ‘pledge’ through Substack. Stripe, the platform Substack uses for receiving payments, does not like me.

Instead, [please click this link](#) and make your much-appreciated donation in any amount from your PayPal account or from any major credit card.

If you can’t make a monetary donation, please click the Share button at the end of this post and/or leave a comment. Thank you.

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Finding Time to Write

November 23, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today’s Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Happy Thanksgiving
- * Finding Time to Write
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“A champion is afraid of losing. Everyone else is afraid of winning.” Billie Jean King

“[I]t is ... important for me to write in tranquility, trying to write as well as I can, with no eye on any market, nor any thought of what the stuff will bring, or even if it can be published...”Ernest Hemingway

Happy Thanksgiving

My wife reminded me yesterday that today is Thanksgiving. (grin) I hope it will be a good day for everyone who’s reading this. I’ll write what I can early, then spend the balance of the day with my bride and our two cats.

I’m thankful for what I do (writing) and for all of you. I hope the twin topics today will help those of you who need them.

By the way, I was going to give you a two-fer in topics today, but I decided to save one for tomorrow. They go hand-in-glove, so I hope you will read both. Tomorrow, “Turning Fear Upside Down”.

Finding Time to Write

Unfortunately, the DWS lecture I told you about in yesterday's Journal isn't free after all. Another writer told me she checked, and it costs \$50 now. And the coupon code on the page apparently doesn't work.

I can't be sure the exercise I was going to outline for you is in that lecture anyway. I have the lecture, but by 2018 when it came out, I didn't need it.

So I thought I'd go ahead and outline a way for you to find time to write. Like I was going to do yesterday.

Like Heinlein's Rules, this exercise isn't difficult at all to do, but it's difficult to follow through. So you might have to do it more than once before you're successful.

First, in a notebook or on a sheet of paper, list the times of your waking day down the left side of the sheet in 15-minute increments. So if you get up at 6:00 a.m., your list might look like this:

6:15
6:30
6:45
7:00
7:15
7:30 and so on until your normal bedtime.

If your weekdays are all pretty much the same, I recommend you make a sheet for at least one weekday. If both Saturday and Sunday are the same, do one for one of those days too.

If you attend services on Saturday or Sunday, prepare one sheet for that day and one for the other weekend day.

For the weekday(s), you can also omit any committed time you have if it's every day. For example, if you work from 9 – 5 and you have no free time during that span, you can omit putting those hours on the list.

The purpose of this is to track what you do during your “free” time or leisure time.

Second, after you've prepared your sheet for the day, out to the side of each time increment, write a quick note about what you do during that time.

- Eat breakfast or supper? Put it down.
- Watch a movie or a half-hour sitcom? Put it down.
- Work in the garden? Put it down.
- Spend time on the phone with a friend who calls out of the blue? Put it down.
- Impromptu conversation with the postman or neighbor or old friend? Put it down.
- Stare off into space daydreaming? When you come out of your trance, put it down.
- Reading? Put it down.

- Writing? Put it down.
- Shower or toilet? Put it down. (You can put more than one thing on one line.)

List literally everything you do during your waking hours until the sheet for that day is full. If you don't list everything, you won't get the full impact of the list.

You can probably see why I said this seems easy to do but that it can be difficult to actually follow through.

This exercise will serve two purposes:

One, it will show you, plainly, any wasted time.

Two, it will show you, plainly, where you can change or reset some of your priorities.

Again, I hope this helps.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

Writing Into (not in) the Dark

The Numbers

The Journal..... 680

Writing of Blackwell Ops 14: Charlie Task

Day 1..... 1359 words. To date..... 1359

Day 2..... 3002 words. To date..... 4361

Fiction for November..... 56729

Fiction for 2023..... 375373

Fiction since August 1..... 40069

Nonfiction for November..... 20930

Nonfiction for the year..... 248820

Annual consumable words..... 620686

2023 Novels to Date..... 8

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 7

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 79

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 235
Short story collections..... 31

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Turning Fear Upside Down

November 24, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * If You Missed It
- * A New Story
- * Turning Fear Upside Down
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

If You Missed It

Yesterday I published a Journal post titled ["Finding Time to Write"](#). It contains an exercise that will help you carve out time for writing fiction.

If you have difficulty with making time for your writing, I strongly recommend you read it.

A New Story

"Normal Louisiana Ladies Club" published yesterday on my [Stanbrough Writes Substack](#). I must have scheduled it to come out a day early. Usually they come out on Friday each week at 10 a.m.

To subscribe, click the link above and then the Subscribe button at the end of the story. You'll receive a new short story every Friday, and it's free.

Below the Subscribe button, there are other short stories you can read in most genres. Enjoy!

Turning Fear Upside Down

Awhile back I advised a writer to turn fear upside down. I don't remember who that was, and it doesn't matter. It's good blanket advice for all writers.

The basic premise is this:

The conscious, critical mind — The whole purpose of your conscious mind is to protect you. It does its job well.

In cases of day to day danger, it will warn you away from actions that might hurt you. It will try to stop you by introducing reasonable fear.

For example, If you lean toward a hot stove, it will cause you to jerk your hand away. It will also keep you from walking into traffic.

The subconscious mind, on the other hand, would not stop you in either of those cases. It's like a happy two year old. It just wants to have fun: "Go ahead! Might be a trip!"

Yeah. A trip to the hospital in a cool van with flashing lights.

But we're aren't talking about death-defying stunts here. We're talking about writing fiction, aren't we? Nothing important at all. Just a few minutes' or hours' entertainment for whomever reads what you've written. Zero danger involved.

But if you listen, the conscious mind will also try to do its job and save you from "harm" in your writing.

It will try to protect you from the embarrassment of rejection. It will do so by stopping you from writing or publishing your fiction. By introducing an UNreasonable fear.

That same unreasonable fear is the foundation for all the stupid writing myths I so often denigrate in this Journal.

Like unreasonable or unreasoning fears, the myths are products of the conscious, critical mind. And the fears and the myths support and feed-off each other:

You must outline, write character sketches, world-build — These are just ways to delay actually writing.

The longer you "plan" and "plot," the longer it will take you to get to actually writing the story. Besides, you cannot successfully plan anything that hasn't happened yet.

I was not immune to this myth. As I've mentioned before, decades ago I spent three YEARS outlining a single novel.

I still have never written that novel, nor do I want to. I know the whole story, so writing it would be bo-ho-ho-horing. Look at my numbers below. What I could have accomplished during those three years if I'd been writing instead of thinking about writing?

You must revise — This is a way to avoid finishing (if you revise as you go) or to avoid publishing (if you've already finished the story). And no, cycling is NOT the same thing.

You must rewrite — Need I repeat myself? Especially if you rewrite for a particular person (an agent or an acquisitions or “developmental” editor) or a critique group, you're writing for an audience of one, and you're writing only to satisfy the opinion of that person or group.

But what about the opinions of the thousands or millions of readers out there who are waiting to read your story and will actually PAY to read it?

If you do push through the fear and publish your story or novel, will you rewrite every time one of them leaves a bad review or says this or that “should have happened”?

Of course not. Yet again, unlike members of your critique group, those readers actually BUY your work before they offer their opinion.

You must seek critical input — Um, no. Even Stephen King or Ernest Hemingway or Lawrence Sanders or Nora Roberts or Dean Koontz or [fill in your favorite author's name here] doesn't know your story more intimately than you do.

Those are the four biggest myths about writing fiction, and folks, they're all bovine excrement.

Power through them. You can do it.

There's nothing wrong with feeling even unreasoning fear. We all experience it. What's wrong is letting it stop you.

The only true failure you can experience as a fiction writer is to not write fiction.

So how to turn the fear upside down? By remembering these three words:

Do it anyway.

Instead of being afraid and stopping because you don't know where the story's going, be afraid of how you'll feel if you don't reach your daily word count goal or if you don't finish the chapter or story. Then take a deep breath and Just Write the Next Sentence. I promise, it works.

Instead of fearing what readers might think of your story, be afraid of how you'll feel if you don't publish it and add one more bit of inventory to your catalogue. After all, that story or novel might be the one that finally gets you noticed.

So instead of not publishing something because you think it sucks canal water from all 50 states, publish it anyway. You might be pleasantly surprised, as I was with a short story titled “Old Suits,” to find that at least one reader believes your work is excellent.

Like King and Koontz and Hemingway and millions of other READERS around the world, even YOUR opinion of your own writing is still only one opinion.

And remember, whether you love it or hate it, you really are the worst judge of your own work. Specifically BECAUSE your opinion is only one opinion.

Finally, maybe you’re just afraid you aren’t really a writer, or that you aren’t a “real” writer because you can only pound on the keys for a half-hour or an hour per day.

Oh shut up. (grin) You’re *writing*, aren’t you? Yes? Then you’re a real writer.

All fiction writers experience unreasoning fear. The only difference is in how they handle it. Some bow to the fear immediately and succumb to the myths. They plot, plan, revise, rewrite, and seek critical-mind input from others.

Others simply trust themselves and write into the dark. Of course, writing into the dark is a frightening proposition in itself. But it’s also a way of turning the fear of the unknown from doubt to exhilaration.

As I told another writer not long ago, it’s all up to you:

You can bow to the fear, succumb to the myths, and trudge through step by weary step. Or stop writing. Or never start. Or

You can face the fear, push through it, and embrace the exhilaration of watching a story unfold in real time before your very eyes.

It really is completely up to you.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

Reader – Writer – Friday, The Sacrifice Fly And see my comment.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1230

Writing of Blackwell Ops 14: Charlie Task

Day 1..... 1359 words. To date..... 1359
Day 2..... 3002 words. To date..... 4361
Day 3..... 3349 words. To date..... 7710

Fiction for November..... 60078
Fiction for 2023..... 378722
Fiction since August 1..... 43418
Nonfiction for November..... 23180
Nonfiction for the year..... 25050
Annual consumable words..... 625265

2023 Novels to Date..... 8
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 7
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 79
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 235
Short story collections..... 31

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Missing Links and an Addendum

November 25, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Missing Links
- * An Addendum
- * A Timely Irony
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“[W]e need to be careful that we don’t send the message to beginning writers (who have families to care for, day jobs to keep bread on the table, and some days they just can’t squeeze in a couple hours to write) that they are not ‘real’ writers if they don’t write every day. I know of no other profession that works in their profession every single day.” Steve Hooley

“Finally, maybe you’re just afraid you aren’t really a writer, or that you aren’t a “real” writer because you can only pound on the keys for a half-hour or an hour per day. Oh shut up. (grin) You’re writing, aren’t you? Yes? Then you’re a real writer.” Me, in yesterday’s Journal post (Just sayin’)

Missing Links

Two astute readers (Thanks, Russ and KC) pointed out that two of my “Of Interest” links didn’t imbed. One is from yesterday’s post, and one is from the post on November 21.

Sorry for any inconvenience. From now on, I’ll double-check the post on Substack before I hit Send. In the meantime, here’s the link that was missing from yesterday’s post:

[Reader – Writer – Friday, The Sacrifice Fly](#)

An Addendum

If you click that link and read that TKZ post today, I hope you’ll also read not only my comment, but all the comments in reponse to mine.

They are revealing. Notice all the qualifiers. The myths are strong at TKZ.

Implication

I hate it when a response implies that I said or wrote something I didn’t.

I never said writing should take priority over family. I only said I personally plan ahead so I can do my job (write) and still spend time with my family. (But I do that every day of the year, not just on holidays. I’m a writer. Writers write.)

I also never said I’m driven to write because I feel “guilty” about not writing or any such nonsense.

Finally, I never said writers aren’t “real” writers if they don’t write every day (first Quote of the Day). Quite the contrary. See the second Quote of the Day.

Cops don’t put on the uniform and work a shift every day either, but they’re still cops. But

- I wouldn't call myself a cop if I didn't put on the uniform and make my shift.
- I wouldn't call myself a carpetenter if I only thought about or talked about building things with wood.
- And I wouldn't call myself a writer if I didn't write, or if I only talked about or thought about writing.

That's why I so often get disheartened when I visit TKZ and see all these folks whose mantra is "whatever works for you is fine." If that's true, why are they bothering to dole out advice? But notice that they also never define the word "works."

I suspect they mean "whatever you *want to do*" is fine. Including thinking about writing and talking about writing instead of putting new words on the page. But of course, that's true too. Whatever you want to do is fine. You don't have to be a writer.

This Journal is a no-bullshit zone.

If you don't want the truth about actually writing, actually putting new words on the page, you're probably wasting your time here.

If all you want is new excuses for not writing, or justification for the excuses you already use, you would be much better served almost anywhere on the internet but at the Journal, including TKZ.

Just to be clear (and deep inside, you know this)...

- Jotting down ideas is not writing.
- Researching, while sometimes necessary, is not writing.
- Outlining, revising, rewriting or consulting critique groups is not writing.
- Thinking about writing or talking about writing is not writing.
- "Write" is an action verb. Writing is putting new words on the page.

If "whatever works" is a way to put new words on the page, then yes, whatever works is fine.

You Do You

All of that said, if you, like so many, are perfectly happy using your most valuable commodity — Time — to plot, plan, revise, rewrite, think about writing, talk about writing, await input from whomever about your writing, or do anything else other than putting new words on the page, that's also fine.

If you'd rather write, my Quiet the Critical Voice book is still available free. All you have to do is ask.

I've thought before about not bothering to visit TKZ. Yesterday's experience made me certain of it. I won't visit there again, and I won't link to anything from there again.

They're just too steeped in the myths, and I'm too tired of fighting the current. If they want to tread water 'til they drown, that's their choice. But I hate that professional writers are spreading

those same myths to so many beginning and would-be writers. I guess doing so gives them a larger audience for their nonfiction writing books in which they expound on the same myths.

If you want to visit and learn from the actual masters at TKZ (there are a few), do so. But shield yourself against the myths. As I would advise you if you were about to cross a cow pasture in New Mexico, try to smell the BS and avoid it rather than stepping in it.

Mutual-admiration societies are not conducive to growth in any endeavor, especially writing.

I'll never stop wondering why so many writers are so dead-set against people who actually enjoy writing and who can do so without all the drama. The only thing I can figure is it's easier to defend their fears and the myths than to face them and overcome them.

But hey, whatever you want to do.

The Other Missing Link

Oh, and here's the link that was missing from the Journal post of November 21: [The Timeless Power of Universal Themes in Fiction](#)

A Timely Irony

Ironically, I had a short writing day yesterday. Go figure.

My son is visiting from up north. He, my wife and I planned to visit our favorite antique store, about 50 miles from here. And that's fine. As I keep saying, what matters with word count and production is Average.

I planned ahead, but plans go awry. I didn't get up as early as I hoped. Then I dealt with the fervor hit from the responses to my comment over at TKZ. After that I spent some time on today's Journal post. Then, finally, I wrote.

As I write this (yesterday), I've cycled through my current novel and added only around 500 words. I'm not sure what the fiction numbers below will reflect. I might well miss my daily word-count goal yesterday because spending time with my family is indeed more important than writing. Duh.

But time lost is time lost. It simply is what it is. And whatever the word count is for yesterday, I could have written at least two or three thousand more words if I had never commented on that stupid TKZ post in the first place.

Don't trust everyone who tells you that comments are welcome and asks enticing questions. Chances are, the person who posts and maybe some others will work in some innuendo and half-truths.

So just sayin', before you leave a comment anywhere, look around carefully for amberries.

You know what those are, right? They grow on ambushes.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

Nada.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1240

Writing of Blackwell Ops 14: Charlie Task

Day 1..... 1359 words. To date..... 1359

Day 2..... 3002 words. To date..... 4361

Day 3..... 3349 words. To date..... 7710

Day 4..... 1687 words. To date..... 9397

Fiction for November..... 61765

Fiction for 2023..... 380409

Fiction since August 1..... 45105

Nonfiction for November..... 23410

Nonfiction for the year..... 251300

Annual consumable words..... 628202

2023 Novels to Date..... 8

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 7

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 79

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 235

Short story collections..... 31

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Reminder, and About the Bradbury Challenge

November 26, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Reminder, and About the Bradbury Challenge
- * The Writing
- * Kristine Kathryn Rusch
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“The key word is ‘create.’ The conscious, critical mind can create nothing. It can only construct.” Me

“Traditional publishers don't help writers get an audience. Traditional publishers buy up copyright for the term of the copyright so that they can have assets on their accounting books.”
Kristine Kathryn Rusch

“Thirty dollars per hour writing a blog post that has little resale value or \$1000 per hour writing stories that can sell for decades. It's really a no brainer.” Kristine Kathryn Rusch

Reminder, and About the Bradbury Challenge

Those of you in the Bradbury Challenge who are reporting your weekly numbers through the Journal, remember the deadline is tonight at midnight Arizona time (or whenever I post the Journal tomorrow morning).

For those of you on the Eastern Time, that's 2 a.m., and for Central Time, 1 a.m. West coast, 11 p.m. for you. Sorry.

For you who are not in the challenge currently, please know that you can jump in (or jump back in) at any time.

The only “requirement” of the Bradbury Challenge is that you write at least one short story per week. That's it.

At least one participant has been writing at least one short story per week for the past 36 weeks. While writing a novel.

Anyway, you don't even have to tell me about it. Just do it for yourself. Writing a story per week is a great way to increase your inventory as a writer, a super-great way to try or practice WITD, and a good way to find stories that will later become novels.

But if you would like me to report your story details, send me the title, word count and genre by the deadline each week. Please use this format:

“Story Title” 1234 Genre

Please, no commas, extra spaces, etc.

As I mentioned, the loose deadline is Sunday at midnight Arizona time. The firm deadline is whenever I publish the Journal on Monday morning. I might publish as early as 12:01 a.m. or as late as 6 or 7 a.m. Arizona time.

If I receive your info after I publish the Journal on Monday morning, you aren't late. You're early. (grin) I will include it in the following week's report.

Of course, it's better to get your stories finished and reported earlier in the week anyway. Then you don't have to worry about the deadline at all. Or you can write a second story (or more) per week. I'll report whatever you send me.

No Vignettes Please — I'd rather not report slice-of-life vignettes. By definition, vignettes have a Setting, Character(s), and Conflict, but no Resolution. A short story has all four of those elements.

Some long-form writers have also reported their weekly progress with novellas or novels they're writing. Some others just write on their own but talk with me privately via email about how they're doing without wanting me to report it.

I can pretty much guarantee I wouldn't look good in a short skirt or tights and a sweater (those of you who know me, can I get an amen?), but I'm a pretty good cheerleader when it comes to your writing. (grin)

The Writing

Well, for the second day in a row, I had a less-than stellar day yesterday. I missed my word count goal, which is annoying but fine. I was tired and my brain was jumbled, so I called it a day about an hour early.

No biggie on that. The average will creep back up.

And then one reader pointed out a couple of typos in one line of yesterday's post. In fact, two bad typos in the space of three words, and one of the words was "a." Hard to get a typo on that one. Though I guess I could've typed an "s" instead or something.

Anyway, I hope the typos didn't distract the rest of you from the point of the post.

Kristine Kathryn Rusch

Among the most decorated fiction writers and editors in history, KKR is hanging up her blogging pen. She just wrote and published her final "Business Musings" post. (See "Of Interest")

Believe me, I understand her reasons.

If you find this Journal of value, consider [making a one-time or recurring donation](#). If you can't, please consider sharing it with friends.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[Collaboration](#)

[Business Musings: All Good Things](#)

[Episode No. 851: Dan Baldwin](#)

[What Makes a Great WordPress Theme for Authors?](#) The author did not mention responsiveness, the ability for the theme to "respond" to whatever the user is using to read the blog.

The best theme I've ever found is [Generate Press](#) by Tom Usborne. Look it up. You own't be sorry. I use it on every website I own. Each of them looks as good on any monitor, from a 24" down to a phone.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 820

Writing of Blackwell Ops 14: Charlie Task

Day 1..... 1359 words. To date..... 1359
Day 2..... 3002 words. To date..... 4361
Day 3..... 3349 words. To date..... 7710
Day 4..... 1687 words. To date..... 9397
Day 5..... 2271 words. To date..... 11668

Fiction for November.....	64036
Fiction for 2023.....	382680
Fiction since August 1.....	47376
Nonfiction for November.....	24230
Nonfiction for the year.....	252120
Annual consumable words.....	631293
2023 Novels to Date.....	8
2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
2023 Short Stories to Date.....	7
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	79
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	235
Short story collections.....	31

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark and adherence to Heinlein's Rules. Unreasoning fear and the myths of writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting

November 27, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting
- * The Writing
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting

For [notes on the Bradbury Challenge](#), please see yesterday's post.

The challenge is a great way to jumpstart your writing and get more practice pushing down the critical voice. Writing fiction is all about conveying the story. It isn't about words.

There's no cost. There's also no pressure re submitting or publishing. That's up to you.

During the past week, in addition to whatever other fiction they're writing, the following writers reported their progress:

Short Fiction

Balázs Jám bor “Manuscript” 4500 Generic fiction
Balázs Jám bor “Tell me an idea!” 2500 Generic fiction
Christopher Ridge “Pig” 2400 Horror
K.C. Riggs “Don’t Question a God” 923 Satire

Longer Fiction

Balázs Jám bor *Kylan’s Story* (tentative title) 4000 Fantasy
Alexander Nakul *The Meerkat Watch* 4418 Urban fantasy (10479 total to date)

The Writing

I’m a bit under the weather. This is the third day. Still, I made my word count today, if only by 95 words. I had to keep taking breaks and coming back, but I was tired of not making the word count. (grin)

I’m hoping I’ll be back up into 4000+ word days soon.

Also I’ve been keeping track separately in the numbers of fiction I’ve written since August 1. But somewhere along the line I omitted a numeral.

So yesterday I recounted. I pulled up my Production Spreadsheet and summed the fiction totals for August, September, October and thus far through November.

Since I started writing fervently again on August 1, I’ve written 271,230 words of fiction. That’s 70% of the fiction I’ve written all year. THAT feels good. (grin) The numbers do build up when you love what you’re doing.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[Two Days Left On Sale](#)

[Words fail us, and this writer knows it. How she is bringing people to the \(grammar\) table](#)

Take the little one-question quiz in the post. If you choose 2, you know the difference between “that” and “which.”

[Helpful Writing Advice from the Pros](#)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 330

Writing of Blackwell Ops 14: Charlie Task

Day 1..... 1359 words. To date..... 1359
Day 2..... 3002 words. To date..... 4361
Day 3..... 3349 words. To date..... 7710
Day 4..... 1687 words. To date..... 9397
Day 5..... 2271 words. To date..... 11668
Day 6..... 3095 words. To date..... 14763

Fiction for November..... 67131
Fiction for 2023..... 385775
Fiction since August 1..... 271230
Nonfiction for November..... 24560
Nonfiction for the year..... 252450
Annual consumable words..... 634718

2023 Novels to Date..... 8
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 7
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 79
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 235
Short story collections..... 31

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Time Travel in Fiction, Part One

November 28, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * In Memoriam
- * Time Travel in Fiction, Part One: Getting Into the Weeds
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Everything is theoretically impossible until it is done.” Robert A. Heinlein

“Even if it turns out that time travel is impossible, it is important that we understand why it is impossible.” Professor Stephen Hawking

In Memoriam

This edition of the Journal is dedicated to my writer friend Sam Turner, whose loving, lifelong partner and wife Phyllis passed away on Thanksgiving day.

Time Travel in Fiction, Part One: Getting Into the Weeds

For time travel, you need only four ingredients:

- A willing or unintentional traveler
- A mode of transport
- The Substory (setting, character, scene[s])
- An understanding of alternate timelines

The Wiling or Unintentional Traveler

The possibility always exists (even in real life) that someone could stumble into or through a time-travel mode of transport and come out confused and probaby horrified on the other side in a different timeline.

There is at least a possibility that asylums (or whatever the politically correct term for that is now) are filled with folks who have had this experience.

But most often, the POV character in a time-travel story is an intentional traveler. S/he enters the mode of transport for a particular reason.

The Mode of Transport

The actual mode of transport is always a space/time anomaly. But you can pass through that anomaly in any of three ways:

- via a dedicated device that carries you through the anomaly,
- via a physical form or formation, the intentional manipulation of which enables you to pass through the anomaly, or
- via a direct physical encounter with the anomaly itself.

The Dedicated Device

By “dedicated device” I mean a machine or other physical device built specifically to enable time travel. (Verne’s *The Time Machine*, *Back to the Future*, et al)

Time travel via physical device is seldom if ever an accident. The whole purpose of the device is to bridge the alleged void between the present and the destination somewhere (or some Time) in the past.

Okay, or another dimension, but that would also be a different timeline.

Maybe the traveler stands or sit inside the machine, then turns knobs and/or sets dials to indicate the time period or even the specific date and location to which s/he wishes to be transported.

And there may be other physical requirements. In the *Back to the Future* films, the device, a DeLorean, also had to attain a particular speed within a set period of time.

Or maybe the traveler manipulates the settings on a smaller device s/he is holding. In either case, the physical “time-travel” device usually goes with the traveler so s/he can return to the present.

In an old film (I forget the title) Buster Keaton was transported through time by wearing an odd helmet.

If you use a physical device, I recommend setting latitude and longitude to set the location for an empty field or something. Wouldn't want the traveler to end up inside a rock wall. Or cause readers to wonder why s/he didn't. (grin)

The Physical Form or Formation (Portal)

As I mentioned above, this is an established object the traveler must manipulate or navigate in order to enter and exit the anomaly.

This is usually a permanent or semi-permanent fixture, albeit one that is not readily recognizable as marking a time/space anomaly. The casual observer wouldn't notice the form or formation, and even if s/he did, s/he wouldn't associate it with a time/space anomaly.

The traveler would know in advance about the form or formation and would manipulate or navigate it to enter a different time or timeline.

How many timelines the traveler can visit via one form or formation depends on the form itself. For example, in my current novel I use a triangle as a physical formation that leads to a space-time anomaly. That particular triangle is a vague series of stones set in the ground.

The traveler must navigate a particular combination of two sides of the triangle in the present to enter a different timeline. Upon his return, he steps through the triangle in reverse order to emerge again into the present. So he can visit and return from any of three timelines via the formation.

If you use a triangle formation and if you include the points of the triangle, that's three more timelines. If you include a combination of the points and sides, the number of possible destinations increases.

Of course you could also use any physical form or geometric formation in a similar way. The possibilities are probably endless.

- In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* C.S. Lewis used a closet (form) as a time- or inter-dimensional travel device.
- In an old episode of *The Twilight Zone*, a child wandered through a physical wall into another dimension.
- In another TZ episode, an aged, fading Hollywood star rejoined her old friends from decades before in a film they starred in together.
- In an episode of *The Simpsons*, Bart once passed into the world in the television.
- In another episode, a very confused Homer walked among normal humans on the street. I forget the mode of travel on that one.

A Direct Physical Encounter with the Anomaly Itself

Despite the mode of transport, the space-time anomaly is always marked by a physical or ethereal “portal,” a “doorway,” between dimensions or timelines. The portal is always discernable with one or more of the physical senses.

To my knowledge, thus far any character in any dimensional-travel or time-travel experience has discerned the mode of transport visually. Coincidentally, writers most often describe scenes via the sense of sight too. This seems a flaw to me.

Any of us can (and have been) transported to memories by scents or sounds or tastes or textures, so why not other dimensions or timelines? Something to consider. “Why not?” is easily among the top few at the top of my personal list of questions that spur growth. You can experiment. We *are* talking about fiction, unimportant little stories that serve only as a few minutes’ or hours’ of entertainment for a reader.

An ethereal anomaly is readily recognizable by anyone. Often, it’s a “glowing” or otherwise noticeable passage. The sides of the anomaly that frame the passage might resemble the “lights” you see behind your eyelids, or they might be similar to the waves of a heat mirage in the desert.

When the traveler steps through the ethereal anomaly, s/he will come out in another timeline on the other side. (Again, the same technique is often used for passing from one dimension to another.)

This is getting long, so I’ll continue it tomorrow. I might even publish this in book form later. If I do it will be a little different, but as always, feel free to copy and paste these posts for your own reference if you find them of value.

More tomorrow in Time Travel in Fiction, Part Two.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

Last Day of Sale

14 Do's and Don'ts of Time Management for Writers But see PG's take.

How to Make a Good Living with Your Fiction (short video)

What does it mean to KNOW the past?

The Ars guide to time travel in the movies I don't know whether this will be helpful, but it might.

Wi-Fi for neurons: first map of wireless nerve signals unveiled in worms SF writers... Got worms in your stories? Or others with wireless nerve signals? Could those maybe be transmitted OUT?

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1260

Writing of Blackwell Ops 14: Charlie Task

Day 1..... 1359 words. To date..... 1359

Day 2..... 3002 words. To date..... 4361

Day 3..... 3349 words. To date..... 7710

Day 4..... 1687 words. To date..... 9397

Day 5..... 2271 words. To date..... 11668

Day 6..... 3095 words. To date..... 14763

Day 7..... 3924 words. To date..... 18687

Fiction for November..... 71055

Fiction for 2023..... 389699

Fiction since August 1..... 275154

Nonfiction for November..... 25820

Nonfiction for the year..... 253710

Annual consumable words..... 639902

2023 Novels to Date..... 8

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 7

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 79

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 235

Short story collections..... 31

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Time Travel in Fiction, Part Two

November 29, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Time Travel in Fiction, Part Two
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“I made a chicken salad last night. Apparently they prefer grain.” Vince the Sign Guy (grin)

“Life is all about perspective. The sinking of the Titanic was a miracle to the lobsters in the ship's kitchen.” a meme from Facebook

“The world has to change to fit you. And if you stick to your principles, values, and morals long enough, it will.” Berry Gordy

Nice thought, but not necessarily true.

“I can honestly say this is the most fun I've had writing fiction since I started with pencil and loose leaf as an 11-year-old. ... Thank God for writing and all the magic it entails.” Philip Smith on WITD

Time Travel in Fiction, Part Two

First, a note in light of a comment on Part One (see Of Interest):

In this two-part series I'm talking only about physical time travel, the transport of the character's physical body into a new timeline for a particular purpose.

I have omitted the dream state, transcendental meditation, reincarnation and other modes of mental or spiritual time travel, though you certainly needn't omit them from your fiction. If I write the book, I probably will include a section on each.

That said, time travel of any kind is also valuable if you're writing an Alternative History novel.

As I mentioned in the previous post, to write effective dimensional- or time-travel stories, you need only four ingredients:

- A willing or unintentional traveler
- A mode of transport
- The Substory (setting, character, scene[s])
- An understanding of alternate timelines

I covered the first two points on Substack in [“Time Travel in Fiction, Part One”](#).

You can also see the original post and a great deal more (archives and other free stuff, etc.) [at the Journal](#).

The Substory

What I'm calling the “substory” is whatever happens (the scenes) while the traveler is in the alternate timeline. Or whatever happens between significant events in the overall story of the book.

For example, in my current novel, *Blackwell Ops 14: Charlie Task*, the overall story consists of everything from Prologue to the seven centered, spaced asterisks that mark the end of the book.

But each substory is the collection of scenes that occur between the significant events. For example, between his entering the portal and when he exits, or between his exiting the portal and entering again, or between assignments.

Those scenes are all necessary if your characters are real. Mine are real. If you constructed a character with your conscious, critical mind, you're on your own. I can't help you.

One caution — Be sure to write those scenes in the past with the particular timeline in mind. You probably shouldn't have a character pull out a cellphone in the 1940s.

Or you can have him or her pull it out, but not get a signal and realize the thing is even more worthless and annoying “back then” than it is now.

A Note on World- or Timeline-Building

You don't have to do that in advance either. Just report what the POV character sees, hears, smells, tastes and touches (and feels, emotionally) as s/he lives the story.

His or her world expands with every moment, every hour, and every day, just as yours does. If you trust your characters to live their own lives, trust your characters to live theirs.

Among Genres, SF Trumps All Others

I would be remiss if I didn't mention this.

In case you hadn't realized it yet, if your story contains even one element of science fiction or science fantasy, that becomes the predominant genre.

So if you write a Romance, but it contains an element of SF, it becomes an "SF Romance," not "Romance, SF."

If you write a Western, it becomes an "SF Western" not a "Western, SF" and so on.

When you publish to Amazon, Draft2Digital, or any other sales venue, I encourage you to use the categories wisely. If you check the SF category initially, you will find most if not all of the other genres listed under it.

Blackwell Ops 14: Charlie Task, like those that preceded it in the series, started out as an action-adventure crime-thriller story.

This is important: When the POV character is assigned a job that requires him to step through a space-time portal — an element of SF — he *could* dismiss the possibility of time travel as ridiculous and impossible. He could refuse the assignment.

In that case, and if the story continues without him going through the portal, the story would remain only an action-adventure crime-thriller.

But if for any reason the character suspends his disbelief, navigates the portal per instructions and is actually transported to a different timeline, the story becomes predominantly science fantasy.

Then when publishing, I would select SF as the first category, SF>action-adventure as the second, and SF>crime-thriller (or thriller) as the third.

Also FYI, the acronym SF refers both Science Fiction, in which the story adheres-to or is-possible-within the laws of physics as we know them, and Science Fantasy, which does not and is not. I suppose you could refer to them as SciFi and SciFa.

An Understanding of Alternate Timelines

Maybe I should have titled this section "The Necessity of Alternate Timelines," because for time travel to be even plausible, alternate timelines are necessary.

Also, as I wrote this section, I realized I've written much of it before. I write this Journal day by day, so at times I repeat myself. Repetition seems prevalent below, but there are a few new thoughts as well. I think. (grin)

Time travel as it is often explained and explored cannot exist because of various paradoxes. The most notable is the "Grandfather Paradox" I mentioned earlier in this short series.

In a nutshell, if anything happens in the time traveler's direct past to cause the death of the time traveler, s/he would not exist in the present and therefore (paradoxically) could not time-travel to the past in the first place.

So for time travel to be possible — and this includes in Science Fantasy, in which pretty much all things are possible — time travel would have to be more of a lateral move into an alternate timeline than a move backward into the character's direct past or forward into the character's at-this-moment-intended or hoped-for future.

I explained that lateral move in a previous post with this: If the character finds a way to travel into the past, s/he will, with that action, have started a new timeline, an alternate timeline, one in which time travel *is* possible.

So the alternate timeline actually begins in the character's present and extends back into the “new” past created by that new present. And from any present, all things are possible, as is the case with any future.

The time traveler could still visit the past, but only in a different timeline: S/he would visit amidst what might have happened if something else had happened to cause it. The initial “something else” would be the time traveler having discovered a mode of transport, or a portal.

This is the only way for the time traveler to avoid direct conflict with the various time-travel paradoxes. S/he won't be able to travel within the same timeline, so s/he won't be able to say or do anything that might affect his or her own past or future.

Past or Future?

As I also wrote in a previous edition of the Journal, “the past is a singular, locked-in event composed of countless lesser events. No matter how much you sometimes wish you could change it or affect it in any way, you can't.”

I believe it is impossible to time travel into the future.

Why? Because the future doesn't exist, even as a direct extension of the present. Which is to say, it doesn't exist at all.

You or your character(s) can't travel to a place or time that doesn't exist. Only the *possibility of a future actually exists. And possibilities for the future — your future — are literally endless.

The future only comes into being as the present, one nanosecond at a time. As I wrote in that earlier post,

“Every decision you make and every step you take in every moment of your life leads to a completely new future with countless other possibilities than you might have encountered if you had decided differently or stepped in a slightly different direction.”

Of course, you might see the future differently. Feel free to share in a comment.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[Another Variant of Time Travel](#) A commenter discusses variants of time travel and how they can be used in writing

[What Sleeping With Jane Eyre Taught Me About Pacing](#)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1460

Writing of Blackwell Ops 14: Charlie Task

Day 1..... 1359 words. To date..... 1359
Day 2..... 3002 words. To date..... 4361
Day 3..... 3349 words. To date..... 7710
Day 4..... 1687 words. To date..... 9397
Day 5..... 2271 words. To date..... 11668
Day 6..... 3095 words. To date..... 14763
Day 7..... 3924 words. To date..... 18687
Day 8..... 3278words. To date..... 21965

Fiction for November..... 74333
Fiction for 2023..... 392977
Fiction since August 1..... 278432
Nonfiction for November..... 27280
Nonfiction for the year..... 255170
Annual consumable words..... 644640

2023 Novels to Date..... 8
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 7
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 79
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 235
Short story collections..... 31

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Generate Press, and Using Science in Fantasy

November 30, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Generate Press
- * Using Science in Fantasy
- * The Fabric of Reality
- * The Writing
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Generate Press

This is too important to hide away down in the Of Interest section.

A few days ago I mentioned Generate Press. It is hands-down the best, most pliable, and most responsive WordPress theme I've ever found.

If you run a WordPress.org site hosted by your own web hosting company (so not WordPress.com) I strongly recommend it.

And Tom Usborne, the founder and developer of Generate Press, is having a cyber sale. But according to an email I received yesterday, it's almost over. Be sure to check it out soon if you're interested. From the email,

“This is our BIGGEST SALE of the year! Check out the [sale on our premium licenses](#).”

Even if you get there too late to take advantage of the sale, I suggest you go for it. There is no better WordPress theme, period.

Using Science in Fantasy

This article needs to be featured prominently too. This was written by Peggy Kurilla, one of our very own Journal readers, and it's a great article.

You will probably note that it's about twenty years old, but so what? Good advice and good information never goes stale. I recommend you check it out.

To do so, click [“Using Science in Fantasy”](#).

The Fabric of Reality

Rikki Mongoose left this comment on yesterday's post:

I like the extended idea of this paradox as it is described [in] The Fabric of Reality by David Deutsch.

Time traveller comes to room, turns time machine on and sets destination to 5 mins in past. Then he waits 5 mins and comes to portal.

He appears in same room in front of same time machine. Then he sees that door opens and he-in-the-past comes to the room, turns time machine on...

So every 5 mins a new copy of time traveller will appear in room.

I can't solve it. But I once have written a sci fi story totally based on this paradox.

The Writing

Well, I won't finish the current novel in 10 days. Probably closer to 13 or 14. I think I have around 10,000 to 15,000 words to go, maybe a little more.

This one wrote slowly. Every novel writes differently. But yesterday I cleared 4,000 words for the first time since my previous novel. So that felt good. (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[The Do's and Do Not's of Author Photos](#)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 410

Writing of Blackwell Ops 14: Charlie Task

Day 1..... 1359 words. To date..... 1359
Day 2..... 3002 words. To date..... 4361
Day 3..... 3349 words. To date..... 7710
Day 4..... 1687 words. To date..... 9397
Day 5..... 2271 words. To date..... 11668
Day 6..... 3095 words. To date..... 14763
Day 7..... 3924 words. To date..... 18687

Day 8..... 3278 words. To date..... 21965
Day 9..... 4093 words. To date..... 26058

Fiction for November..... 78426
Fiction for 2023..... 397070
Fiction since August 1..... 282525
Nonfiction for November..... 27690
Nonfiction for the year..... 255580
Annual consumable words..... 649143

2023 Novels to Date..... 8
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 7
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 79
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 235
Short story collections..... 31

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The Journal is a Politics-Free Zone

December 1, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * The Journal is a Politics-Free Zone
- * Why Do Writers Seek Criticism?
- * December 1
- * Isaac Asimov
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“I agree with Stephen King: Stories — and maybe all art — already exist, whole and complete, *in some other place*. It's our job as creators not to make that art or tell those stories, but to uncover them.” Johnny B. Truant (emphasis added)

YES! THIS!

The Journal is a Politics-Free Zone

My personal political preferences might seep out now and then or a reader might read-into something I write either here or in my fiction, but I will never blatantly inundate you with my beliefs. Not my department.

Besides, this isn't the place for that. We're all here to learn more about writing, right?

Nor do I subscribe to the selfish notion "It's my blog so I'll write what I want." If the purpose of your blog is to convey information on a subject, stick to the subject.

The one thing I abhor about human beings is their tendency to believe they have the right to force their views on others. The second thing is suppositories, but I repeat myself. So I don't do that, anywhere.

Until and unless this nation is attacked in a manner that I can affect with a personal response, I'll keep my personal opinions on political matters, well personal. In the unlikely event of such an attack, I'll do what we do as writers: act instead of talk (show, don't tell).

Yesterday I ran across a ridiculously childish post on another website by a successful writer. I won't share his name or where I saw the post because I don't want to advertize the guy. But I left a comment and thought it appropriate for the Journal.

Here's the comment:

"I unsubscribed from [the writer's] posts long LONG ago. Not because of his gratuitous use of foul language — I was a Marine, so meh, the guy's an amateur — but because I couldn't take the constant assault of blatant political innuendo, half-truths, and outright lies like the inane 'Nazi' comment in his post.

"Seldom have I seen a more blatant example of the south end of a horse walking north specifically to advertise the glory that is that south end. Poor [guy]. Who will defend him when the baddies hit? Not this kid."

A few years ago I unsubscribed from Kristine Kathryn Rusch's Business Musings posts (and stopped reading her fiction) for precisely the same reason. They were awash in political nonsense.

As a result I missed learning a great deal about the business end of writing. I know. My fault, and that's fine. I'm good with taking personal responsibility for my actions. I literally couldn't abode the barrage. So instead of surrendering, I withdrew.

And that's too bad. She could have been SO helpful to SO many writers across the board if only she had kept her Business Musings about writing and publishing to writing and publishing (duh) and kept her politics to herself.

Like I do in this Journal. Why any writer would even *risk* alienating readers is unfathomable to me, much less why they would do so intentionally. Doing so intentionally is cutting off one's nose to "get back at" one's face.

Hatred takes many forms on both the dominant and pre-dominant sides of the political aisle. And that's true no matter who's in power at the time. I will not abide it and I will not help spread it.

If that doesn't make you want to share this Journal, I don't know what will.

Why Do Writers Seek Criticism?

A writer emailed me with a question: "Why do you think writers believe criticism and critiques from other people help improve their writing?" (Thanks, Matt.)

Here's my response:

Because that's what they've been taught. Just imagine it. They've been actively taught in all negatives:

- that they don't know enough,
- that they cannot trust themselves, and
- that they are functionally incapable of putting out a quality story without first
 - outlining it,
 - character-sketching and world-building,
 - revising,
 - seeking critical input, and
 - rewriting X number of times.

They are actively taught that they are incompetent. And they lap it up. Head-shakingly inane.

And just for the record, EVERY successful professional fiction writer I've seen or heard who advises new writers to go that route also has nonfiction books for sale telling them how to do so. Every one of them. Conflict of interest? Anyone?

Then I congratulated him on not being a lemming.

December 1

For me personally, a new year starts every night at one instant past midnight or, if you prefer, with each sunrise. Or with the click of every second off the clock. Each of those begins a definitive new period of 24 hours, seven days, 52 weeks, or 12 months.

But if you're one who is more attuned to the traditional calendar, today is a great time to begin thinking about your writing goals for the next year.

Whatever goals you set, I encourage you to break them into smaller increments:

If your goal for the year is to write 1,000,000 publishable words of fiction, that will feel impossible.

But it will feel much less impossible to write 83,334 words per month. Or 19,231 words per week. Or 2733 words per day on average.

Or if your goal is to write 500,000 publishable words of fiction, those numbers fall to 41,667 per month, 9616 words per week, and 1367 words per day.

I know one "professional" writer who laboriously churns out TWO (count 'em, 2) 50,000 to 60,000 word novels per year. She is considered by some to be prolific.

That's her process, and of course "whatever 'works'" is fine. But prolific? Please, do the math.

At the top end of that writer's production, she averages 10,000 words per month. Or 2308 words per week. Or a paltry, embarrassing (to me) 328 words per day.

Divide that by the 16 hours most of us are typically awake during the day and you'll find it's a blazing-fast 21 words PER HOUR: one-third of one word per minute.

C'mon, wo/man. You could do that if you wrote only during bathroom breaks. On your phone.

Isaac Asimov

Dan Baldwin pointed me in the direction of Isaac Asimov's final collection of short stories and a novella: *Gold*.

According to Dan, "About 60 percent of the book is Assimov writing on writing science fiction."

There you go. The opportunity to learn from a master. I ordered a trade paperback copy immediately [from Amazon for only \\$11.42 including tax](#).

Just thought I'd pass it along.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[We Are All Just Inspirations for the Record...](#) THIS. This is a must-read for all Journal subscribers and readers. You don't want to miss it.

[Astronomers find six planets orbiting in resonance](#) Delightful. All but incredible.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1120

Writing of Blackwell Ops 14: Charlie Task

Day 1..... 1359 words. To date..... 1359

Day 2..... 3002 words. To date..... 4361

Day 3..... 3349 words. To date..... 7710

Day 4..... 1687 words. To date..... 9397

Day 5..... 2271 words. To date..... 11668

Day 6..... 3095 words. To date..... 14763

Day 7..... 3924 words. To date..... 18687

Day 8..... 3278 words. To date..... 21965

Day 9..... 4093 words. To date..... 26058

Day 10.... 3764 words. To date..... 29822

Fiction for November..... 82190

Fiction for 2023..... 400834

Fiction since August 1..... 286289

Nonfiction for December..... 1120

Nonfiction for the year..... 256700

Annual consumable words..... 654027

2023 Novels to Date..... 8

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 7

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 79

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 235

Short story collections..... 31

Note: If you find this Journal of value and want to make a one time or recurring donation, please **do not pledge** through Substack. I don't use Stripe. [Instead click this link](#). If you can't donate, please consider sharing this post with friends.

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Welcome, A New Story, and December 2

December 2, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Welcome
- * A New Story
- * December 2
- * Isaac Asimov
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Welcome

Welcome to Alexander S and any other new subscribers or readers of the Journal. I hope you will find it useful.

[Get the Archives and other free downloads](#) at the Journal website. Just click the links and a PDF will download in a new page.

I also recommend reading [“I Believe in You”](#).

Oh, and check out this half-hour video where bestselling author Vin Zandri and I are [chatting about writing at The Writer's Life](#).

A New Story

“Needful Things” published yesterday on my [Stanbrough Writes Substack](#).

To subscribe, click the link above and then the Subscribe button at the end of the story. You'll receive a new short story every Friday, and it's free.

Below the Subscribe button, there are other short stories you can read in most genres. Enjoy!

December 2

I posted something similar yesterday under the title “December 1.” Not to nag or anything, but I thought this bears repeating.

Goals are important. They drive you to (or back to) the computer and they make your fingers move. Like music makes you tap your feet under the table. That said, of course, they're completely up to you.

If you didn't start yesterday, today is a great time to begin thinking about your writing goals for the next year. Whatever goals you set, I encourage you to

One writer I know recently set a daily word count goal of 1500 words per day.

Nothing huge, right? Nothing daunting? And if I remember correctly, Stephen King's daily goal is about the same. And if you do miss, the beauty of a daily goal is that it resets every day.

If my writer friend keeps that average going, that goal will net him 10,500 words per week; 45,000 words per average 30-day month; and a whopping 549,000 words for the year of 2024.

Of course, you can also set goals in the other direction. You can set an annual goal first, then break them into smaller, more manageable increments.

If your goal for the year is to write 1,000,000 publishable words of fiction, that will feel impossible.

But it will feel a little *less* impossible to write 83,334 words per month. Or 19,231 words per week. And it will feel *much* less impossible to write 2733 words per day.

Or if your goal is to write 500,000 publishable words of fiction, those numbers fall to 41,667 per month, 9616 words per week, and 1367 words per day.

As I mentioned yesterday, I know one "professional" writer who laboriously churns out TWO 50,000 to 60,000 word novels per year. She is considered by some to be prolific.

If you do the math, you'll find that at the top end of her production, she averages only 10,000 words per month (500 words fewer than my friend above writes in a week). That's 2308 words per week and a paltry 328 words per day.

Divide that by the 16 hours most of us are typically awake during the day and you'll find it's a blazing-fast 21 words PER HOUR or one-third of one word per minute.

Frankly, I don't know how anyone can write that slowly unless they're writing a grocery list and checking the fridge and pantry as they go.

Isaac Asimov

Dan Baldwin pointed me in the direction of Isaac Asimov's final collection of short stories and a novella: *Gold*.

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Just thought I'd pass it along. Again. (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[Star Trek Stuff A blast from Dean's past](#) (Brought forward from 2012)

[Planning, Prepping and Productivity Tips for Self-published Authors](#)

[We're All in This Together, Anecdotes from the Front Lines](#)

[Ready to publish your audiobooks with Kobo Writing Life? Read this](#) Not for me, but if audio is for you, check it out.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 650

Writing of Blackwell Ops 14: Charlie Task

Day 1..... 1359 words. To date..... 1359

Day 2..... 3002 words. To date..... 4361

Day 3..... 3349 words. To date..... 7710

Day 4..... 1687 words. To date..... 9397

Day 5..... 2271 words. To date..... 11668

Day 6..... 3095 words. To date..... 14763

Day 7..... 3924 words. To date..... 18687

Day 8..... 3278 words. To date..... 21965

Day 9..... 4093 words. To date..... 26058

Day 10.... 3764 words. To date..... 29822

Day 11.... 4362 words. To date..... 34184

Fiction for December..... 4362

Fiction for 2023..... 400834

Fiction since August 1..... 290651

Nonfiction for December..... 1770

Nonfiction for the year..... 257350

Annual consumable words..... 659039

2023 Novels to Date..... 8

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 7

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 79

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 235

Short story collections..... 31

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“It,” and Toward Clarity

December 3, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Finished the Novel
- * “It,” and Toward Clarity
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“[Traditional publishing] will stab you in the back the first chance they get.” Vin Zandri (see Of Interest)

Finished the Novel

Welp, *Blackwell Ops 14: Charlie Task*, subtitled *A Time-Travel Thriller*, is in the can.

It wrapped yesterday with a little over 2100 words. I ran a spell check, saved it as a PDF file, and sent it off to my first reader. It's off my desk, so it's all good. (grin)

Despite four days when I fell short of my daily goal, my average daily count on this one was a hair under 3,026 words per day. I'll take it.

I advise other writers to keep track of their daily progress. It's just one more byproduct that keeps me coming back to the keyboard and tapping into the lives of characters.

It's also why I keep saying average matters.

This novel feels a little special to me in retrospect. When I updated the Numbers below, I realized this was my 80th novel since I started back in late October of 2019.

For some reason, that feels like a benchmark. With a little luck, the next benchmark will be my 100th. (grin)

“It,” and Toward Clarity

Writing and publishing fiction is all about conveying the story your characters are living to interested readers. In that endeavor, clarity matters.

I’ve talked before about taking your time as your characters’ Recorder or Stenographer (as Stephen King refers to himself). Be sure to include anything that passes through your mind as you’re writing. Anything the characters allow you to see, hear, touch, taste or smell (or feel emotionally) as you’re typing.

The word “it” is one I often use to refer back to a sometimes vague antecedent. It’s a flaw I have.

My characters usually catch “it” during my cycling sessions. I usually characterize cycling as the characters stopping and waiting, often impatiently, as their much older Recorder catches up.

The stories often unfold far more quickly than I can manage to race through them. Though fortunately, the characters never seem to have that problem.

As I said, the characters most often replace instances of “it” that are too vaguely connected to their antecedent and replace them for me. In fact, I think I’ve never heard from any of my first readers any confusion caused by that little word.

But if you’re one who still “looks for” errors, typos, wrong words and other flaws consciously during one or more editing passes, I suggest you make “it” the subject of at least one pass with the Find feature.

Then, each time the feature finds “it,” read over the sentence or passage to see whether what you want to convey would be clearer if you replaced “it” with (usually two) other words.

Remember, as long as the story is coming through the POV character, you can’t be too specific.

Excesses or deficiencies in description can only occur when you bow to the critical mind and add-to (or subtract-from) what your characters and your creative subconscious have given you.

You will never make a story “better” by doing that. You’ll only make it different, and usually worse. Of course, whether to do that is strictly up to you. But the only legitimate value judgement is up to the reader.

Reminder

Participants in the Bradbury Challenge, get your Challenge info in before the Journal goes live tomorrow (Monday).

Waiting for some of you who dropped out of the Challenge (or from reporting your progress) to jump back in

I'm pulling for you.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[Episode No. 855: The Big FU \(Thanks Elon\)](#) If you're still tied to the "dream" of traditional publishing, do yourself a favor and watch this.

[For nearly 2,000 memorable opening lines from every genre of world literature](#)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 650

Writing of Blackwell Ops 14: Charlie Task

Day 1..... 1359 words. To date..... 1359
Day 2..... 3002 words. To date..... 4361
Day 3..... 3349 words. To date..... 7710
Day 4..... 1687 words. To date..... 9397
Day 5..... 2271 words. To date..... 11668
Day 6..... 3095 words. To date..... 14763
Day 7..... 3924 words. To date..... 18687
Day 8..... 3278 words. To date..... 21965
Day 9..... 4093 words. To date..... 26058
Day 10.... 3764 words. To date..... 29822
Day 11.... 4362 words. To date..... 34184
Day 12.... 2127 words. To date..... 36311 (done)

Fiction for December..... 6489
Fiction for 2023..... 407323
Fiction since August 1..... 292778
Nonfiction for December..... 24200
Nonfiction for the year..... 258000
Annual consumable words..... 661816

2023 Novels to Date..... 9
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 7
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 80
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 235
Short story collections..... 31

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A New Novel, and the Bradbury Challenge

December 4, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting
- * A New Novel
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Begin at once to live, and count each separate day as a separate life.” Seneca the Younger
(Thanks to Dan Baldwin for this quote)

“I like how the story unfolds before my eyes. I stopped at 10,000 words for a few hours, when I [started wondering] “what's next....” But I managed to silence the critical voice. I focused on the character and the world around him, and it worked! A few sentences made the change. Now I am excited about what happens next.” Balázs Jámbor

Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting

Reporting your numbers to other writers can help encourage them to keep writing. It's why I post my new numbers each day in the last section of the Journal.

Anyone can jump in (or jump back in) and join or rejoin the challenge at any time.

This is a great way to jumpstart your writing and get more practice pushing down the critical voice.

There's no cost.

Notice, there's also no pressure re submitting or publishing. That's up to you.

The point of this challenge — the point of all writing challenges — is to have fun and grow as a writer. Learning to keep track of your writing is a bonus.

During the past week, in addition to whatever other fiction they're writing, the following writers reported their progress:

Short Fiction

- George Kordonis "A Woman Like No Other" 2316 Supernatural Horror
- George Kordonis "Just The One" 3994 Urban Fantasy (from Nov 27, not posted due to weekend internet outage)
- Adam Kozak "Hugo Davenport" 3685 Detective Humor
- Christopher Ridge "Germs" 1500 Horror
- K.C. Riggs "The Paperweight" 3227 Magic Realism

Major Streak Alert: This is KC Riggs' 37th week in a row writing and reporting on at least one short story every week. Know how? One story at a time. 😊

Longer Fiction

- Balázs Jámor *Kylen's Story* (tentative title) 8000 Fantasy (12000 total to date)
- Alexander Nakul *The Meerkat Watch* 4418 Urban fantasy (10479 total to date)

A New Novel

Yesterday, I remembered a hinted-at conflict in *Blackwell Ops 14: Charlie Task*. It wasn't a loose end that I had to tie up in that novel. But it, combined with how the novel ended, strongly suggested another Blackwell Ops novel.

My first reader also mentioned a few things that could be resolved in a new novel, given that TJ Blackwell is not one to take anything lightly.

For a brief moment (less time than it took to write "For a brief moment), I let the conscious, critical mind slip-in. I actually considered reopening Blackwell Ops 14 and asking Charlie whether there was more to tell. After all, every novel writes differently. Maybe I'd jumped the gun.

But I knew better. Blackwell Ops 14, the third installment of Charlie's story in the series, wrapped, and it wrapped easily and naturally. It was what it was supposed to be.

But the hinted-at conflict I mentioned above and the continuation of the overall Blackwell Ops story, both of which would require either a new POV character or the return of an earlier one, handed me, on a silver platter, what will become my next novel. (grin) I love it when that happens.

I got the promo doc written and the cover designed for Blackwell Ops 14, and I applied my first reader's invaluable catches. Then I published it to D2D and Amazon for pre-order. It will be available on December 15.

And then I sat down at the writing 'puter and started Blackwell Ops 15. I didn't even know who the new or previous POV character would be. TJ Blackwell figured that out for me in the prologue. (grin)

Note: That could only happen because I put my fingers on the keyboard and Just Wrote whatever came. I trust my characters to live the life they're living. Bless them for allowing me to run through it with them.

As TJ uncharacteristically picked up the phone to call the operative—a POV character I hadn't met before—I remembered a cover pic that that pictured that operative perfectly.

So I stepped away from the story and took a few minutes to create a cover. First time I've ever created a cover when I'd written only the prologue for the novel the cover would represent. (grin)

[Here's the cover and description for Blackwell Ops 14: Charlie Task.](#)

And [here's the cover for the forthcoming Blackwell Ops 15: Soleada Garcia.](#)

I'm a very fortunate guy. I'm so freakin' excited I can only barely wait to get back to the story this morning.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[Making dialogue sound natural](#) Or just write what the characters say....

The Numbers

The Journal..... 770

Writing of Blackwell Ops 15: Solana Garcia

Day 1..... 3034 words. To date..... 3034

Fiction for December..... 9523

Fiction for 2023..... 410357

Fiction since August 1..... 295812

Nonfiction for December..... 3190

Nonfiction for the year.....	258770
Annual consumable words.....	665620
2023 Novels to Date.....	9
2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
2023 Short Stories to Date.....	7
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	80
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	235
Short story collections.....	31

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Definitions, and Nouns vs. Adjectives vs. Verbs

December 5, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Welcome
- * Offbeat Definitions
- * Nouns vs. Adjectives vs. Verbs: A Rant
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Welcome

Welcome to Madhuri T, Emma(?) and any other new subscribers or readers of the Journal. I hope you will find it useful.

Get the Archives and other [free downloads at the Journal website](#). Just click the links and a PDF will download in a new page.

I also recommend reading ["I Believe in You"](#).

Oh, and check out this half-hour video where bestselling author [Vin Zandri and I are chatting about writing at The Writer's Life](#).

Offbeat Definitions

I've been writing new definitions for new words occasionally. Usually these words pop up as "typos" in my fiction. So they're all directly from my characters and my creative subconscious.

But as I catch them during cycling, if they make sense and if a definition if one presents itself, I stop and scribble it down, then go back to the novel.

Here are a few. The first two are brand new. The third comes from the title of a short story collection, *Strange Stuff*:

cantaloupeé, n. a toupee or hairstyle that looks like a helmet

converstation, n. in business buildings, most often the water cooler

strange, adj. strange to the point of straining the brain.

Nouns vs. Adjectives vs. Verbs: A Rant

I've been noticing an alarming (to me) propensity to use adjectives as nouns.

This weird new foible follows on the heels of writers using nouns as verbs: For example, using "gift" (a noun) as a verb to replace "give" for some strange reason. I suspect most people do it to sound cool or some such nonsense.

Some poor 20-something uttering "Ooh, Mom gifted me a new car for graduation" makes as much sense as "Ooh, Mom potatoed me (or "rivered me" or "mountained me" or "bicycled me" or another "noured me") a new car.

But it isn't only young folks. It's older people passing along their own ignorance.

In fact, saw a new example of the noun-becoming-verb misuse-but-now-accepted-(for some stupid reason)-use in a blog post by an esteemed jurist yesterday morning.

In the opening line of his post, he wrote, "We have been discussing the latest Irish law to crackdown on free speech."

I had respected this man and his opinions. But I deleted the email and unsubscribed from the newsletter. If he's that ignorant despite all his education, I don't want to risk what I might pick up through osmosis.

What he intended to convey was the verb "crack down," meaning strenuously regulate. A "crackdown" (noun) is the implementation of that verb. I guess it's just easier to omit the space.

Know what? If you're that fatigued, you should probably be sleeping, not typing.

But more and more often I see writers use “backyard” or “backseat” (both adjectives) as the noun that describes a place: the back yard or the back seat.

If you’re fortunate, you might have a backyard swing in the back yard.

If you’re unfortunate, you might have a backseat driver in the back seat of your car.

You can come up with other examples on your own.

This isn’t an earthshaking problem. But for a writer, having a thorough understanding of the language, the primary tool of the writer’s profession, should be a matter of simple pride.

A writer misusing the language (except intentionally to create a certain effect in the reader) is like a carpenter trying to drive a nail with a screwdriver.

If I ever see in a “professional” writer’s work a backyard swing in the backyard or a backseat driver in the backseat I think my head might explode.

Not because the mangled usage bothers me that much. But because how can anyone who calls him- or herself a professional writer — or a writer at all — NOT know, or at least strive to learn, the language better than that?

As for those who shrug and say something stupid (and lazy) like, “The reader will know what I mean” — first, how do you know what the reader will or won’t do? But second, that isn’t the point.

The point is, you’re the writer. It’s your job to convey your intention clearly so the reader won’t have to decipher anything.

I’ve mentioned here before that the abbreviated word “’til” is now considered archaic. Silly usage dictates that if you want to shorten the word “until,” you don’t (do not) simply insert an apostrophe. You add an L and make it “till.” Which, by the way, is already taken.

“Till” is already a noun (cash drawer) or a verb (turn over soil with a plow or “tiller).

Besides, “till” and “’til” are pronounced exactly the same way. So this is a phonetics spelling problem (the writer’s problem) not a matter for dictionaries to take up. If a character means to truncate “until” in dialogue, it should be “’til.”

And of course, it makes absolutely no sense to these folks to insert that apostrophe and simply shorten “until” to “’til.” Too obvious, I guess. Besides, why bother with straining to find the apostrophe on a keyboard when you can just repeat the last consonant instead, eh?

By that reasoning, I suppose we might as well all start writing the shortened form of “do not” as “dонт” and “is not” as “isнт” and — well, I’m sure you take my point.

Oh, oops. That one wasn't a contraction. But it's all good. The reader'll know what I mean.

So I guess that would make the short form of "I will" "I'll" and "should have" "should've." Wow. The irregular contraction for "should not have" will become "shouldn't've." Cool!

I personally mark-up this new inane habit to either laziness or learned ignorance.

All of that said, you don't have to email me. I do understand I'll have to put up with it until I get the sweet release of eternal sleep.

Why? Because oddball changes like this always go unchecked except in tiny corners like mine. Which, of course, have plenty of detractors and make only the slightest bit of difference. Maybe. Sometimes.

Over time, changes in language due to ignorance become the norm as the people who know better die off and people who don't know better say "Well, the reader will know what I mean."

Then the latter go on to serve as professors at a universities and pass on their ignorance to a whole new generation of teachers.

In the meantime, for the sake of clarity, I will still correct such inanities in any new copyedits I conduct, and it will (or it'll) never make its way into my own writing, fiction or nonfiction.

I hope, for the sake of your own sense of self, you will do the same.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[**The AI Boom Could Use a Shocking Amount of Electricity**](#)

[**The Danger of E-Skimmers**](#) I recommend subscribing to this site.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1120

Writing of Blackwell Ops 15: Soleada Garcia

Day 1..... 3034 words. To date..... 3034

Day 2..... 4389 words. To date..... 7423

Fiction for December..... 13912

Fiction for 2023..... 414746

Fiction since August 1..... 300201
Nonfiction for December..... 43100
Nonfiction for the year..... 259890
Annual consumable words..... 671129

2023 Novels to Date..... 9
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 7
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 80
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 235
Short story collections..... 31

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A Few Notes on Yesterday's Post

December 6, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Welcome
- * A Few Notes on Yesterday's Post
- * The Writing
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Welcome

Welcome to Noah(?) and any other new subscribers or readers of the Journal. I hope you will find it useful.

Get the Archives and other **free downloads at the Journal website.** Just click the links and a PDF will download in a new page.

I also recommend reading ["I Believe in You"](#).

Oh, and check out this half-hour video where bestselling author [Vin Zandri and I are chatting about writing on The Writer's Life.](#)

A Few Notes on Yesterday's Post

1. I stick by what I wrote, but you don't have to apply it to your own writing. It's not like I'm gonna stop by your house and ask to see your WIP or something you've just finished. (grin)

I can only give you my best advice. Only you can decide whether to pick it up or leave it where you found it. I'm good with that either way.

2. Yes, the language evolves, whether from ignorance or pronunciation/spelling of a particular culture or small part of the population or from some dweeb like me making up new words. And that's fine.

Change is inevitable. That does not mean it should be easy or simply accepted. And professional writers should be the ones vetting those changes. Or perhaps we should all just "write" via AI. I will never do that.

3. Yes, typos happen. Along with wrong words, misspellings and autocorrect errors and really stinky advice from instructors who don't have a clue what they're talking about. You can even pick the wrong word out of a thesaurus. I understand all of that.

I'm not saying writers should never make a mistake. I'm only saying readers will hold the writer personally responsible for them.

One quick example — In the midst of writing the second chapter of my current novel, I referred back to a character (by name) from the previous novel.

But when I checked the previous novel to find his name, I found that the character Juan Segura somehow magically became Juan Aguilar toward the end of the book. I had confused two characters.

I understand that readers might or might not have noticed, and that those who did notice might have forgiven me. But that isn't the point.

In any case, I was thrilled I caught that mistake. I changed it in the previous novel, clicked Save, and then uploaded a new mss to both D2D and Amazon.

But again, that's just me.

4. Characters, in dialogue, are exempt. Characters say what they say. (Correct typos, of course.)

5. Readers exist only to be entertained. Regardless of whatever excuses we make ourselves for our poor communication of a story, they won't even make excuses for a writer like Stephen King, much less for me or anyone else.

I recommend knowing the nuances of the language intimately and then learning more.

6. Here's some of that "best advice":

Publish your work yourself and retain all rights to your intellectual property. If you do that, you get to set your own standards. And despite anything I say, whether and how you present your work to readers is strictly up to you.

If you're going through a publisher, you will have to meet that publisher's standards or go unpublished by that publisher.

7. Life is a series of choices. For example, from a readerly standpoint, I won't read any novel that I know was written from an outline, etc. I like authentic stories.

Of novels I do start, I stop reading when I've encountered several typos or wrong words or other errors, or even one grossly erroneous fact (e.g., calling a 9mm Beretta a "revolver" or a magazine a "clip").

If I pick up a book and flip through pages or use the "see inside" feature at Amazon and I encounter several long (more than 8 or 10 lines) paragraphs in a row, I put it down and move on to the next book.

If the writer pulls me into the opening scene and forces me to keep reading, I buy the book. If s/he doesn't, I don't.

As always, your choices may differ, and that's perfectly fine.

The Writing

Okay, that's probably more than enough for today. Back to the novel, which is racing along so well I can barely catch my breath, much less keep up. (grin)

Oh, one more thing. Because I trust them and WITD, the characters enable my success. A couple days ago, I surpassed 300,000 words of fiction since August first.

I couldn't help but think once more of that "prolific" writer who "churns out" 120,000 words of fiction per year in two novels. (grin)

I think I've never been prouder of any stat I've posted in Numbers below. And it's all because of my characters and their willingness to let me write their stories.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

Nada

The Numbers

The Journal..... 800

Writing of Blackwell Ops 15: Solana Garcia

Day 1..... 3034 words. To date..... 3034

Day 2..... 4389 words. To date..... 7423

Day 3..... 4327 words. To date..... 11750

Fiction for December..... 18329

Fiction for 2023..... 419073

Fiction since August 1..... 304528

Nonfiction for December..... 5110

Nonfiction for the year..... 260690

Annual consumable words..... 676256

2023 Novels to Date..... 9

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 7

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 80

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 235

Short story collections..... 31

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Fear

December 7, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Fear
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Fear of life closes off more opportunities for us than fear of death ever does.” Agnes Moorehead

“I don’t believe any of you have ever read Paradise Lost, and you don’t want to. That’s something that you just want to take on trust. It’s a classic ... something that everybody wants to have read and nobody wants to read.” Mark Twain

Fear

Unreasoning fear.

I get questions and excuses via email all the time. I don’t mind. Many topics for this Journal come from those questions and excuses.

I’ve sent one or more writers a few bits out of today’s post earlier. It is my considered opinion that you only go around once: Just in case I’m correct, for goodness’ sake Be Bold.

The conscious mind’s primary function in life is to protect you.

In writing fiction, it protects you by not letting you write fiction. If you don’t write it, you won’t publish it.

If you don’t publish it, you won’t have to suffer the embarrassment of someone not liking it or (gasp) telling you it’s no good.

One writer recently revealed to me a brand new tactic of the conscious mind. S/he wrote,

“Honestly it’s not the historical part that slows me down, although I do love researching so much I often spend hours doing that and not writing.”

Okay, that’s not the new tactic. That’s an old one. I’ve heard that one a thousand times. It’s important to research so you’ll “get it right.”

Um, it’s fiction. A few seconds of quick spot research (hop online, learn what you need to learn, hop back into the story) will more than adequately suffice. And you’ll be writing.

Or the variation: “I love research so I often spend hours doing that instead of writing.”

Yep. Reading what somebody else wrote about a topic is far less frightening than writing a story.

But the new one s/he handed me on a platter is this one: “It’s more just that I have so many ideas and so few sound exciting.”

A new tactic from the conscious mind:

“Here: Look at all these story ideas!

“Ooh, but how will you ever decide which one to write? Quite a conundrum. (heh heh)

“What if you pick the wrong one? What if you waste all that time writing the wrong story?”

“Then nobody will like it, you’ll be a laughing stock, and your career will be over.

“So just be careful. Be sure you pick the right one. Be sure you pick one that’s exciting. One that’ll really blow the readers out of their chairs.”

Okay, Wait.

In the first place, what career? Are you writing at least five days a week (or at least on a regular schedule, showing up, writing)? Are you publishing what you write?

If the answer is no, then what career?

But the real biggie, what you should say to your conscious, critical mind: “Who’re you to say whether they’re exciting?”

If you’re here to learn, and if you really want to write, listen.

If your characters are giving you ideas at all, those ideas are exciting at some level. But you will never find that level or how exciting they are if you don’t write them.

The only way to see what your neighbor’s doing in his front yard is to open the blinds or pull the curtain and watch him.

The only way to see what your characters are doing is to open the blinds or pull the curtain and watch them.

The difference is, you can actually go *do* what your characters are doing, and write it down without anyone getting annoyed.

You just have to sit down and do it.

And for the record, only putting new words on the page is writing. Everything else is, well, whatever else.

Ideas don’t come as fully formed stories. Thank God.

If a fully formed story plays through my head, especially if it includes the ending, why in the world would I want to write it? I can’t think of anything more boring. Well, except maybe trying

to force my way through reading a novel someone's obviously outlined and controlled so tightly that I can practically hear the characters screaming.

Maybe, now and then, "a really great (or exciting)" short story will occur to you sometimes. And you'll write it and publish it. Woohoo!

And some readers will *love* it. And most will abide it and some will think it sucks. Hey, that's life.

A lot of you will never write a novel simply because you can't hold the whole thing in your head and you're too frightened to take a chance. That fear is what leads to outlining and other unnecessary safety nets. What happens if nobody likes your novel?

NOTHING. No consequences. If nobody likes your novel, you write the next novel.

I promise, it's SO much more fun to just write what comes. Let the story unfold around you as you run through it with your characters. You cannot have more fun writing than that.

"But maybe the story won't be any good."

I GUARANTEE it won't be any good for some. But what about all those readers who will love it or like it?

Don't readers deserve a chance to decide for themselves what they like or don't like?

What they "will" like or not is not for you to decide.

Your job is to write the thing. Period. Your job is to go have fun with the characters and be the very first person EVER to see a story that thousands of other people will eventually see. That's a pretty big-deal role.

And there's only One Way to do that: You just have to realize the story (any story) is not important. That It will matter to some readers, and it won't matter at all to others.

What's important is that you be the first to enjoy it, and that you bring it to light by writing it.

Well, that's what *I* think is important for you. But how do I know?

Maybe researching is more important to you than writing. That's fine. Be a researcher.

Or maybe something else is more important. Maybe you don't really even want to write. Maybe you only want to "have written."

There's a vast difference.

An author is always looking back at what s/he has written."

A writer is always looking forward, anticipating (and thrilling in) what happens next in the current story or novel.

My “prolific” acquaintance who turns out two medium novels per year is an author.

I am a writer. I look forward. A writer writes.

Only you can know what’s truly important to you.

But if you wanna be a writer, y’gotta write.

And I’m not talking crap off the cuff here.

About 9 years ago I finally overcame the EXACT SAME FEARS that are stopping you right now.

And because I finally realized what really mattered (THAT I write, not WHAT I write), today I’ve written well over three or four million words of fiction. Maybe more.

But it’s all up to you. Only you can prevent your conscious mind from stopping you.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[The 2023 Diagram Prize for the Oddest Book Title of the Year...](#)

[Social media overload, exhaustion, and use discontinuance](#)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1230

Writing of Blackwell Ops 15: Solana Garcia

Day 1..... 3034 words. To date..... 3034

Day 2..... 4389 words. To date..... 7423

Day 3..... 4327 words. To date..... 11750

Day 4..... 4058 words. To date..... 15808

Fiction for December..... 22297

Fiction for 2023..... 423131

Fiction since August 1..... 308586

Nonfiction for December..... 6340

Nonfiction for the year.....	261920
Annual consumable words.....	681544
2023 Novels to Date.....	9
2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
2023 Short Stories to Date.....	7
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	80
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	235
Short story collections.....	31

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A Good Day

December 8, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * A Good Day
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

My first reader commented on one doubt the conscious mind will try to push on you from yesterday's post: "But maybe the story won't be any good."

"True, but maybe it will be . . . unless it never gets written. Not writing it absolutely guarantees it won't be good, but writing it absolutely guarantees that it might be good. Remember that you're not writing for those who aren't going to like it, you're writing for those who are, and you can't possibly know how many of the former and how many of the latter there are unless you write and publish the story." Russ Jones, on [Fear](#)

Note: Russ is not a writer of fiction. But he's an avid reader. And he likes my stuff, so he obviously has excellent taste. (grin)

A Good Day

Yesterday was the best day of writing I've had in a very long while, and maybe ever (see Numbers). I am stoked. And I can't wait to get back to the story this morning. So a short post today.

Just so you know, I did a lot of other things yesterday: going to the post office, wrapping Christmas gifts, visiting with my wife and the two kittens, and even a two-hour trip to the grocery and back.

My "secret" is

1. I keep coming back, and
2. When the characters and the story are running, I run with them.

I wish the same for you, today and every day.

Not that you have to equal or surpass what I do — though I will be your loudest cheerleader if you do — but that you equal or surpass in publishable words of fiction today what you produced yesterday.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[Hey, if you like snow, check out my buddy Vin Zandri \(vinzandri.com\) on the slopes](#)

[One organ in a person's body can age faster than the rest](#) Story ideas.

[What to know about Hanukkah, which begins tonight](#) This listing is one day old.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 350

Writing of Blackwell Ops 15: Solana Garcia

Day 1..... 3034 words. To date..... 3034

Day 2..... 4389 words. To date..... 7423

Day 3..... 4327 words. To date..... 11750

Day 4..... 4058 words. To date..... 15808

Day 5..... 6103 words. To date..... 21911

Fiction for December..... 28400

Fiction for 2023..... 429234

Fiction since August 1.....	314689
Nonfiction for December.....	6690
Nonfiction for the year.....	262270
Annual consumable words.....	687997
2023 Novels to Date.....	9
2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
2023 Short Stories to Date.....	7
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	80
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	235
Short story collections.....	31

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Welcome, a New Story, and Raising the Bar

December 9, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Welcome
- * A New Story
- * Raising the Bar
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Welcome

Welcome to Remy and any other new subscribers or readers of the Journal. I hope you will find it useful.

Get the Archives and other [free downloads at the Journal website](#). Just click the links and a PDF will download in a new page.

I also recommend reading ["I Believe in You"](#) and ["Fear"](#). Can't hurt, and it might help.

Oh, and check out this half-hour video where bestselling author [Vin Zandri and I are chatting about writing](#) on The Writer's Life.

A New Story

“Seven Minutes in Belfast” published yesterday on my [Stanbrough Writes Substack](#). This one is a short story I wrote in the Blackwell Ops world.

To subscribe, click the link above and then the Subscribe button at the end of the story. You’ll receive a new short story every Friday, and it’s free.

Below the Subscribe button, there are other short stories you can read in most genres. Enjoy!

Raising the Bar

Challenges are good. They’re a great way to push yourself (gently).

Over and over again I hear from those in the ongoing Bradbury Challenge that it and having a place to report their results has helped them shove aside the critical voice and practice writing. Anyone can jump in or jump back in at any time. The “deadline” is Sunday at midnight Arizona time.

I need challenges too. Probably because of my background, I enjoy them. And of course, in writing challenges, there are no actual, real-world consequences anyway. Whether you make it or miss it, each day the word count goal resets to zero. So why not take a shot?

Yesterday I decided to increase my daily word count goal “officially” to 4000 words per day of clean, publishable fiction. Making 3000 words per day, which was my goal for years, has become relatively easy for me.

But writing 4000 words per day pushes me a little. It makes me stay a little longer in the chair, or come back “one more time” to achieve the goal. That’s what I mean about pushing gently.

Yesterday, after posting a 6000+ word day the previous day, I struggled a little to make my 4000 words. But when I checked my novel word count against yesterday’s total and saw that my goal was only around 600 words away, I thought What’s another half-hour? No biggie.

So I got up and walked around a little, then returned to the chair to make my goal. The story took over, and when the smoke cleared, I’d written almost a thousand more words and surpassed my goal by over 300 words. Again, clean, publishable fiction. I don’t count words I put on the page, then cut.

Whatever your goal is, that’s all it takes. A few more minutes in the chair or coming back one more time. If you’re stuck, just write the next sentence that comes, and the next, and the next. Soon you won’t be stuck any longer, the story will be flowing again, and you will have surpassed your goal.

I realize not everyone has the amount of free time I have. For many, a day job and children necessarily take priority. But my children are long-since grown and gone. I lost them in increments. My grandchildren and great grandchildren live too far away to visit often.

And my day job, you could say, is writing and publishing this Journal. But that process is also a great warm-up for my fingers for the fiction writing I do after this thing is posted.

And I love answering your questions in emails or comments or, when I think they would be valuable to other writers, in the Journal (anonymously, of course). So if you have questions, ask them and share the wealth.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[Inspiration: Find It, Use It](#) From my friend, accomplished writer Robert J. Sadler

[Episode No. 859: Jennifer Wilcov](#)

[How Improv Made Me a Better Writer](#) In case this is of any value to you

The Numbers

The Journal..... 650

Writing of Blackwell Ops 15: Solana Garcia

Day 1..... 3034 words. To date..... 3034
Day 2..... 4389 words. To date..... 7423
Day 3..... 4327 words. To date..... 11750
Day 4..... 4058 words. To date..... 15808
Day 5..... 6103 words. To date..... 21911
Day 6..... 4330 words. To date..... 26241

Fiction for December..... 32730
Fiction for 2023..... 433564
Fiction since August 1..... 319019
Nonfiction for December..... 7340
Nonfiction for the year..... 262920
Annual consumable words..... 692977

2023 Novels to Date..... 9
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 7
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 80

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 235
Short story collections..... 31

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If You're Still Struggling to Write

December 10, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * If You're Still Struggling to Write
- * Reminder
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“[P]utting the pressure of life and death on every word you are writing crushes the life out of the words, completely negating what you are trying to do....” Tiffanie Gray

If You're Still Struggling to Write

Please read [Tiffanie Gray's comment](#) on yesterday's post.

I almost didn't include the link to the article on improvisation in yesterday's post. Now I'm very glad I did. Thanks, Tiffanie.

Reminder

If you are participating in the Bradbury Challenge (or want to jump in or jump back in) remember to submit your story info before tonight at midnight Arizona time. Right now that is 2 a.m. Eastern, 1 a.m. Central, and 11 p.m. Saturday for the west coast.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[Writing Stories to Seek Answers to Life's Thorny Questions](#)

[Censoring Imagination: Why Prisons Ban Fantasy and Science Fiction](#)

[See Dr. Mardy Groeth's excellent quotes on "alone" vs. "loneliness" this week](#)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 170

Writing of Blackwell Ops 15: Solana Garcia

Day 1..... 3034 words. To date..... 3034
Day 2..... 4389 words. To date..... 7423
Day 3..... 4327 words. To date..... 11750
Day 4..... 4058 words. To date..... 15808
Day 5..... 6103 words. To date..... 21911
Day 6..... 4330 words. To date..... 26241
Day 7..... 4213 words. To date..... 30454

Fiction for December..... 36943
Fiction for 2023..... 437777
Fiction since August 1..... 323232
Nonfiction for December..... 7510
Nonfiction for the year..... 263090
Annual consumable words..... 697360

2023 Novels to Date..... 9
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 7
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 80
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 235
Short story collections..... 31

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Welcome, and the Bradbury Challenge

December 11, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Welcome
- * The Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting
- * The Writing
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Since I turned off the ‘I must publish’ button in my mind, I can write freely, without any reader or editor in mind. I can focus on the story and the characters and how their story really happens.”
Jámbor Balázs

Welcome

Welcome to Amelia, Sophia, and any other new subscribers or readers of the Journal. I hope you will find it useful.

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I also recommend reading the posts [“I Believe in You”](#) and [“Fear”](#). Can't hurt, and it might help.

Oh, and check out this half-hour video where bestselling author [Vin Zandri and I are chatting about writing on The Writer's Life](#).

The Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting

Reporting your numbers to other writers can help encourage them to keep writing. It's why I post my new numbers each day in the last section of the Journal.

Anyone can jump in (or jump back in) and join or rejoin the challenge at any time.

This is a great way to jumpstart your writing and get more practice pushing down the critical voice.

There's no cost.

Notice, there's also no pressure re submitting or publishing. That's up to you.

The point of this challenge — the point of all writing challenges — is to have fun and grow as a writer. Learning to keep track of your writing is a bonus.

During the past week, in addition to whatever other fiction they're writing, the following writers reported their progress:

Short Fiction

- Erin Donoho "The Ghosts of the Del Monte" 1900 Historical supernatural
- George Kordonis "Movers Misdelivery," 2408 Urban Fantasy
- Adam Kozak "The Promotion" 5497 General Fiction
- Christopher Ridge "The Mirror Is Not Your Friend" 2600 Horror
- K.C. Riggs "Buried Futures" 1382 Magic Realism

Longer Fiction

- Balázs Jámbor *Kylan's Story* (tentative title) 5000 Fantasy (17000 total to date)
- Alexander Nakul *The Meerkat Watch* 4418 Urban fantasy (10479 total to date)

The Writing

Another personal record-setting good day of writing yesterday. My daily average for this novel is 4583 words per day.

Again, I am stoked. And I'm even more stoked about the story.

If you keep track of your numbers, average matters a great deal. In fact, it is all-important. In addition to the story itself, it's what keeps me coming back to the writing 'puter.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[Logic: The Lost Art in Being a Fiction Writer](#)

[Great Advice from Joe Lansdale](#)

[The Power of the Creative Voice](#)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 440

Writing of Blackwell Ops 15: Solana Garcia

Day 1..... 3034 words. To date..... 3034
Day 2..... 4389 words. To date..... 7423
Day 3..... 4327 words. To date..... 11750
Day 4..... 4058 words. To date..... 15808
Day 5..... 6103 words. To date..... 21911
Day 6..... 4330 words. To date..... 26241
Day 7..... 4213 words. To date..... 30454
Day 8..... 6232 words. To date..... 36686

Fiction for December..... 43175
Fiction for 2023..... 444009
Fiction since August 1..... 329464
Nonfiction for December..... 7950
Nonfiction for the year..... 263530
Annual consumable words..... 704032

2023 Novels to Date..... 9
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 7
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 80
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 235
Short story collections..... 31

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Welcome, and Time-Travel Notes

December 12, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Welcome
- * Time-Travel Notes
- * The Writing
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Since I turned off the ‘I must publish’ button in my mind, I can write freely, without any reader or editor in mind. I can focus on the story and the characters and how their story really happens.”
Jámbor Balázs

Welcome

Welcome

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I also recommend reading the posts [“I Believe in You”](#) and [“Fear”](#). Can’t hurt, and it might help.

Oh, and check out this half-hour video where bestselling author [Vin Zandri and I are chatting about writing on The Writer’s Life](#).

Time Travel Notes

Just a few notes I’ve jotted down on Notepad since I’ve been writing time-travel stuff, especially the previous and current novel —

Please bear in mind that when I talk about time travel, I mean the physical manifestation of it: a character going to live physically in another time (and timeline). So not dreams or transcendental meditation or any of that.

I’m not saying any of that isn’t valid. I’m only saying that isn’t what I’m talking about when I talk about time travel.

Even if time travel ever does become possible, to avoid direct conflict with various paradoxes, the time travel itself will have to be more of a lateral move than a move backward into the direct past or forward into the at-this-moment-intended future.

[As I wrote in a past article](#), “The time traveler could still visit the past or future, but only in a different timeline: they would visit amidst what might have happened if something else had happened to cause it. S/he won’t be able to travel within the same timeline, so s/he won’t be able to say or do anything that might affect his or her own past or future.”

The timeline factor is an important distinction for a fiction writer, and especially for a prolific one. Say you’ve written a story set in a small fishing village along the Pacific coast in 1950s Mexico.

If you later write another story in which a character time-travels to that same village in the same time (even the same minute, hour, or day) that character will be in a different timeline.

The past in that different timeline might be the same or it might be different, even including characters' names. So you don't necessarily have to remember or look-up character names, place names or descriptions, etc. You can Just Write.

But regardless of that, the future of that timeline will definitely be different. And that's where the new story begins. Your character can literally go anywhere and do anything from that point forward, just as s/he or you can in real life.

Another mind experiment — If you (or your character) found a mode of time travel and actually traveled to the past, could you or s/he stay there indefinitely?

In my opinion (of course, all of this is my opinion) yes. The bigger question is whether you would want to. And of course, whether you would want to would depend on how many and which modern so-called conveniences you could do without.

I personally have always borne in mind that the only necessities are food, water, and shelter, so I would be fine. Everything else is one level or another of luxury.

Some of us who are dependent on various medicines might argue that we couldn't stay in a timeline in which those medicines haven't been invented.

But remember, it's a different timeline. Would you even have the same maladies? If so, might there be a cure in that timeline? Or might you never have succumbed to the malady at all?

A different timeline is literally a different world. As a writer, you can change (or not change) whatever you want from the one we're currently living in.

As with writing into the dark, the possibilities are endless. And of course, time travel isn't possible anyway — or is it? So have fun with it.

The Writing

Missed my new word count goal yesterday (visiting with family). But thanks to making the goal on all but one of the other days, my average is still 4448 words per day through this novel. One more reason to set a daily word-count goal.

Sadly, I expect the novel to wrap today. I wonder what will come next. Which for me actually means I wonder which set of characters I'll check-in with next. Maybe even the same ones. They're already in a new timeline and stepping into a new future, so again, the possibilities are endless.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

Nada

The Numbers

The Journal..... 800

Writing of Blackwell Ops 15: Solana Garcia

Day 1..... 3034 words. To date..... 3034
Day 2..... 4389 words. To date..... 7423
Day 3..... 4327 words. To date..... 11750
Day 4..... 4058 words. To date..... 15808
Day 5..... 6103 words. To date..... 21911
Day 6..... 4330 words. To date..... 26241
Day 7..... 4213 words. To date..... 30454
Day 8..... 6232 words. To date..... 36686
Day 9..... 3352 words. To date..... 40038

Fiction for December..... 46527
Fiction for 2023..... 447361
Fiction since August 1..... 332816
Nonfiction for December..... 8760
Nonfiction for the year..... 264340
Annual consumable words..... 708194

2023 Novels to Date..... 9
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 7
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 80
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 235
Short story collections..... 31

Note: If you find this Journal of value and want to make a one time or recurring donation, **please do not pledge through Substack**. I don't use Stripe. [Instead click this link](#). If you can't donate, please consider sharing this post with friends.

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark and adherence to Heinlein's Rules. Unreasoning fear and the myths of writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

Welcome, and Copyright Infringement

December 13, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Welcome
- * Copyright Infringement
- * The Writing
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Concerning time ... I read a bit about a new quantum mechanics theory stating that not only do we change the future with every breath we take, every move we make, every cake we bake, we also at that same instantly change our past.” Dan Baldwin in a comment on yesterday's post

“It does not get easier with time, does it? Everyone tells us that nonsense, but every joyful memory is shadowed with raw mourning.” A friend, in an email regarding the death of my youngest daughter, a kitten, 8 months ago on April 11 (Beautifully written, I thought)

Welcome

Welcome to Ezra, and any other new subscribers or readers of the Journal. I hope you will find it useful.

Get the Archives and other [free downloads at the Journal website](#). Just click the links and a PDF will download in a new page.

I also recommend reading the posts [“I Believe in You”](#) and [“Fear”](#). Can't hurt, and it might help.

Oh, and check out this half-hour video where bestselling author [Vin Zandri and I are chatting about writing on The Writer's Life](#).

Copyright Infringement

This is not a lecture. Unfortunately, this is an example.

I use a service called [Talkwalker](#). It alerts me each time anyone mentions the title of any alert I set. Of course, one of those alerts is for my name.

Yesterday I received such an alert. Here is a screenshot:

Latest News from our blog: [Generative AI for data analytics - Talkwalker](#)
If you like our Alerts, please help us keep this service free by [liking](#) and [following](#)!

Blogs

1 new result

[Download Wes Crowley Gap Series by Harvey Stanbrough \(.ePUB\)+](#)

Download Wes Crowley Gap Series by **Harvey Stanbrough** (.ePUB)+ Wes Crowley Gap Series (2, 4-6, 8-10) by **Harvey Stanbrough** ePUB / MOBI Reader, 3.9MB | Retail **Harvey Stanbrough** was born in New Mexico, seasoned in Texas, and baked in Arizona. After...

12/11/23 14:35 | United Kingdom | [paidshitforfree.com](#)



If you are honest and if you do not yet use Talkwalker, I recommend it. It's free.

People who download books free while they are still under copyright (not in the public domain) are stealing food from the table of the writer. They are stealing rent money and money for medical bills.

I can't imagine that any of you are doing that. If you are, either stop or please at least unsubscribe from my blog. I don't want to be around you, even virtually. Thieves disgust me.

I write this blog and charge nothing. I pass out free advice. I serve as your cheerleader if you need one. I even give away my fiction and nonfiction to anyone who asks if they can't afford to buy it. And anyone who buys direct from StoneThread Publishing gets a steep discount.

For those who get my books through the usual channel and pay full price, I don't think five or six dollars is too steep a price for a few hours' entertainment. Compare that with the price for a movie ticket.

But giving something away is vastly different from having it stolen outright by thieves. Thieves have no honor, and I will not abide them.

I would rather stop writing fiction and go fishing than to have my work stolen at will. Period.

The Writing

The novel wrapped, and in doing so the two main characters handed me the next novel. I couldn't believe my luck. I think it might be a series. Similar to Blackwell Ops but set in the 1950s (so no computers, cell phones, etc.) Should be interesting.

The previous one, in addition to being a Blackwell Ops novel, also dealt with time travel so crossed over into the science fiction realm.

The one that wrapped yesterday dealt also with time travel, but also included some magic realism. Of course, it was also in the Blackwell Ops world, so it includes some tropes from the action-adventure and crime-thriller genres.

The next one — if I'm correct in my assumptions about the main characters, and I seldom am — will be move more solidly back into the realm of action-adventure and crime-thriller. As always, it will be interesting (for me) to follow along and find out what happens.

I took a break, then came back to begin the next novel. But then that alert came in. It made me a little angry. I don't like to write when I'm angry, so I'll start the novel again today and begin reporting it tomorrow.

Well, after I post this, then apply the changes to I received this morning from my first reader and publish Blackwell Ops 15.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[The Hidden Powers of Everyday Ritual](#)

[Episode No. 862: Go Wide!](#)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 710

Writing of Blackwell Ops 15: Solana Garcia

Day 1..... 3034 words. To date..... 3034
Day 2..... 4389 words. To date..... 7423
Day 3..... 4327 words. To date..... 11750
Day 4..... 4058 words. To date..... 15808
Day 5..... 6103 words. To date..... 21911
Day 6..... 4330 words. To date..... 26241
Day 7..... 4213 words. To date..... 30454
Day 8..... 6232 words. To date..... 36686
Day 9..... 3352 words. To date..... 40038
Day 10.... 2524 words. To date..... 42562 (done)

Fiction for December..... 49051

Fiction for 2023..... 449885

Fiction since August 1..... 335340
Nonfiction for December..... 9460
Nonfiction for the year..... 265040
Annual consumable words..... 711418

2023 Novels to Date..... 10
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 7
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 81
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 235
Short story collections..... 31

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Critical Mind Seeped In

December 14, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Welcome
- * Critical Mind Seeped In
- * Yesterday, and the Writing
- * Stanbrough Writing In Public
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“When comparing two things, one thing is different FROM the other, whereas when comparing two actions, one action is different THAN the other.. An elephant is different from a mouse, while hunting an elephant is different than hunting a mouse.” In a note from my excellent first reader

“I have said over and over again that I write by instinct and that there is nothing purposeful or deliberate in what I do.” Isaac Asimov

“Hypocrisy is not a way of getting back to the moral high ground. Pretending you’re moral, saying you’re moral is not the same as acting morally.” Alan Dershowitz

Welcome

Welcome to Benjamin, Amelia, and any other new subscribers or readers of the Journal. I hope you will find it useful.

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I also recommend reading the posts [“I Believe in You”](#) and [“Fear”](#). Can’t hurt, and it might help.

Oh, and check out this half-hour video where bestselling author [Vin Zandri and I are chatting about writing on The Writer’s Life](#).

Critical Mind Seeped In

Here, learn along with me as I learn:

There’s an old “rule” that says if your novel has a prologue, it must also have an epilogue. That is one more annoying myth. And my critical mind latched onto it like a robotic fist.

Yesterday after applying the excellent suggestions Russ (my first reader) sent me, I emailed him again. He hadn’t mentioned anything about the ending feeling weak or flat. So I complained to him that, to me, the ending felt flat somehow.

But a few minutes after I sent that email, without having received a reply, my creative subconscious kicked-in again. The ending of the story — the last sentence of the chapter that preceded the epilogue — was great. Duh.

So I deleted the epilogue and allowed the story to close where it tried to close before I forced the epilogue on it.

But don’t I *have* to end with an epilogue if I begin with a prologue?

Um, no.

That was the question I asked without even noticing at first (critical mind) that almost steered me wrong. As I mentioned awhile back, if you have to ask, you probably already know the answer. That knowing is a function of the creative mind.

The story required a prologue to allow a minor POV character to introduce the story. To explain the why of the story without an info dump.

But that character didn't appear as a POV character the rest of the way through the novel. It wasn't his story. Hence the prologue.

As my characters' stories always do, this one actually ended — well, when it naturally ended. Then I added that stupid epilogue in an attempt to adhere to a rule that makes no sense. Not every egg is comfortably nested.

I also realized that one of the two main POV characters of the NEXT novel, which I started yesterday, started *that* story with the same information I had tried to brush into an epilogue in the previous story.

I'm just glad the characters called me on it. The epilogue in the previous book served no purpose. If I had left it in, it might have annoyed readers with a boring finale. And it would have been stolen from the next story, which at that point the characters hadn't started yet.

So the lesson? As always, write what the characters give you as you race through the story with them. Don't add (or subtract) anything on your own.

Other than your role as your characters' faithful recorder, the story is none of your business. Including how it begins or ends.

Yesterday, and the Writing

First, if you are interested in Hugh Everett and the development of his “many worlds interpretation,” Alexander Nakul offered this [PDF document](#) in a comment. He said the article shows the story behind the theory.

Yesterday, I applied the excellent suggestions I received from my first reader, then published Blackwell Ops 15 to [Draft2Digital](#) and Amazon. You can see the cover and description at [StoneThread Publishing](#).

Afterward, I uploaded several more short stories into the magazine (yep, a gun reference) to my [Stanbrough Writes substack](#) (a free story every Friday). I'm good now through March 1.

Then finally, around 7:30 a.m., I turned to my writing 'puter and started the next novel. The numbers are below.

Stanbrough Writing In Public

I'm seriously considering discontinuing my Writing in Public substack.

As I was writing Terea-Garcia yesterday, I was thinking about adding it to the SWIP substack. For one thing, I think the largest readership I had there was 13 people or something. And pretty much nobody was recommending it.

But my biggest reason for shutting it down is that it doesn't pass the WIBBOW test, first put into words (to my knowledge) by a writer named Scott Carpenter: Would I Be Better Off Writing.

Only spending time with my wife or a visiting offspring ever passes that test.

On many occasions when I posted two or three novels there, I found myself (foolishly, in hindsight) *stopping writing* an hour or so early so I could prep what I'd written and post it to that substack.

For a fiction writer — at least *this* fiction writer — that was an insane thing to do.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[A Brief 200-Year History of Synesthesia](#) Thanks to KC

[Dune Part 2](#) The interesting origins of Dune and Frank Herbert

The Numbers

The Journal..... 950

Writing of Tarea-Garcia 1

Day 1..... 4968 words. To date..... 4968

Fiction for December..... 54019
Fiction for 2023..... 454853
Fiction since August 1..... 340308
Nonfiction for December..... 10410
Nonfiction for the year..... 265990
Annual consumable words..... 717336

2023 Novels to Date..... 10
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 7
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 81
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 235
Short story collections..... 31

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Short Stories from Novels

December 15, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Short Stories from Novels
- * The Writing
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Poetry is when an emotion has found its thought and the thought has found words.” Robert Frost

Short Stories from Novels

Seems a little topsy-turvy doesn't it? Everyone talks about writing a short story and then that story turning into a novel. Perfectly acceptable.

As almost everyone here knows, a simple 6,000 word short story titled “Adobe Walls” gave birth to the character Wes Crowley, who later told me his complete life story over the course of [22 novels and a couple of million words](#).

In fact, from the moment I started writing my very first novel (and the first novel in the Wes Crowley series) I was pretty sure finishing his saga would be my life's work. My personal magnum opus.

Boy was I wrong. There were SO many more stories to tell. And there still are.

To some readers, the Crowley series will be my magnum opus. To others, it will be the [Journey Home SF series](#) or the [Blackwell Ops crime-thriller series](#).

Anyway, it dawned on me yesterday as I returned to writing the current novel that I had written a short story without realizing it. The prologue and the first three chapters of Tarea-Garcia formed a completed short story of just under 5000 words. It's also the origin story of the Tarea-Garcia team. Kind'a cool.

Writing it did not add extra words to my word count because it's also the first almost-5000 words of the novel. But it's one more publication with my name on it, so one more piece of IP.

And if the characters have more stories to tell when the first novel is finished, it will also be the origin story for a series.

I gleaned several short stories — shorter stories within the story — as I wrote the Wes Crowley series too. Most of the time for those, I had to touch them a little so they would wrap as short stories. A few probably read exactly as they read inside the novel.

But this one, which I'll probably title something hokey like "Origins: Tarea-Garcia" absolutely wrapped. I could have stopped writing about this particular team and moved on to something else.

Since I don't know what's going to happen until it happens and I write it down, the current novel could potentially move back into the Blackwell Ops world and become Blackwell Ops 16: Tarea-Garcia.

After all, these two characters made their bones working for TJ Blackwell . He's still out there and no doubt still trying to bring these two back into the fold. Or have one or both of them assassinated. Or even do it himself, or try. So anything is possible. I just never know.

But then, that is the sheer joy and exhilaration of writing into the dark. No matter what genre you write, for the writer who practices WITD writing is an absolute thrill ride from the opening sentence to the end.

Oh, and to a few of you out there, if you've made a start at writing a novel into the dark and "failed" (the only way you can fail as a writer is by not writing), give it another shot. If you keep coming back at it, you will succeed either with the current novel or another one.

If you're adamant about finishing the current one, simply read through it from the beginning, allowing yourself to touch it as you go, then keep writing when you hit the white space.

So I'm just sayin', I recommend you keep one thin slice of your creative subconscious aware of the possibility of a short story unfolding as you write your novel.

There are few feelings better than writing a novel and realizing you've created two or more extra pieces of licensable intellectual property without even having to do the "work."

The Writing

Fell far short of my daily word count goal yesterday. But my average is still up there, and that's what matters. Back on the hoss as soon as I file this edition of the Journal.

How is your own writing going? I hope you're challenging yourself, and I hope you're having a ball doing it.

There is no better challenge than learning to trust yourself and your characters and WITD. Because that one will benefit you for years to come.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[PG Goes on a Poetry Binge](#) If you enjoy poetry, you're in for a brief treat of two or three posts.

[Sprint to the New Year With Kris!](#) A writing challenge with Kristine Kathryn Rusch. Must sign-up by December 18. She even reports her numbers to you every day. (Sounds familiar, eh? If she would make her numbers public day by day I'd follow along.)

[To Be Clear On A Couple of Things](#)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 790

Writing of Tarea-Garcia 1

Day 1..... 4968 words. To date..... 4968

Day 2..... 3677 words. To date..... 8645

Fiction for December..... 57696

Fiction for 2023..... 458530

Fiction since August 1..... 343985

Nonfiction for December..... 11200

Nonfiction for the year..... 266780

Annual consumable words..... 721803

2023 Novels to Date..... 10

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 8

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 81

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 236

Short story collections..... 31

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POV, SF, Magazines, and More

December 16, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Welcome
- * A New Story
- * POV, SF, Magazines, and More
- * The Writing
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Fact and fiction carry the same intrinsic weight in the marketplace of ideas. Fortunately, reality has no advertising budget.” Daniel Suarez

“AI-generated news anchors to be part of new national news channel premiering next year” Title of an article online. (See Of Interest)

Good for the new national news channel. Their anchors will be even easier to program than the human news anchors are now.

Welcome

Welcome

Welcome to Disruptive Concepts (or Clear Vectors), Helen, and any other new subscribers or readers of the Journal. I hope you will find it useful.

Get the Archives and other [free downloads at the Journal website](#). Just click the links and a PDF will download in a new page.

I also recommend reading the posts [“I Believe in You”](#) and [“Fear”](#). Can't hurt, and it might help.

Oh, and check out this half-hour video where bestselling author [Vin Zandri and I are chatting about writing on The Writer's Life](#).

A New Story

“The Death of Federico Parizzi,” another story in the Blackwell Ops world, published yesterday on my [Stanbrough Writes Substack](#).

To subscribe, click the link above and then the Subscribe button at the end of the story. You’ll receive a new short story every Friday, and it’s free.

Below the Subscribe button, there are other short stories you can read in most genres. Enjoy!

POV, SF, Magazines, and More

I had a multiple-question email from a writer yesterday. Here’s my response, edited a bit for inclusion in the Journal:

Question 1: Point of View

Whatever POV you choose doesn’t matter. Ninety-nine percent of what you’ve heard about POV is bovine excrement. Keep two things in mind and you’ll be fine:

- 1, Every word in the novel must come through the POV character and his or her physical and/or emotional senses.
- 2, The POV character cannot read another character’s thoughts, and s/he cannot see something that is not within his/her line of sight. The same goes for the other senses.

When you have multiple POV characters, I recommend switching POVs only at the beginning of a chapter or at the beginning of a section within a chapter.

[I added this Example from my book Blackwell Ops 15](#) to the free stuff in the Journal this morning. If you aren’t sure how to pull off identifying multiple POV characters for the reader, download it.

Question 2: Is my work SF?

As I wrote in a recent edition of the Journal, if the story contains any SF elements, it is SF in the first category.

SF trumps all other genres. If your story takes place on a planet other than Earth, its SF and then subcategories of that.

I just wrote two Blackwell Ops novels that include time travel. Hence, they are SF: The search terms for the first are SF thriller, time travel, psychological suspense, assassin, crime thriller, worldwide network.

The actual categories for the second novel are SF TIME TRAVEL, SF ACTION/ADVENTURE, THRILLER PSYCHOLOGICAL, and THRILLER SUSPENSE.

SF can stand for either Science Fiction or Science Fantasy.

- **Science fiction** adheres to the laws of physics as we know them.
- **Science fantasy** does not. That is the only difference.

Question 3 had to do with whether and what s/he should cut based on readers' opinions.

Just write what comes. And stop listening to readers and other critiquers. Especially those who complain. Why would you care what they think anyway?

Think of all the readers who DON'T complain.

If the complainers "would have written it differently," frankly, why the hell didn't they?

Readers who have the chutzpah to complain about anything in fiction other than erroneous facts should all hold hands in a big circle and shut the hell up.

The concept is not that difficult to understand. If you don't like it, don't read it.

Do I come to your law office and tell you how I would have argued a case? Or the café where you work and tell you how I would have served the food or bussed the table?

Before you complain about how a novel is written, write ten or twelve yourself. Otherwise, go join the critics in their circle.

And while I'm on the topic, until you've written at least ten or twelve novels, don't pass out advice on writing novels. Chances are, you're embarrassingly wrong. Same with short stories until you've written at least 50 or so.

Instead of handing out advice and leading others astray, spend your time Practicing: i.e., putting new words on the page.

In spoken conversations, if someone starts to tell you how to write, be kind and interrupt them with a question: "How many novels (short stories) have you written?"

If the answer doesn't exceed the numbers I wrote above, even if you've written fewer than they have, walk away. Or say "Buy me a drink and you can keep talking." At least the alcohol might help you forget tie inanity.

If you're writing anything that has to do with firearms, get the terminology right. Do two seconds of spot research online, and you'll find out that little box thingy that holds ammunition and is loaded into the grip of a pistol (not a revolver) or a rifle is called a "magazine," not a "clip." And no, they are not interchangeable terms.

And no one on a modern battlefield or with a memory of a modern battlefield will smell “cordite.” Cordite was used as a propellant in ammunition during the late 1800s and early 1900s.

“Write what you know” no longer holds water. Because a great deal of what you “know” is wrong. If the instructor or article writer doesn’t have the knowledge, s/he shouldn’t be teaching or writing how-to articles. They should be holding hands with the other “experts” in that circle.

The Writing

I missed my daily word count goal yesterday. My average, for the first time in a long while, dropped below 4000 words per day to 3984. But tomorrow is a new day.

No excuses. I just had a really sucky day and couldn’t put the circumstances out of my head for awhile.

How is your own writing going? I hope you’re challenging yourself, and I hope you’re having a ball doing it.

Okay, I’m outta here. With only 81 novels in the can, I’m still practicing.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[Listening In – Gabriel Bump talks new novels, writing 500 words a day](#) I try occasionally to offer differing points of view and experiences in case they will work for you. You already know my opinion. Go practice, Gabriel. Or go join the circle.

[“Amazing Grace” is a 200-year-old song with a surprising history](#) A couple of good videos if you like the song

[AI-generated news anchors to be part...](#)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1140

Writing of Tarea-Garcia 1

Day 1..... 4968 words. To date..... 4968

Day 2..... 3677 words. To date..... 8645

Day 3..... 3307 words. To date..... 11952

Fiction for December..... 61003

Fiction for 2023..... 461837

Fiction since August 1..... 347292
Nonfiction for December..... 12340
Nonfiction for the year..... 267920
Annual consumable words..... 726250

2023 Novels to Date..... 10
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 8
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 81
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 236
Short story collections..... 31

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Failure, and Goals

December 17, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Failure, and Goals
- * Reminder
- * The Writing
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“If you set your goal ridiculously high and it's a failure, you will fail above everyone else's success.” James Cameron

Failure, and Goals

I love the Cameron quote above. But also remember the only valid comparison is what you did today vs. what you did yesterday.

If you want to succeed, you have to try. And if you aren't failing occasionally, you aren't trying hard enough.

I never advise anyone to set their goal "ridiculously high." But do set it high enough so reaching it is a stretch.

As a basis for setting your goals, set a timer and write clean, publishable fiction for an hour. Then multiply that number times the number of hours per day that are available to you to write. Then add 500 words.

That's your daily goal.

Most of us can write roughly 1000 words per hour of clean, publishable fiction. A blazing fast 17 words per minute. That leaves a lot of time for staring off into space.

To set a weekly, monthly, quarterly or whatever longer goal, simply multiply your daily goal times the number of days you can write during a week or month.

But if you set a daily goal, and if you adhere to it, you will find that longer goals really are not necessary. If you stick to your daily goal and if you achieve it often, you will write more than you would have set for a longer goal anyway.

And remember that a new day (week, month, year) begins with every moment. In my quest to write 1,000,000 words of publishable fiction in a calendar year, I'm currently going from September 1, 2023 to September 30, 2024.

Finally, remember that goals are adjustable. If you never reach your goal, lower it by 250 or 500 words. If you reach it all the time, raise it by 500 or 1000 words.

If you make it often but maybe not all the time, it's pretty much right on.

Reminder

If you want a place to report your fiction numbers publicly, a process to use to hold your feet to the fire, the Journal can be that place.

Ray Bradbury once wrote that if you want to learn how to write fiction, you should write one story per week for a year. Because, he said, "Nobody can write 52 bad short stories in a row."

For those who don't know, I'm currently administering a Bradbury Challenge. It's simple. Write at least one short story per week. Then, each week on Sunday before midnight Arizona time, send me your story title, word count, and genre via email to harvestanbrough@gmail.com.

Here's the preferred format: (help me help you)

“Short Story Title” 3456 Genre

If you’re writing a novel, you may also report your weekly progress. Just be sure to include words written this week as well as total words to date.

I’ll publish whatever info I receive in the Monday edition of the Journal each week. There is no cost. I only want to help you succeed.

For those of you currently in the challenge, this is your reminder. Today is Sunday. Midnight my time is a little over 21 hours away. Just sayin’.

The Writing

The novel is flowing, but I had to delete one scene.

The scene is necessary to the characters and the story, but it was also a bit “blue.” I make my books suitable for readers of all ages, so I had to take it out of the novel.

However, I will add a new opening and ending, and the scene I cut out of the novel will become the centerpiece of a short story. The story is already listed in the Numbers section below.

Of course, I’ll publish it under a pen name. Probably the name of the female POV character who told the story in the novel.

In the novel now, there is a much shorter, glossed-over version. Basically the lead-up to the scene I cut.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[The Excruciating Death of Mister Red Pepper Paste Man](#)

Two Days To Get Into the Challenge with Kris! Actually one day. The deadline is 18 December. I do not personally recommend spending \$300 when you can do the same thing right here with me. But it is KKR, so your opinion might differ.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 690

Writing of Tarea-Garcia 1

Day 1..... 4968 words. To date..... 4968

Day 2..... 3677 words. To date..... 8645

Day 3..... 3307 words. To date..... 11952
Day 4..... 4467 words. To date..... 16419

Writing of “The Love of Charlie Task” (blue short story)

Day 1..... 1079 words. To date..... 1079

Fiction for December..... 66549
Fiction for 2023..... 467383
Fiction since August 1..... 351759
Nonfiction for December..... 13030
Nonfiction for the year..... 268610
Annual consumable words..... 732486

2023 Novels to Date..... 10
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 8
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 81
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 236
Short story collections..... 31

Note: If you find this Journal of value and want to make a one time or recurring donation, **please do not pledge through Substack.** I don't use Stripe. [Instead click this link.](#) If you can't donate, please consider sharing this post with friends.

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark and adherence to Heinlein's Rules. Unreasoning fear and the myths of writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

Let It Be, and The Bradbury Challenge

December 18, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Welcome
- * Correction
- * The Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting
- * The Writing
- * The Kris and Dean Show
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Welcome

Welcome to Alex and any other new subscribers or readers of the Journal. I hope you will find it useful.

Get the Archives and other [free downloads at the Journal website](#). Just click the links and a PDF will download in a new page.

I also recommend reading the posts [“I Believe in You”](#) and [“Fear”](#). Can’t hurt, and it might help.

Oh, and check out this half-hour video where bestselling author [Vin Zandri and I are chatting about writing on The Writer’s Life](#).

Correction

Of course yesterday, when I mentioned my own personal calendar year goal of writing 1,000,000 words of published fiction in a year, I meant to say that year would begin on 1 September 2023 and run through 31 August 2024, not 30 September 2024.

But as Bob B mentioned when he called me on that goofy error, if the baker’s dozen approach works for you, go for it. (grin)

The Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting

Reporting your numbers to other writers can help encourage them and yourself to keep writing. It’s why I post my new numbers each day in the last section of the Journal.

Anyone can jump in (or jump back in) and join or rejoin the challenge at any time. There’s no cost.

This is a great way to jumpstart your writing and get more practice pushing down the critical voice.

Notice, there’s no pressure re submitting or publishing. That’s up to you.

The point of this challenge — the point of all writing challenges — is to have fun and grow as a writer. Learning to keep track of your writing is a bonus.

During the past week, in addition to whatever other fiction they’re writing, the following writers reported their progress:

Short Fiction

- George Kordonis “Forbidden Detour” 3557 SF Adventure

- Adam Kozak “Superior” 3387 Cosmic Horror
- Alexander Nakul “Case Study of the Pied Piper of Hamelin” 1365 Magical Realism
- Christopher Ridge “The Boy” 1800 Horror
- K.C. Riggs “Walking” 3228 Mixed Reality

Longer Fiction

- Balázs Jámbor *Kylan’s Story* (tentative title) 2800 Fantasy (19800 to date)
- Alexander Nakul *The Meerkat Watch* 4418 Urban fantasy (10479 to date)

The Writing

Let it be.

I’m not talking about the now-ancient Beatles’ song.

I’m not even talking about letting the story be whatever it wants to be or letting your characters say and do whatever they say and do. Although yes, of course you should. You’re only the recorder. It’s *their* story.

Here I’m talking about something I learned yesterday.

I’ve said I don’t know how many times to *trust the process*. You can buy all the how-to books in the world, and lectures and workshops or seminars or Masters Classes.

And all of those — IF they aren’t peddled by bogus instructors who should be selling air conditioners to denizens of igloos — can help you improve in the CRAFT of writing. The mechanics.

But only by practicing, by which I mean putting new words on the page, can you actually improve your writing.

No one else can do anything to improve your writing. Only you can do that, and only by writing. The more you write, the better your fiction will get. Period.

In every novel before the current one, I’ve tried (conscious mind) to keep my chapters under 1500 words. That’s a throwback to some old crap I learned from my inadvertent mentor, Dean Wesley Smith. He cited readers’ shorter attention spans.

Um, what would a reader with a “shorter attention span” be doing with a novel in his lap?

But honestly, the guy doesn’t know everything. Still, this is only the second time I’ve seriously deviated from his advice because I disagree with it.

And I only learned this one yesterday, as I was writing. It’s all about structure.

In the first eleven chapters of this book, if you could see my reverse outline, you would almost feel the chapters straining. Most of them are in the upper 1400s. (Yes, I'm so anal that I actually include the word count of each chapter on the RO. Again, goes to structure, your honor.)

But Chapter 12 ran to 1673 words. I can't cut a word of it without harming the story.

Yes, sometimes I cut words while cycling. I can do that without slipping into critical mind. I don't "look for" anything. I just read for pleasure, and if something unnecessary pops out at me, I cut it.

And Chapter 13 — and when this realization hit me I interrupted cycling through it to move to my business computer and write this — is currently at 1544 words.

And I'm betting it will go higher.

Because I do not like soup-sandwiches. I like precision. I like the reader to see, smell, taste, feel, and hear precisely what the characters and I see, smell, taste, feel, and hear as we race through the story.

Tip: That's why my readers keep emailing to tell me they feel as if they are "in" the story with the characters. It is also why I continually advise you to slow down as you're writing. Be sure that everything the POV character senses, *and nothing that you the author* sense, goes onto the page.

So from this point forward, in this novel and all future novels, I will allow chapters to be as short or long as they naturally are. If a chapter goes too long, I'll break it into two chapters.

Update: I would have won the bet above on Chapter 13. As I ended my writing/cycling day, it stood at 1726 words. Amen.

Now if the stuff above isn't slap-your-grandma valuable information I don't know what is. Aren't you glad you read this? So share it with your friends already.

The Kris and Dean Show

In Of Interest, Dean mentions Kris' challenge, which begins today, and a new one of his own, which begins January 1.

I don't personally believe either Kris' 15-day writing challenge or Dean's year-long challenge will get many takers. It would appeal only to professional writers. Only they would not feel intimidated by Kris' or Dean's numbers, and why would they bother? Like me, they might shadow it strictly as a matter of curiosity, but otherwise, nah.

Besides, not to sound snarky, but how many working dads or moms with children, who can't write as much as I can because of other commitments, will attempt to match my humble numbers?

It's all silly. As I've said many times, the only valuable, authentic comparison is what you do today vs. what you did yesterday.

If you can hit 4000 words per day or more regularly, I invite you to tell me about it. I'll cheerlead for you. If you can't, that's perfectly fine. Use my numbers as inspiration, not as a hammer or depressant.

Of course, your opinion might differ.

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[Dean Challenge 2024](#) (scroll down) I'll probably shadow this one.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1140

Writing of Tarea-Garcia 1

Day 1..... 4968 words. To date..... 4968
Day 2..... 3677 words. To date..... 8645
Day 3..... 3307 words. To date..... 11952
Day 4..... 4467 words. To date..... 16419
Day 5..... 4193 words. To date..... 20612

Writing of "The Love of Charlie Task" (blue)

Day 1..... 1079 words. To date..... 1079

Fiction for December..... 70742
Fiction for 2023..... 471576
Fiction since August 1..... 355952
Nonfiction for December..... 14170
Nonfiction for the year..... 269750
Annual consumable words..... 737819

2023 Novels to Date..... 10
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 8
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 81
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 236
Short story collections..... 31

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True Inspiration, and Trust the Creative Subconscious

December 19, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * The Writing: Trust the Creative Subconscious
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“It got me thinking that recurring elements aren't annoying; they're linguistic fingerprints.”
Johnny B. Truant (See Of Interest)

“[P]utting recurring elements in a story or art can provide a sense of familiarity to your audience. It gives them something to latch onto, making your work memorable.” Johnny B. Truant

“Today a massive rain storm hit Massachusetts hard, resulting in over 200,000 areas without power, including my neighborhood. ... I did managed to squeeze in 1, 177 new words of fiction.... I dusted off my Olympia portable to bang out the word count by candlelight. Not exactly what I had planned for Day 1 of the sprint but I will take it!” Frank Theodat (See Of Interest)

Now THAT'S inspirational! So what stopped YOU from writing yesterday?

The Writing: Trust the Creative Subconscious

Yesterday I mentioned a new lesson I learned. To let chapters be whatever they need to be for length and not worry about it. After all, there is the story of the novel, and then there is the story of the chapter.

For that matter, there are the smaller stories of separate sections within a chapter. Most of my chapters are further separated into sections, so those provide the reader with plenty of white space to “rest.”

Doing that isn't permission to go slop-wild. It's adherence to letting the overall story remain in the capable hands of the characters.

That same day and during that same writing session, I also received a stout, very plain reminder to always obey the creative subconscious.

I had written in Blackwell Ops 15 that my female lead has "Mayan" features. Yet she has lived in Mexico most of her life, in an area where Aztecs, not Mayans, dominated.

The same character is also the female lead in my current novel. Two days ago, during that same writing session, I "caught" that distinction and wrote Aztec (conscious mind). Then I went back to Blackwell Ops 15, opened the Word document and changed Mayan to Aztec.

I was about to upload the revised document to D2D and Amazon when I remembered: Although she had lived in Mexico since she was an infant and considers herself a Mexican, she was actually born in Colombia.

Now. Where she was born has no bearing on the story. She might as easily have been born in London, Cairo, or Albuquerque.

But she wasn't. In the story that flowed through me from my characters, she was born in Colombia. Yep, she was a descendant of Mayans.

So yes, I changed Aztec back to Mayan in the Blackwell Ops 15 document, sheepishly closed it, and returned to the current novel. There, I bowed to the wisdom of the characters:

- because for *them*, where one of their own was born mattered a great deal indeed, and
- because she was born where she was born, not where the stupid writer's conscious, critical mind thought she *should have* been born.

You are only the writer, the recorder of your characters' stories. You run through the stories with them at their invitation, but what you "think" does not matter to the story itself.

Always trust and obey your creative subconscious. It knows what matters or will matter in the story the characters are giving you.

In my own writing, I fell far below my daily goal. Instead of writing much of anything new, I chose to cycle back through the entire novel to relieve the straining chapters I mentioned yesterday. As a result I added only a little over 2000 words today.

Fortunately, tomorrow, as ever, the goal resets to zero. (grin)

Talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[Sprinting to 2024 Challenge – Day 1 Reporting](#) I encourage you to sign up for Frank’s free substack newsletter

[It’s Not Repeating Yourself. It’s Your Fingerprint.](#)

[Bringing Forward. FAILURE MUST BE AN OPTION](#) For writer Frank Theodat, failure was not an option. (grin)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 650

Writing of Tarea-Garcia 1

Day 1..... 4968 words. To date..... 4968
Day 2..... 3677 words. To date..... 8645
Day 3..... 3307 words. To date..... 11952
Day 4..... 4467 words. To date..... 16419
Day 5..... 4193 words. To date..... 20612
Day 6..... 2061 words. To date..... 22673

Writing of “The Love of Charlie Task” (blue)

Day 1..... 1079 words. To date..... 1079

Fiction for December..... 72803
Fiction for 2023..... 473637
Fiction since August 1..... 358013
Nonfiction for December..... 14820
Nonfiction for the year..... 270400
Annual consumable words..... 737819

2023 Novels to Date..... 10
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 8
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 81
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 236
Short story collections..... 31

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Addendum, a Christmas Gift, and More

December 20, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Welcome
- * Addendum to the Past Two Posts
- * A Christmas Gift for You
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Welcome

Welcome to “muktarmomoh” and any other new subscribers or readers of the Journal. I hope you will find it useful.

Get the Archives and other [free downloads at the Journal website](#). Just click the links and a PDF will download in a new page.

If you download the Journal Archives, I suggest downloading and reading [the most recent one](#) first. Then, if you want to see how I personally progressed as a fiction writer, you can go back and download the others. It has been an interesting journey.

When I compile the archive for 2023 in early January, I will add it to the Archives page. I will also announce it and make it available in a post in the Journal.

I also recommend reading the posts [“I Believe in You”](#) and [“Fear”](#). Can't hurt, and it might help.

Oh, and check out this half-hour video where bestselling author [Vin Zandri and I are chatting about writing on The Writer's Life](#)

Addendum to the Past Two Posts

I had one other qualifier to add to the two previous posts on letting chapters be what they are and trusting the creative subconscious. You might well write differently than I do, and that's fine.

In each of the previous two posts, I was talking about what works for me with chapters in my novels.

In my books, each chapter is a major scene and/or a collection of related smaller scenes (sections within the chapter).

Most often a scene is contained within a chapter. Typically (but not always), if a scene runs longer than around 1200 words, the chapter most often also contains one or more of those smaller, related scenes in sections.

If a scene runs longer than 2000 words (and of course, I don't know until I write it), I will most often scroll back to see whether there's a natural breaking point. If I find one, I break the scene in two and make the second half a new chapter. Especially if there are no sections within the long chapter.

The chapter or scene break serves three purposes.

Primarily, from a strictly structural standpoint, it is to separate what has come before with what is coming next. It also gives the reader a place to "rest," a little white space before s/he delves into the story again.

But it also provides the writer with a natural place to add information, such as the POV character name (if the POV switches to a different character), to indicate a date stamp or other passage-of-time information, or the new "topic" of the chapter or section.

Of course, you don't "have" to have any of the above. I've written novels before that have no chapter headers. Only a centered asterisk (or something) to indicate subliminally to the reader a change of scene.

Write how you write. I submit the above discussion, as with those in the previous two posts, only for your consideration.

A Christmas Gift for You

Awhile back, I removed the audio lectures I created from the menu at HarveyStanbrough.com. Now I have decided to offer them to any readers of the Journal free of charge as an early or belated Christmas gift.

So any time from now through December 31, 2023, visit the [Audio Lecture Series](#). Scroll down to read the topics and descriptions and make your selection(s).

Then email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com with your request(s) and I will send them to you. The audio files will arrive as attachments in MP3 format. You may save them to your computer and listen to them as many times as you like. For longer courses, it might take two or three emails.

After January 1, as I have time, I will update or delete the courses and then add whatever's left to the Writer Resources page on HarveyStanbrough.com.

Of Interest

[8 Easy Ways To Use Book Mockups To Market Your Books](#)

[Five Top Tips To Smash Your Writing Goals in 2024](#)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 670

Writing of Tarea-Garcia 1

Day 1..... 4968 words. To date..... 4968
Day 2..... 3677 words. To date..... 8645
Day 3..... 3307 words. To date..... 11952
Day 4..... 4467 words. To date..... 16419
Day 5..... 4193 words. To date..... 20612
Day 6..... 2061 words. To date..... 22673
Day 7..... 3250 words. To date..... 25923

Fiction for December..... 76053
Fiction for 2023..... 476887
Fiction since August 1..... 361263
Nonfiction for December..... 15490
Nonfiction for the year..... 271070
Annual consumable words..... 744450

2023 Novels to Date..... 10
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 8
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 81
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 236
Short story collections..... 31

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More on Christmas Gifts, and Writing

December 21, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * More on Christmas Gifts
- * The Writing
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“We are like butterflies who flutter for a day and think it is forever.” Carl Sagan

“A good novel shows how life can and ought to be lived. It not only entertains but energizes and uplifts readers.” Terry Goodkind

“I suggest you look back, see how you did with your goals. Don't tell anyone, just write it down for yourself and figure out what you did right if you hit your goals or wrong if you missed them. And remember, don't look at how much you missed a goal, but instead look at how much you got done. ... That is called FAILING TO SUCCESS.” Dean Wesley Smith (see Of Interest)

“Study finds all major AI models were trained on datasets containing some amount of explicit images of children....” headline in 1440 Daily Digest

Yeah! (fist pump) Let's hear it for AI and those good folks who train or use it! Jerks.

More on Christmas Gifts

If you take advantage of my offer in [yesterday's post](#), please be patient. It takes time to attach and send the files, and I do so only during my breaks.

Also, please do not write telling me what you disagree with from the lectures. I no longer agree with some of it myself. (grin)

As a result, I teach some of these subjects differently now. You can find that updated information in the [free Journal Archives](#).

The lectures I'm sending you, including the PDF handouts (when appropriate), are some of the lectures I've taught over the years in person.

Thus far, only five subscribers — which I define as writers whom I assume want to learn something about writing from me (otherwise why are they subscribed?) — have taken me up on my offer of free audio lectures.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not disappointed or anything like that. But I am considerably confused.

I would have done almost *anything* to get something like this from Dean back in the day. Instead, I paid \$300 a pop to get a small bit of information packed in a lot of fluff.

Sorry, but that's the truth of it, and if you've taken his courses, you know it. The first two to three weeks of a six-week course comprise a teaser, a lead-up to the meaty information. The fluff pads-out the course.

Again, don't misunderstand. I'm more than grateful for what I learned from Dean, especially his blogs but also the courses. Nestled gently in the fluff was a lot of good information. But if he'd been publishing his WMG writers' guides back then, I would have bought those instead of paying \$300 each for the online courses.

This Journal and my audio lectures comprise a no-fluff zone. As I wrote above, for the most part, the lectures are exactly as I taught them in live seminars on the sunny slopes of long ago. All solid stuff.

Ah well, to each his or her own. Less work for me. (grin)

The Writing

My writing on the novel was delayed for a couple of hours yesterday morning as my persona, Gervasio Arrancado, shouldered his way in to write a new short story.

I am very glad he did. It was great to hear his voice again.

The story will be published for the first time on the [Stanbrough Writes substack](#) (free short story every week) on Friday, March 8.

The info on the story is in Numbers below.

I also added more to "The Love of Soleada," an erotic short story. I also put it back in the line-up below.

Then I used about an hour total to send MP3 (audio) files to those who requested some or all of my lectures. It takes about 15 minutes to send all 66 lectures. But then, only one person asked for that, and one other asked for all but one.

I also added some words to the novel, though not as many as I would have liked. Honestly, I think I'm dragging my feet a little on this one because I don't want it to end. When I'm enjoying a story a great deal, I tend to do that.

Anyway, when the smoke cleared and I totaled everything, it had been a banner day totaling well over 5000 words of fiction. I'll take it. (grin)

Of Interest

Step One: Getting Ready for the New Year *A Must Read*

Inspiration is Everywhere

“Funner” vs. “More fun”: History and Recommended Usage I've never had a character who used “funner,” but if one said that I would write it.

Publisher drops author for using fake accounts to ‘review-bomb’ peers Sometimes apologies just don't matter. This is one of those times.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 790

Writing of Tarea-Garcia 1

Day 1..... 4968 words. To date..... 4968
Day 2..... 3677 words. To date..... 8645
Day 3..... 3307 words. To date..... 11952
Day 4..... 4467 words. To date..... 16419
Day 5..... 4193 words. To date..... 20612
Day 6..... 2061 words. To date..... 22673
Day 7..... 3250 words. To date..... 25923
Day 8..... 2036 words. To date..... 27959

Writing of “Little Bit: A Cautionary Tale of Love”

Day 1..... 1661 words. To date..... 1661 (done)

Writing of “The Love of Soleada”

Day 1..... 1079 words. To date..... 1079
Day 2..... 1444 words. To date..... 2523

Fiction for December..... 81194
Fiction for 2023..... 482028
Fiction since August 1..... 366404
Nonfiction for December..... 16280
Nonfiction for the year..... 271860
Annual consumable words..... 750381

2023 Novels to Date.....	10
2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
2023 Short Stories to Date.....	8
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	81
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	236
Short story collections.....	31

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Making Time to Write

December 22, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Welcome
- * Making Time to Write
- * The Writing
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“She tapped me on the chest with one finger. ‘Soy la *jefa* de ti.’” Soleada Tarea to Charlie Task in Tarea-Garcia. When Soleada (5’2” 100 pounds) said this to Charlie (6’3” 212 pounds). I laughed so hard Coke almost snorted out of my nose. 😊

GAWD I love writing into the dark! Oh, and I suggest you ladies out there memorize this is case you need it. It means “I am the *boss* of you.” 😊

Welcome

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I also recommend reading the posts [“I Believe in You”](#) and [“Fear”](#). Can’t hurt, and it might help.

Making Time to Write

How do you make time to write?

I personally write every day. On the few days when I’m not writing new fiction, putting new words on the page, I’m doing writing-related things.

On those days, I still write, albeit nonfiction, here in the Journal. So even on days when I “don’t write,” I generally write 1000 words or so for this venue.

You can be a professional writer even if you have a day job, children, a spouse and so on. Just set a daily goal and then strive to meet or exceed it every day.

Some can carve out only an hour a day to write. That’s a thousand words a day, or 30,000 per month, or 365,000 per year.

If you can get only a half-hour per day to write, that’s still a lot. 500 words per day, 15,000 per month, 180,000+ per year. That’s three 60,000 word novels and a bunch of short stories.

Some advocate writing when you can, in 10- or 15-minute spurts. If that works for you, go for it. But I recommend still setting a goal so you have a reason to “find time” for those 10- or 15-minute spurts.

You might also experiment a little. Try getting up an hour earlier than normal. Or going to bed an hour later. Push a little, lightly. See what your body and its rhythms can take.

Of course, all of the above is dependent on how important writing is to you.

Not that the story is important — no single story or novel is important — but WRITING the story is important. Because you’re a writer. And writers write.

Me, I get up and go to work very early in the morning. My work is an often erratic combination of writing the Journal (nonfiction), checking the blogs and newsletters I check each day, corresponding with writers, and writing fiction (and occasionally poetry).

This past week I've worked on the current novel, submitted a Journal every day, written a short story, started another. And yes, I've also spent ample time with my family and doing necessary everyday chores, etc.

In other words, every day (yes, including holidays) I do what I love. I am very fortunate. I've found work that truly matters to me, and I get to do it every day. I look forward to it every day.

Which leads me to this:

If writing isn't high up somewhere on your list of priorities, don't.

Seriously. Find something you truly enjoy, something you look forward to doing, and do that instead.

If writing fiction IS important to you, find a way.

The Writing

Yesterday I fell short of my goal strictly on the novel with 3700+ words.

On the other hand, I write into the dark so I experienced sheer joy (and laughter) when my characters surprised me with the scene from which I extracted this morning's Quote of the Day. (grin)

But I had also added 200+ words to a short story that is coming along slowly and is kind of an addendum to various scenes in the novel.

So overall I exceeded my daily goal with 4014 words.

Well, plus the 790 words in yesterday's Journal. I'll take it. (grin)

Of Interest

[How Writer's Fail... How To Avoid Some Failures](#)

[Major Data Breach at Xfinity](#) I recommend this free daily newsletter.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 780

Writing of Tarea-Garcia 1

Day 1..... 4968 words. To date..... 4968
Day 2..... 3677 words. To date..... 8645
Day 3..... 3307 words. To date..... 11952
Day 4..... 4467 words. To date..... 16419
Day 5..... 4193 words. To date..... 20612
Day 6..... 2061 words. To date..... 22673
Day 7..... 3250 words. To date..... 25923
Day 8..... 2036 words. To date..... 27959
Day 9..... 3789 words. To date..... 31748

Writing of “The Love of Soleada”

Day 1..... 1079 words. To date..... 1079
Day 2..... 1444 words. To date..... 2523
Day 3..... 0225 words. To date..... XXXXX

Fiction for December..... 85208
Fiction for 2023..... 486042
Fiction since August 1..... 370418
Nonfiction for December..... 17060
Nonfiction for the year..... 272640
Annual consumable words..... 755175

2023 Novels to Date..... 10
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 8
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 81
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 236
Short story collections..... 31

Note: If you find this Journal of value and want to make a one time or recurring donation, **please do not pledge through Substack**. I don't use Stripe. [Instead click this link](#). If you can't donate, please consider sharing this post with friends.

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark and adherence to Heinlein's Rules. Unreasoning fear and the myths of writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

Kudos, a New Story, and More

December 23, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Dr. Mardy Groethe
- * Welcome
- * Don't Be Bullied
- * A New Story
- * The Writing
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“No sense in dwelling on missed targets. We press on.” Frank Theodat on missing a daily goal

“The importance of a great opening goes beyond its ability to keep the reader just turning the pages. A great opening is a book's soul in miniature.” P.J. Parrish as reported by Dr. Mardy Groethe

Dr. Mardy Groethe

in addition to many other things, is among the world's great quote gatherers, and is often quotable himself.

He just added the opening paragraph from my *Confessions of a Professional Psychopath* to his [Great Opening Lines website](#). How cool is that?

I also strongly recommend his newsletter, [Dr. Mardy's Quotes of the Week](#). Both free and paid subscribers get the same great content. You'll find story ideas, insights, and some really great thoughts all around.

See more from Dr. Mardy in Of Interest.

Thanks, Mardy. Quite a kudo for me.

Welcome

Welcome to Auraist (<https://substack.com/@auraist>), Logic Zombie (<https://substack.com/@logiczombie>) and any other new readers or subscribers of the Journal. I hope you will find it useful.

Get the Archives and other [free downloads at the Journal website](#). Just click the links and a PDF will download in a new page.

If you download the Journal Archives, I suggest downloading and reading [the most recent one](#) first. Then, if you're bored enough to want to see how I personally progressed as a fiction writer, you can go back and download the others. It has been an interesting journey.

When I compile the archive for 2023 in early January, I will add it to the Archives page. I will also announce it and make it available in a post in the Journal.

I also recommend reading the posts ["I Believe in You"](#) and ["Fear"](#). Can't hurt, and it might help.

Oh, and check out this half-hour video where bestselling author [Vin Zandri and I are chatting about writing on The Writer's Life](#).

Don't Be Bullied

Any negative thoughts or ANY thoughts that delay or stop you from writing are directly from your critical mind. And the critical mind is a bully of the first order.

If you get really nervous or break out in a cold sweat when you think about trying WITD or setting a daily word count goal or anything else writing related, take a deep breath and take a chance.

- set the goal anyway and strive to achieve it, and
- try to trust yourself and your characters and write into the dark

You will fail at first, maybe even several times, but so what? Put it behind you and try again. Remind yourself the daily goal resets to zero every day.

There are no real-world consequences. Create a new, better and more confident you. It really doesn't take long.

And learn to recognize that critical voice.

A New Story

"Eufemia and José," the first in an interconnected series of ten magic realism stories, went live yesterday on my [Stanbrough Writes Substack](#). If you enjoy magic realism or Mexico, you probably don't want to miss this series of stories

To subscribe, click the link above and then the Subscribe button at the end of the story. You'll receive a new short story every Friday, and it's free.

Below the Subscribe button, there are other short stories you can read in most genres. Enjoy!

The Writing

The novel is racing along. I love it when that happens.

My new friend Dr. Mardy mention in correspondence that he didn't realize I was so "prolific."

I guess I am, but honestly, I've never understood the distinction. Millions of people get up and go to work every day. And that's all I do. I get up and go to work every day. And while I'm there, I actually do my job, again, like millions of others. I just happen to be very fortunate in that I love what I do.

I also added around 700 more words to the short story yesterday.

Interesting. I've never written a short story in quite this way before. Since the story is an offshoot of the current novel, it grows only when something *happens* in the novel that I don't want to *include* in the novel.

This particular POV character is wonderfully willful. She's so strong that she actually overpowers the guy with the computer. I HAVE to write what she gives me (I WITD), but what actually makes it into the published novel is for conscious-mind Publisher Guy to decide.

So if I decide not to include it in the novel, it has to go somewhere else. Hence the story.

It's a very cool feeling.

Of Interest

[Twenty-Three of the Best Opening Lines of 2023](#)

[The 84 Sentences That Explain 2023](#) In case something stirs a story idea for you.

[Lord of the Rings fan fiction writer sued for publishing own sequel](#) Actually, the moron got sued because s/he tried to sue Amazon for ripping off his/her work, which s/he had ripped off from JRR Tolkein. Incredible. Amazon *did* air a prequel to *Lord of the Rings*, but of course they purchased a license to do so.

[Specificity matters in opening pages too](#)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 830

Writing of Tarea-Garcia 1

Day 1..... 4968 words. To date..... 4968
Day 2..... 3677 words. To date..... 8645
Day 3..... 3307 words. To date..... 11952
Day 4..... 4467 words. To date..... 16419
Day 5..... 4193 words. To date..... 20612
Day 6..... 2061 words. To date..... 22673
Day 7..... 3250 words. To date..... 25923
Day 8..... 2036 words. To date..... 27959
Day 9..... 3789 words. To date..... 31748
Day 10.... 4093 words. To date..... 35841

Writing of “The Love of Soleada”

Day 1..... 1079 words. To date..... 1079
Day 2..... 1444 words. To date..... 2523
Day 3..... 0225 words. To date..... 2748
Day 4..... 0747 words. To date..... 3495

Fiction for December..... 90048
Fiction for 2023..... 490822
Fiction since August 1..... 375258
Nonfiction for December..... 17890
Nonfiction for the year..... 273470
Annual consumable words..... 760845

2023 Novels to Date..... 10
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 8
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 81
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 236
Short story collections..... 31

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Goals for the New Year

December 24, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Correction
- * Reminder
- * Goals for the New Year
- * The Writing
- * Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Correction

Typos happen. But not with names. Ugh.

For some reason, I see [Dr. Mardy Grothe](#)'s name in my head with an extra E shoved in between the O and the T. And that's how I wrote it (several times) in yesterday's Journal.

That despite the fact I own several of his books and have followed his weekly quotes for several years. Sigh.

Sorry, Mardy. You are hereby authorized to spell my last name Stanbreaux. I prefer it anyway. (grin)

Reminder

Hey kids, the Bradbury Challenge continues.

I don't expect anyone new will hop on board this week (though all are welcome at anytime), but for you more experienced players, just think how good you'll feel knowing even Christmas couldn't interrupt your streak. (grin)

Get your story info in before midnight Arizona time.

Goals for the New Year

Mentorship Goals —

Nobody can say what the new year will hold, but I'm tentatively planning to offer a paid limited mentorship on Writing Dialogue and Pacing and possibly another one on Pulling the Reader Into the Story (or Grounding the Reader).

Either mentorship will require writing. As part of either mentorship, I will field questions and offer detailed instruction-on and explanation-of the concepts, as well as advice on mechanics, flow, and the interaction of characters in any genre.

If either or both of these mentorships would be of interest to you, please either leave a comment or email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

Of course, you are not committing to anything by indicating your interest. If there is no interest, I'll shelve the idea.

Nonfiction and Publishing Goals —

In 2024, I plan to write at least two new nonfiction titles under the new Harvey Stanbrough Writing Guides (or something) umbrella. I will also revamp, update, rebrand, and reprice six (maybe seven) of my previous books on writing. A few I probably will rebrand as pamphlets.

Finally, I'll also rebrand and reprice the eight nonfiction titles that do not need to be updated:

- Writing the Character-Driven Story
- Quiet the Critical Voice (and Write Fiction)
- Punctuation for Writers (2nd edition)
- Creating Realistic Characters
- Writing Effective Dialect
- The Craft of Poetry: Structure and Sound
- Poetry Techniques for the Fictionist
- The Art of Writing Flash Fiction

I might revamp and rebrand Writing Realistic Dialogue & Flash Fiction or I might write a new companion book, the equivalent of a sequel in fiction. Or I might write a new book and trash the old one.

For the rebranding, I'll design new covers (and in at least one case a new title), and offer all of them under the same umbrella imprint.

Fiction Writing Goals —

If my health holds, and I see no reason it won't, I also intend to write and publish 19 new novels (my baseline is 12), which will bring me to 101 during 2024 while doing all of the above. It's easily doable according to the math.

1. I write 1000 +/- words per hour (a *blazing* fast 17 words per minute), and
2. When it's time to write, I show up.

I typically write 4000 words per day (so four hours per day) of clean, publishable fiction. So that's 28,000 words per week.

There's nothing magical about it. I'm a fiction writer, so I write fiction. Still, I only do my "job" four hours per day, plus a lunch break. (grin) Much, *much* better than when I had to report from 9-5 to do something I didn't enjoy.

Given that a novel typically takes me two weeks or less from start to finish, and given that I'll probably be writing no more than four new nonfiction books, that should leave me plenty of time for staring off into space, twiddling my thumbs, and attending to other important matters.

The Writing

I'm writing this yesterday, before I begin writing fiction. I dedicated a lot of time to the stuff above, so I'll probably miss my daily goal for today. That's fine.

I expect the current novel to wrap sometime in the next five or six thousand words. I've already decided I will not start a new one until at least January 1. A "clean start" and all that. Give my creative subconscious a short vacation and maybe see what new lessons I can pick up from the King (IMHO, the only Stage 5 writer writing today).

I plan to write fiction on the 23rd (today, as I write this) and on the 24th (today, as you read this) and 25th if there's still anything left to write on the novel.

But I also will visit with my wife, my youngest son and his girlfriend on those days. If the word count suffers, it won't suffer much. And as always, tomorrow begins a new day and the goal resets.

Update: I not only missed my daily goal yesterday, I didn't write any fiction at all. Maybe the novel wants to wrap on Christmas morning. (grin) Had a great visit though.

(Remarkably, see Dean's post in Of Interest for today.)

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays

I will almost certainly work on Christmas, as I do on any day when the sun rises in the east and sets in the west. To be sure I don't forget to extend my own greetings to you, I want to express them today.

Whether or not you celebrate the day as either the official birthdate of the Christ child or simply a festive holiday, I hope you will have a very merry Christmas.

If you do not celebrate Christmas, I hope you had or will enjoy a special, thoughtful and joyful holiday.

And may the upcoming new year be among the best for us all.

An Addendum

I wish the above even for those who believe they have the right to control how others write, speak, think, love or worship. May they develop wisdom and the courage to act on it.

And I wish it even for those who believe they can alter the past by eradicating the markers that indicate it. May they develop some level of humility. And may they one day strive to be as selfless and courageous as those whose monuments and memories they have defiled.

Not that I have anything personal against those folks. I don't. I simply don't care about what "offends" them — including this post — anymore than they care about what offends me or anyone else.

Of Interest

Sometimes Just Take a Day Off (grin)

[The Former Navy SEAL Who Keeps Churning Out Hit Books](#)

[Dr. Mardy's Dictionary of Metaphorical Quotations](#) I've mentioned this before. It's a great resource.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 980

Writing of Tarea-Garcia 1

Day 1..... 4968 words. To date..... 4968
Day 2..... 3677 words. To date..... 8645
Day 3..... 3307 words. To date..... 11952
Day 4..... 4467 words. To date..... 16419
Day 5..... 4193 words. To date..... 20612
Day 6..... 2061 words. To date..... 22673
Day 7..... 3250 words. To date..... 25923
Day 8..... 2036 words. To date..... 27959
Day 9..... 3789 words. To date..... 31748
Day 10.... 4093 words. To date..... 35841
Day 11.... 0000 words. To date..... 35841

Writing of "The Love of Soleada"

Day 1..... 1079 words. To date..... 1079
Day 2..... 1444 words. To date..... 2523
Day 3..... 0225 words. To date..... 2748
Day 4..... 0747 words. To date..... 3495

Fiction for December..... 90048
Fiction for 2023..... 490822
Fiction since August 1..... 375258

Nonfiction for December..... 18870
Nonfiction for the year..... 274450
Annual consumable words..... 761825

2023 Novels to Date..... 10
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 8
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 81
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 236
Short story collections..... 31

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Bradbury Challenge Report and Fan Fiction

December 25, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * Merry Christmas
- * Welcome
- * Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting
- * Fan Fiction Writer?
- * The Writing
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“Stephen King writes on Christmas because why not? If we eat and sleep and brush our teeth how is this different?” George Kordonis

Merry Christmas

Good morning, everyone. I'm up a little early this morning so I can write fiction before the day's festivities begin.

Wishing you all a very merry Christmas day.

Welcome

Welcome to WS, Edward and any other new readers or subscribers of the Journal. I hope you will find it useful.

Get the Archives and other [free downloads at the Journal website](#). Just click the links and a PDF will download in a new page.

If you download the Journal Archives, I suggest downloading and reading [the most recent one](#) first. Then, if you're bored enough to want to see how I personally progressed as a fiction writer, you can go back and download the others. It has been an interesting journey.

When I compile the archive for 2023 in early January, I will add it to the Archives page. I will also announce it and make it available in a post in the Journal.

I also recommend reading the posts ["I Believe in You"](#) and ["Fear"](#). Can't hurt, and it might help.

Oh, and check out this half-hour video where bestselling author [Vin Zandri and I are chatting about writing on The Writer's Life](#). Merry Christmas, Vin.

The Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting

Reporting your numbers to other writers can help encourage them and yourself to keep writing. It's why I post my new numbers each day in the last section of the Journal.

Anyone can jump in (or jump back in) and join or rejoin the challenge at any time. There's no cost.

This is a great way to jumpstart your writing and get more practice pushing down the critical voice.

Notice, there's no pressure re submitting or publishing. That's up to you.

The point of this challenge — the point of all writing challenges — is to have fun and grow as a writer. Learning to keep track of your writing is a bonus.

During the past week, in addition to whatever other fiction they're writing, the following writers reported their progress:

Short Fiction

- George Kordonis "Christmas in Space" 2789 Science Fiction

- Adam Kozak “The Wooing of Winifred” 2639 Romance, Humor
- Christopher Ridge “Yums Yums” 2300 Horror
- K.C. Riggs “The End of the Universe” 1681 Humor

Longer Fiction

- Balázs Jámbor *Kylen’s Story* (tentative title) 2000 Fantasy (21800 to date)

Fan Fiction Writer?

Check out Archive of Our Own at <https://archiveofourown.org>. Thanks to Matt G P for the info.

The Writing

To see my goals for 2024 and [two new mentorships](#) I’m considering offering, read this post.

I did write yesterday (and this morning.) But yesterday also my son’s visit ended so I spent much of the morning with him and my wife and his girlfriend.

After they left I wrote a little, but decided to spend the rest of Christmas Eve with my bride. We’re both a little sad when one of our offspring has to leave after a visit.

So I didn’t take the day off, but neither did I come close to my goal. But again, it reset this morning. It’s magical that way. (grin)

In the numbers below, I remembered that I count only writing days in the blog. So the Day 11 you will see below is Writing Day 11 although it’s calendar day 12.

The novel might wrap tomorrow or it might run for another day or so. Not a big deal.

Of Interest

[A Christmas Celebration \(Celtic Women video\)](#)

[Kris and Cheeps Baking](#)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 610

Writing of Tarea-Garcia 1

Day 1..... 4968 words. To date..... 4968

Day 2..... 3677 words. To date..... 8645

Day 3..... 3307 words. To date..... 11952
Day 4..... 4467 words. To date..... 16419
Day 5..... 4193 words. To date..... 20612
Day 6..... 2061 words. To date..... 22673
Day 7..... 3250 words. To date..... 25923
Day 8..... 2036 words. To date..... 27959
Day 9..... 3789 words. To date..... 31748
Day 10.... 4093 words. To date..... 35841
Day 11.... 3771 words. To date..... 39612

Writing of “The Love of Soleada”

Day 1..... 1079 words. To date..... 1079
Day 2..... 1444 words. To date..... 2523
Day 3..... 0225 words. To date..... 2748
Day 4..... 0747 words. To date..... 3495

Fiction for December..... 93419
Fiction for 2023..... 494253
Fiction since August 1..... 379029
Nonfiction for December..... 19480
Nonfiction for the year..... 275060
Annual consumable words..... 765806

2023 Novels to Date..... 10
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 8
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 81
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 236
Short story collections..... 31

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Remain Vigilant

December 26, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * Welcome
- * Remain Vigilant
- * Fan Fiction Writer or Reader?
- * The Writing
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“Stephen King writes on Christmas because why not? If we eat and sleep and brush our teeth how is this different?” George Kordonis (So good I decided to repeat it.)

“As usual, personal conversations from those at the tables filled the air. The din was so thick you could almost walk across it. But you would have to take care not to stumble over a chuckle or be knocked aside by a sudden outburst of laughter.” Soleada Tarea describing the cantina in Agua Rocosa in Blackwell Ops 16: Tarea-Garcia

Remain Vigilant

Always be vigilant for the critical voice to seep in.

I mentioned in the two previous posts that I decided to take a day off from writing fiction completely on December 23, and then to leave early on December 24, missing my daily goal by a mere 229 words (for me, about 15 minutes).

Both were perfectly valid decisions. I don't regret either of them.

But even as much as I've written (see numbers below), and even though I write fiction almost every day of the year, yesterday as I turned from this business computer to my writing 'puter, my very first thought was

“It wouldn't hurt anything at all to take today off too. After all, it's Christmas.”

That despite the fact it was almost 3 a.m. and most of the rest of my world is asleep. (grin) It was nothing but pure critical mind trying to shove its way in.

So even when you've shoved the critical voice away enough that it seldom visits, it will still crop up now and then. And when it does, it will stop you from writing. It's stopped many of us this year, hasn't it?

Fortunately, I recognized it for what it was, laughed it off, then turned back to the business computer and wrote this little bit.

And now I'm going to put some new words into the novel.

Because as George Kordonis reported to me when he submitted his story information for the Bradbury Challenge on Christmas Eve, "Stephen King writes on Christmas because why not? If we eat and sleep and brush our teeth how is this different?"

That is easily one of the wisest and most profound quotes about writing fiction I've ever heard.

Fan Fiction Writer or Reader?

I'm repeating this from yesterday and adding a little info.

If you are a fanfic writer or reader, check out [Archive of Our Own](#). Thanks to Matt G P for the info.

And it isn't only short stories and novels. Browse the site. You might be pleasantly surprised.

The Writing

To see my goals for 2024 and **two new mentorships I'm considering offering**, [read this post](#). If the mentorships interest you, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com to let me know that. Just gauging level of interest. You aren't committing to anything by emailing me.

Well, the novel didn't wrap yesterday as I thought it would. I think it would have if I hadn't forced myself to stop writing to go eat lunch. I wrote a couple hundred words after that, but I'd lost the momentum.

I expect it to wrap today unless the characters throw me a distinctly different curve ball.

Also, in a late chapter yesterday the characters hinted that this novel is probably another Blackwell Ops novel instead of the beginning of a new series.

Which is fine if that's how it turns out. I can only keep doing what I do if I remain unattached to outcome.

I never focus on outcome. I focus only on the process. Putting new words on the page and letting the story be what it will.

While I'm on the topic, the Wes Crowley books aren't really a series. They comprise a saga, one continuing story that spans 21 or 22 novels. The characters age. That's also the way of The Journey Home SF saga.

But Blackwell Ops is not a saga. It's a series. It can have a new POV character in each book, so they don't age. They come onstage, tell their story, and exit. It could go on forever.

Of Interest

Nada

The Numbers

The Journal..... 700

Writing of Tarea-Garcia 1

Day 1..... 4968 words. To date..... 4968
Day 2..... 3677 words. To date..... 8645
Day 3..... 3307 words. To date..... 11952
Day 4..... 4467 words. To date..... 16419
Day 5..... 4193 words. To date..... 20612
Day 6..... 2061 words. To date..... 22673
Day 7..... 3250 words. To date..... 25923
Day 8..... 2036 words. To date..... 27959
Day 9..... 3789 words. To date..... 31748
Day 10.... 4093 words. To date..... 35841
Day 11.... 3771 words. To date..... 39612
Day 12.... 4366 words. To date..... 43437

Writing of “The Love of Soleada”

Day 1..... 1079 words. To date..... 1079
Day 2..... 1444 words. To date..... 2523
Day 3..... 0225 words. To date..... 2748
Day 4..... 0747 words. To date..... 3495

Fiction for December..... 97785
Fiction for 2023..... 498619
Fiction since August 1..... 383395
Nonfiction for December..... 20180
Nonfiction for the year..... 275760
Annual consumable words..... 770872

2023 Novels to Date..... 10
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 8
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 81
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 236
Short story collections..... 31

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The Writing

December 27, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * A Rare Advertisement
- * The Writing
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quotes of the Day

“You write something and it can cause you to take pause. Or at the very least, you need to catch your breath and get some air because it's then you realize you are not in control of your art. Something very spooky and invisible is. You're just the conduit.” Vin Zandri

“There's no such thing as writer's block. That was invented by people in California who couldn't write.” Terry Pratchett

Ridiculous, inane, stupid statement of the day: [“Writers not only don't work alone: they can't.”](#)

Um, yes, we do. And we love it. “Visiting” in “little packs” of “book culture” and all that other crap are ways to avoid writing.

A Rare Advertisement

I very seldom announce releases of even my own books, here or anywhere else. But this is such a great value, I couldn't help myself.

Right now for a ridiculously low 99 cents, you can grab Vin Zandri's [American Crime Story: The Complete Saga](#). Don't miss your chance.

The Writing

To see my goals for 2024 and two new mentorships I'm considering offering, [read this post](#). If you're interested, email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com.

Day before yesterday, I thought the novel would probably wrap in another chapter and a half. But I stopped and went to lunch, then didn't really feel like writing afterward. I think I mentioned that in yesterday's post.

Yesterday morning, I returned to the novel, still expecting it to wrap in a chapter and a half.

Um, as I'm writing this entry (yesterday afternoon shortly after 1 p.m.) I just returned from a short break at the house. I wrote *three chapters* before that break. Now I expect the novel to wrap today (Dec 26), probably in one more chapter, but I'm not placing or taking bets.

During the break, I told my wife I expect the novel to wrap after one more chapter, but if it doesn't, I would stop writing anyway and the novel would wrap tomorrow (Dec 27).

And no, I'm not complaining. Just explaining how things go.

Anyway, that isn't the big news. The big news is this:

This morning, in what will be my 82nd novel, I wrote the strongest, maybe best individual chapter I've ever written. It was so strong that I recognized it as *being* strong and momentarily wondered where in the world it came from.

I'm not talking here about being surprised or amazed at characters doing things I don't expect. That's routine.

Because I trust the characters and am writing-down their story as it unfolds around them, that's an everyday occurrence. I've known for a very long time it's the characters' story, not something I'm making up.

But this time, in that one chapter, one character surprised me (and the other character) SO much and affected us SO strongly that it rattled both of us to the core of our being.

That's the sort of thing that can happen when you write what actually occurs in a story and what the characters do and say in response as you run through the story with them. I am blessed to have learned that lesson long ago, and today I was rewarded for knowing it and trusting it.

When I finished that chapter, I couldn't continue writing. I had to get up and take a break, if only to let the event settle in my head or heart or wherever such things settle. What a great feeling.

I wish the same for all of you.

Okay, now back to the writing ‘puter to see whether the novel will wrap today or will be continued tomorrow. I don’t really care. I only wish I could invite these characters into my world, not only in a novel, but in real life.

Update — The novel did not wrap today. And I’m actually glad. I can only barely wait until tomorrow to see what happens next.

I also added a little over 1100 words to the short story. The day gave me a little over 5600 words of fiction.

Of Interest

[Remembrance](#)

[Targeted Sale to Get Ready for 2024](#)

[Hemingway’s Parlay!](#) On December 23, Vin Zandri “had the great pleasure and honor of being the very first guest on John Hemingway’s new podcast, Hemingway’s Parlay. We talk about all sorts of great stuff including the state of modern publishing.”

[10 great openings to romantic novels](#)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 740

Writing of Tarea-Garcia 1

Day 11.... 3771 words. To date..... 39612

Day 12.... 4366 words. To date..... 43437

Day 13.... 4533 words. To date..... 47970

Writing of “The Love of Soleada”

Day 1..... 1079 words. To date..... 1079

Day 2..... 1444 words. To date..... 2523

Day 3..... 0225 words. To date..... 2748

Day 4..... 0747 words. To date..... 3495

Day 5..... 1105 words. To date..... 4600

Fiction for December..... 103423

Fiction for 2023..... 504257

Fiction since August 1..... 389033

Nonfiction for December..... 20920

Nonfiction for the year..... 276500
Annual consumable words..... 777250

2023 Novels to Date..... 10
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 8
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 81
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 236
Short story collections..... 31

Note: If you find this Journal of value and want to make a one time or recurring donation, **please do not pledge through Substack**. I don't use Stripe. [Instead click this link](#). If you can't donate, please consider sharing this post with friends.

Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark and adherence to Heinlein's Rules. Unreasoning fear and the myths of writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

The Novel Wrapped

December 28, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

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

Quote of the Day

“Give a man a fire and he's warm for a day, but set fire to him and he's warm for the rest of his life.” Terry Pratchett

The Writing

The novel wrapped with another 3700 words. It also proved to be a Blackwell Ops novel instead of the genesis story for a new series.

You can see the cover and the description at [StoneThread Publishing](#).

Most of my Blackwell Ops novels seem to wrap at around 35000 words. This one held on until 51000. That said, my first reader has already gotten feedback to me (Thanks, Russ), so I might add words today.

Also, my 4000 words-per-day writing goal is probably right where it should be. Over 14 writing days, the average for the novel was 3691 words per day. So at least I don't have to think about changing that for awhile.

When I include the short story (thus far) the average jumps a little to 4020 words per day. That's probably closer to right since I wrote the short story during five of the same fourteen days I was writing the novel.

Again, it isn't WHAT you write that's important, it's THAT you write.

As usual, I'm a little sad to see it in the can and on its way to my first reader. I very seldom "celebrate" a novel ending. My first novel, yeah. And personal milestones, like my 50th and my forthcoming 101st.

But most often, as we all do in all other aspects of life, I celebrate new births (starting a new story or novel) and I grieve deaths (end of a story or novel or series).

But as Gus McCrae (Lonesome Dove) said, "The only thing you can do with death is ride off from it." And the best way to do that for a fiction writer is to start a new story or novel.

I could write these two characters forever, but it certainly wouldn't be in the Blackwell Ops world. If they ever offer me another new story, I'll write it. But I doubt they will.

Still, I haven't been happier to meet two people since I wrote the story of Wes Crowley and Coralín.

I'll finish the short story too in a day or two so I can add the numbers to this year.

And awhile back I said I would intentionally not start a new novel until at least January 1. Well, that was just stupid. I'll start a new one as soon as a new one comes along.

Stay tuned and I'll talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[Step Two... Ramp Up](#)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 450

Writing of Blackwell Ops 16: Tarea-Garcia

Day 1..... 4968 words. To date..... 4968

Day 2..... 3677 words. To date..... 8645

Day 3..... 3307 words. To date..... 11952
Day 4..... 4467 words. To date..... 16419
Day 5..... 4193 words. To date..... 20612
Day 6..... 2061 words. To date..... 22673
Day 7..... 3250 words. To date..... 25923
Day 8..... 2036 words. To date..... 27959
Day 9..... 3789 words. To date..... 31748
Day 10.... 4093 words. To date..... 35841
Day 11.... 3771 words. To date..... 39612
Day 12.... 4366 words. To date..... 43437
Day 13.... 4533 words. To date..... 47970
Day 14.... 3709 words. To date..... 51679 (done)

Writing of “The Love of Soleada”

Day 1..... 1079 words. To date..... 1079
Day 2..... 1444 words. To date..... 2523
Day 3..... 0225 words. To date..... 2748
Day 4..... 0747 words. To date..... 3495
Day 5..... 1105 words. To date..... 4600

Fiction for December..... 107132
Fiction for 2023..... 507966
Fiction since August 1..... 392742
Nonfiction for December..... 21370
Nonfiction for the year..... 276950
Annual consumable words..... 781409

2023 Novels to Date..... 11
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 8
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 81
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 236
Short story collections..... 31

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POV and POV Indicators

December 29, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * POV and POV Indicators
- * The Writing
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

POV and POV Indicators

I had a very interesting email discussion with my first reader yesterday, whose input is always invaluable, about POV indicators.

Russ made some very good catches as he read the novel. This is why I recommend strongly either finding a good first reader or reading your work aloud before you publish it.

A good first reader is one who only reads and notes what pops out at him or her, not one who tries to tell you how s/he would have written it. (grin)

Telling you how they would have written the story is the domain of critique groups and "beta" readers, and it's why I recommend strongly against using either of those.

A POV indicator can be a valuable tool In a novel. And if you write with only one POV character, read this anyway. You never know what the next book might hold. Most of my Blackwell Ops (and other) novels had only one POV character. The last two have had several.

If the characters keep switching off in narrating the novel, it's important that the reader be able to discern those different points of view without becoming confused or interrupting the flow of reading the story to "figure it out."

First, two quick notes about POV indicators:

1. The POV indicator is not part of the story.

The POV indicator does not come from the creative subconscious. It is inserted by the writer (you) from outside the story when it's necessary (a conscious-mind decision) to clarify for the reader which POV character is narrating that particular chapter or scene or section within the chapter or scene. And

2. The POV indicator is ALWAYS an author intrusion and therefore should be used Only When Necessary (OWN) to identify for the reader which character is narrating. Whether to insert one depends on the context of the scene.

That's why I make my POV indicators as unintrusive as possible. I skip a line, add the POV indicator in italics, left justified and with no indent, then skip another line and go on with the story.

The reader can notice the indicator if s/he wants or needs to, or s/he can skip over it and continue reading.

A Note on Consistency of Use —

We all probably know consistency is of major importance within a story.

For example, if a character speaks English in a stilted manner — maybe s/he never uses contractions or s/he occasionally confuses similar words — s/he should ALWAYS speak it in a stilted manner.

Or if a character uses a signature word (or “tag” word) or phrase regularly, then s/he should use it regularly. If s/he always truncates gerunds, for example, s/he shouldn't suddenly switch from using “seein” to using “seeing.”

If s/he speaks with a Brooklyn dialect, s/he should always speak with a Brooklyn dialect. This goes a long way toward enabling the reader to immediately and subliminally identify the POV character.

But consistency does not enter into POV indicators. Just because you use one at the beginning of one chapter or section doesn't mean you “have” to use one at the beginning of all other chapters or sections (OWN).

Again, POV indicators are not part of the story. They are an author intrusion. They are necessarily a function of the conscious, critical mind. Whether and where to use them is a decision you should make on a case-by-case basis.

For example, in Blackwell Ops 16, I used them sparingly.

Chapter 13 was originally titled “Rodrigo Valenzuela,” which was also the name of the POV character. So originally I didn't use a POV indicator to blatantly show that the POV was his.

But thanks to the input from Russ, I changed the title of the chapter to indicate what *happened* in the chapter: “Discovered.” Then I added “Rodrigo Valenzuela” as a POV indicator below that.

Here's part of my explanation to Russ of other uses of POV indicators, slightly modified for inclusion in this topic:

“In Chapter 15, I added a ‘Soleada’ POV indicator (on Russ’ recommendation), primarily because the previous chapter was narrated by a different character. Originally I had skipped it because of her early reference in the chapter to Charlie.”

I also added a “Soleada” indicator for Chapter 16 because the opening paragraph could have been narrated by either of the main POV characters.

Back to my excerpt from my email to Russ:

“I did not use a ‘Soleada’ indicator in Chapter 17 because ‘Charlie’ is the first word of the chapter, so that context reveals Soleada as the POV character. But I did leave the indicator at the beginning of Chapter 18 because the opening sentences might have been narrated by either of them.

“I also left ‘Charlie Task’ (who some time ago in the story changed his last name to ‘Tarea’) as the indicator near the end of Chapter 20. But Charlie himself explains why in that section, especially in the last three sentences of the chapter.”

(Remember, folks, despite the quotation marks below, the following segment is narration):

“[W]hen we are together, which is most of the time, we are señor y señora Tarea. But at the moment we are not together. And sometimes when we are not together, Charles Claymore Task surfaces. This was one of those times.”

Back to my excerpt from my email to Russ:

“I deleted the ‘TJ’ indicator at the beginning of Chapter 22. His very distinct ‘voice’ (he’s a mobster from Jersey) makes it obvious the chapter is from his POV.

“I kept the Soleada indicator in Chapter 25 because Charlie isn’t mentioned for some distance down the page. But I deleted the one at the beginning of Chapter 26 because it’s basically a continuation (even in the action of the scene) of Chapter 25.

“No POV indicator on Chapter 29 because 1) it’s in the title (‘Charlie’s Ruminations’), and 2) ‘as Soleada slept’ is the first line. Both indicate subliminally — rather than blatantly with a separate POV indicator — that Charlie is the narrator.”

I hope this helps. For some of you, it’s probably next-level stuff. But that doesn’t mean you can’t begin using it if you deem it necessary.

As always, if you have any questions at all about any of this, please feel free to email me at harveystanbrough@gmail.com and ask.

The Writing

Yesterday morning, after I applied the fixes Russ sent me, I prepared a promo doc, then published Blackwell Ops 16: Tarea-Garcia to both D2D and Amazon. It will release on Monday, January 8.

I also wrote the topic above, then updated the publishing website (see above). Finally, I finished the short story under Numbers below.

Probably I will spend the rest of the day (yesterday) on a trip to Sierra Vista with my wife. We have some shopping to do, so....

There are still three days left in the year including today. A few days ago I said I would wait until at least January 1 to begin a new novel.

I don't know that I can twiddle my thumbs that long. If an idea I like occurs to me, I will write it (short story) or start it (novel). Anything less would just be a silly waste of time.

Oh, I also started writing my personal year in review post. I'll put that one up on December 31.

I'll talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[Step Three... Clean Up and Plan](#)

[Blogging Resumes Tomorrow](#)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1230

Writing of

Day 1..... XXXX words. To date..... XXXXX

Writing of "The Love of Soleada"

Day 1..... 1079 words. To date..... 1079

Day 2..... 1444 words. To date..... 2523

Day 3..... 0225 words. To date..... 2748

Day 4..... 0747 words. To date..... 3495

Day 5..... 1105 words. To date..... 4600

Day 6..... 0790 words. To date..... 5390 (done)

Fiction for December..... 107922

Fiction for 2023..... 508756

Fiction since August 1..... 393532

Nonfiction for December..... 22600

Nonfiction for the year..... 278180

Annual consumable words..... 783419

2023 Novels to Date.....	11
2023 Novellas to Date.....	0
2023 Short Stories to Date.....	10
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014).....	82
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015).....	9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014).....	238
Short story collections.....	31

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Publishing, Genres and a Lot More

December 30, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quote of the Day
- * This Morning
- * I Love This Age of Publishing
- * Genres and Sub-Genre Redux
- * A New Story
- * The Writing
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Quote of the Day

“I agree. Its THAT you write that is important, not what. I'm currently writing a very personal project, a family history (it will be a series given the amount of info I have on both sides), which I put off for a long time since I worried it would interfere with my 'real' projects. ... Now that I'm knee deep in the first volume I'm having a blast retelling the lives of my ancestors....”
Matthew Gordon Pettipas

Wonderful for the family, and many readers enjoy reading family sagas too. And if Matt chooses to change a name here and there, he'll also have a series of novels in a fictional saga.

This Morning

Unfortunately, I read a statement in an excerpt from a blog post over on The Passive Voice. I try to remain positive here at the Journal, but this just dragged me over the line into a free speech frame of mind.

The statement is easily one of the most inane I have ever read. While talking about soldiers who endure a combat environment and his brother who suffers PTSD from having done so, the author of the OP actually wrote

“The writer’s life can be just as hectic and restless as a soldier’s life.”

Yes, well, if “the writer” removes his melodramatic forearm from his forehead so he can use both hands on the keyboard, he might — just might — find that sitting alone in a room making stuff up has ZERO comparison points to serving in a hostile environment in which one’s body might begin absorbing bullets at any second.

Additionally, in response to the article, one commenter wrote, “A soldier going into battle will surely feel kinship with what a writer endures.”

Oh. Yes. Surely. I have to assume the comment writer was expressing sarcasm. If he wasn’t, then this was a pair of quotes nobody should have to endure this early in the morning. Or any other time.

If you want, you can read the post and the comments, including mine, at [Rest and Relaxation](#).

I Love This Age of Publishing

And I’m very glad I scheduled my previous novel for release on January 8. Doing that gave me the opportunity, before anyone bought it, to correct a glaring omission.

It was in the backmatter of the book.

I got in slightly too big a hurry and submitted the manuscript to both D2D and Amazon without crediting the person whose photograph I used in the design for the front cover.

I discovered the omission yesterday morning.

But thanks to the wonders of ebooks and this new golden age of publishing, I added the information (Cover photo(s) © Andrii Podilnyk, [Unsplash](#)), clicked Save, and uploaded the manuscript again to both platforms.

Because Andrii deserves to be credited for that cover photo as much as I deserve my name to be on the front cover of the book.

In the old days under traditional publishing, it would take an act of Congress and ratification from God to make any changes at all in a book. And that's even at a small publisher, never mind the conglomeration of control freaks in New York.

Genres and Sub-Genres Redux

Awhile back I mentioned that SF (fiction or fantasy) trumps all other genres. That's true.

If your story or novel has even one tiny SF element in it, it's Science Fiction or Science Fantasy in the first categorization. Everything else stems from that.

Blackwell Ops 16: Tarea-Garcia, like B0-15 before it, has only a small bit of SF in it — time travel — so it's science fantasy.

So I set these categories at D2D and Amazon:

- sf/action & adventure
- sf/ time travel
- romance/action & adventure

(If they offered “sf/romance” that would have been the third category.)

Also, the search terms I listed are SF thriller, romance, psychological suspense, time travel, assassin, and crime thriller.

But wait. Where in the world did that “romance” thing come from?

In the categories, SF, being the trump card in the genre deck, is first. Derived from that are “action & adventure” (and “thriller” if it were available) and then “time travel.”

But another overriding theme in this novel is Romance. And it isn't only a small element that wormed its way into the story as it sometimes does. It's a powerful aspect that permeates the story. Without it, there would be no story.

So the third category is “romance” and then “action & adventure” again derived from that.

The third big element and overriding theme is “psychological suspense.” The reader will often find his or her heart rate increasing because s/he is often privy to the POV character's thoughts.

In fact, sometimes the reader will know things the POV character is yet to learn, and that will create tension and suspense in the reader. Right where it belongs. (grin)

Give careful consideration to your categories when you publish your stories or novels through D2D or Amazon. They and the search terms are what make it easier for readers to find your books.

Then readers look at the cover and, fingers crossed, feel invited into a story they'll like. Then they read your sales copy (as massively important as the cover, and maybe more so) and are hooked.

If you have the "Look Inside" feature activated at Amazon, so much the better. That enables the actual opening of the story to grab them and pull them in. If it does, the purchase is a done deal.

And just so you know, when you've practiced setting correct genres and search term, and creating genre-attractive covers and alluring sales copy, and writing strong openings, all of that becomes a habit and you don't have to really "try" to do any of it.

That, of course, is the good news. (grin) I hope this helps.

A New Story

"Maldito," the second story in an interconnected series of ten magic realism stories, went live yesterday on my [Stanbrough Writes Substack](#). If you enjoy magic realism and-or Mexico, you probably don't want to miss this series of stories.

To subscribe, click the link above and then the Subscribe button at the end of the story. You'll receive a new short story every Friday, and it's free.

Below the Subscribe button, there are other short stories you can read in most genres. Enjoy!

The Writing

I started a new novel yesterday. Woohoo!

I would have preferred something other than another Blackwell Ops novel. But as Matt wrote (Quote of the Day), it isn't what you write, it's that you write.

What I write isn't really up to me. I choose to be a writer, and I choose to write fiction, most often novels. But that's as far as my free will or control goes.

What I write is up to the characters. I go to wherever they invite me, I run through the story with them as it unfolds around us, and I record it as faithfully as I can.

Anyway, I also did some writing-related things. From what I understand, many writers and would-be writers believe those writing-related things are "part" of writing. They aren't. All too often, they serve as a way to avoid writing. Writing is putting new words on the page.

And I wrote this Journal entry. Otherwise I prepped the manuscript template for Blackwell Ops 17 and another one for whatever other novel I might start next. Y'never know.

Then I headed up to the house a couple of hours early to sit on my good side and watch the Sun Bowl.

I'll talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

[U.S. Copyright Office Fair Use Index](#)

[The Fresh Start Challenge With Kris](#)

The Numbers

The Journal..... 1290

Writing of Blackwell Ops 17:

Day 1..... 4204 words. To date..... 4204

Fiction for December..... 112126
Fiction for 2023..... 5129606
Fiction since August 1..... 397736
Nonfiction for December..... 23890
Nonfiction for the year..... 279470
Annual consumable words..... 788923

2023 Novels to Date..... 11
2023 Novellas to Date..... 0
2023 Short Stories to Date..... 10
Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 82
Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9
Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 238
Short story collections..... 31

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[Adios, 2023, Audio Lectures, and Much More](#)

December 31, 2023 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Adios, 2023
- * They're Doing It Again
- * Audio Lectures Adios
- * Reminder
- * Of Interest
- * The Numbers

Adios, 2023

I have most of my "year in review" post written. I had planned to post that today.

But my year, like yours, won't end until well after this edition of the Journal is published. And I write fiction AFTER I publish the Journal each day.

Duh.

So if I published my year in review today, it would be my year-minus-one-day in review. An' 'at just ain't right.

So you'll see the year in review post tomorrow morning instead.

Some of you know I was shadowing Kris Rusch's Sprint to the End challenge (or whatever she called it), so in tomorrow's post I'll also break out separately what I wrote over the last 14 days of December.

I'll be interested to see whether Kris posts her numbers (or Dean posts them for her) publicly or whether that will remain a secret among those who joined the challenge.

As a friend wrote to me yesterday, it's pretty ballsy to charge people money (usually \$300) to write, something we all do for fun anyway. 😊

And as I wrote in a couple of earlier posts, you can challenge or shadow me anytime with your writing. I won't charge you money to do it, and I'll even cheer you on to outdo me.

I have to thank Kris R anyway, because if I hadn't remembered as I walked to the Hovel this morning that I was shadowing her challenge, I probably would have published the year-end post a day early. (grin)

They're Doing It Again

See the first item in Of Interest.

This is a really great idea, challenging yourself to write 2024 words per day (on average) for the entire year of 2024. In fact, setting ANY daily word count goal and challenging yourself to reach it every day (or average) is a great idea.

But as I mentioned above, paying someone \$600 for the “privilege” of doing something you, as a writer, should be doing anyway? Not so much.

I have to be fair. If you pay the money and “win” the challenge you DO get some nifty prizes for your \$600. (Read the post in Of Interest.)

But still. You can learn anything you want to learn about writing free of charge from this Journal, the free archives, and many of my books. In fact remember the audio lecture series offer?

Audio Lectures Adios

If you remember, awhile back I offered all of my audio lectures free to anyone who asked. The value of the whole series is \$220. Even if you paid full price, that’s only \$5 per lecture. And I’m offering them free. (But then, I’m not trying to siphon your bank account. I’m trying to help you with your writing.)

But as of this writing, only 11 writers (out of around 150) wanted them. Frankly, I was astounded, but hey, it’s your call. Anyway, today is the last day of that offer.

Visit HarveyStanbrough.com/lecture-series, read the course descriptions, and [email me](#) let me know which lectures you want. No limit. I’ll send them out via several emails in MP3 audio files.

Reminder

You who are still in the Bradbury Challenge, remember to get your story information in to me before midnight Arizona time (2 a.m. on the east coast). Of course, as always, I’ll include any info that’s in my inbox before I publish that edition of the Journal.

Because the year-end post is already over 1100 words, I’ll truncate the Bradbury Challenge post to the bare essentials tomorrow. But of course I’ll list your names and story info.

Also, I’ve heard from a few folks that they want to jump into the Challenge in the first week of January (so the week ending January 8). You will be welcome. Just remember to write your stories and get the info in to me before January 7 at midnight.

It’s going to be a great year for all of us. I can just feel it. (grin)

I’ll talk with you again soon.

Of Interest

2,024 Words Per Day in 2024

Wisdom from the Dutch

The Numbers

The Journal..... 660

Writing of Blackwell Ops 17: Julia Stern

Day 1..... 4204 words. To date..... 4204

Day 2..... 4284 words. To date..... 8488

Fiction for January.....

Fiction for December..... 116410

Fiction for 2023..... 517244

Fiction since August 1..... 402020

Nonfiction for December..... 24550 (done)

Nonfiction for the year..... 280130 (done)

Annual consumable words..... 793867

2023 Novels to Date..... 11

2023 Novellas to Date..... 0

2023 Short Stories to Date..... 10

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 82

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

Short stories (since Apr 15, 2014)..... 238

Short story collections..... 31

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Disclaimer: I am a prolific professional fiction writer. On this blog I teach Writing Into the Dark and adherence to Heinlein's Rules. Unreasoning fear and the myths of writing will slow your progress as a writer or stop you cold. I will never teach the myths on this blog.

2023 in Review, and Goals

January 1, 2024 by [Harvey](#)

In today's Journal

- * Quotes of the Day
- * The Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting
- * Correction
- * 2023 in Review
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Quotes of the Day

“Words are, of course, the most powerful drug used by mankind.” Rudyard Kipling

“All my important decisions are made for me by my subconscious. My frontal lobes are just kidding themselves that they decide anything at all. All they do is think up reasons for the decisions that are already made.” Rex Stout, in Life magazine (Dec. 10, 1965)

“New Year’s Day. Now is the accepted time to make your regular annual good resolutions. Next week you can begin paving hell with them as usual.” Mark Twain

“Tomorrow is the first blank page of a 365 page book. Write a good one.” Brad Paisley, in a Dec. 31, 2009 Tweet

Thanks to [Dr. Mardy Grothe](#) for these quotes.

The Bradbury Challenge Writers Reporting

During the past week, in addition to whatever other fiction they’re writing, the following writers reported their progress:

Short Fiction

- George Kordonis “Welcome to the Next Space Age!” 2345 SF
- Adam Kozak “Devil in the Storm” 3135 General Fiction
- Christopher Ridge “Houseguest” 2600 Horror
- K.C. Riggs “The Sun” 1239 SF

Longer Fiction

- Balázs Jámbor *Kylen’s Story* (tentative title) 2000 Fantasy (21800 to date)

Correction

In yesterday’s edition of the Journal, I wrote “(But then, I’m trying to siphon your bank account. I’m trying to help you with your writing.)”

I hope it's obvious that I meant to write "(But then, I'm NOT trying to siphon your bank account....) Otherwise the whole thing wouldn't make sense. (grin)

2023 in Review

Welp, it's that time'a year again.

As you read the stuff below, try to remember I'm not complaining. I'm only laying it out for you, being transparent, in the hope that it will help you with your own writing in some way.

Most of my personal year in review as a fiction writer is in the Numbers below. You can scroll down to see that if you're interested.

But what the numbers DON'T show is that I wrote 77% of my fiction after August 1. And most of that (all but one novel) was after September 1.

As most of you know, my production was paltry before that. Of the 11 novels I wrote during the year, I wrote 9 of them after August 1. And I *finished* 9 of them after September 1.

The whole secret to success as a fiction writer is to keep coming back, keep trying again and again until you're actually writing every day (or at every opportunity if you have an outside job, children, etc.).

Sometimes having an outside job is necessary, and of course, family and children are precious. I get all that.

But if you regularly cite "other interests" as a reason for not writing, maybe you don't want to be prolific as a fiction writer. And that's fine too. Hey, if you don't, you don't.

But if you DO, then maybe consider resetting your priorities among those "other interests" and nudge fiction writing to the top (again, after the job, family, and babies).

I don't always say what you want to hear, but I'll always tell you the truth. If you want to write, you can. If you want to be prolific, you can. And again, if you don't want to do either of those things, that's perfectly fine too.

Okay, back to my year in review —

August was my restart month after two straight years of not being able to write. And during that restart, I struggled. A lot. I started, stopped, started again, etc. Some of you know the drill. You know who you are.

Starting in September, I still struggled a little, and I wrote only one more novel. But by the time I finished Blackwell Ops 10: Jeremy Stiles in late September, I was off and running again. At long last.

What do I mean by “off and running?”

It took me most of August and into September to write and publish Blackwell Ops 9. Then most of September to write Blackwell Ops 10. So that was progress, but not much.

But I finished the other 7 novels (Blackwell Ops 11 through 16) on

- Oct 10,
- Oct 25,
- Nov 5,
- Nov 16,
- Dec 2,
- Dec 12, and
- Dec 27.

If I can keep up that level of productivity from January through December of 2024, I will write 28 novels next year. (See Fiction Goals below.)

That’s what I mean by off and running.

And it didn’t require a plan or an outline or any of that. It required only that I sit my butt in the chair, trust the characters, and write the story the characters gave me as I ran through it with them. Nothing more.

Depending on your personal schedule, you can do the same or better.

On Christmas Eve, I laid out my writing goals for 2024. As a reminder (if you’re interested) and in order of my personal priorities, they are

1. Fiction Goals

This is my highest priority because writing fiction is all-important to me. If I don’t write fiction, nothing below this section matters. And again, what matters is not *what* I write (the individual story or novel) but *that* I write:

- *Write 19 new novels (2500 words +)
- Write 4000 new words of fiction per day (average), and
- Write whatever novellas or short stories happen.

**If I miss this one, I hope it will be because one or more of the novels took off and ran well over 100,000 words.*

2. Nonfiction Goals

- Write a new edition of the Journal every day (with no “fillers” or placeholders — I hate those.)
- Write at least 2 new nonfiction craft titles,
- Plus either put out a much-revised 2nd edition of *Writing Realistic Dialogue* or write a companion volume to the one that’s already out there. It would be like a sequel in fiction.

3. Publishing Goals — Publishing all of the above, plus

- Updating, rebranding and repricing 6 or 7 of my current nonfiction titles (not including WRD)
- Rebranding and repricing 8 other old nonfiction titles

The rebranding will require designing a branded cover for all of them. That will be the easy part.

4. Production Goals

- Meet or exceed my daily word count goal on every writing day
- Have as many writing days as possible

This one's kind'a silly. If I meet my daily word count goal and maintain an average of even close to 4000 words of fiction per day for the year, I'll easily produce more than I ever have before.

In fact, I'll surpass 1,000,000 words for the year and easily meet or surpass the 19 novels I listed as a goal in fiction above. In writing, everything boils down to the daily word count goal.

But I'm also planning to keep one eye on my production from when my writing finally took off on October 1 of this year through September 30 2024. Because that's a year too. (grin)

You'll see that new production record in "Numbers" in the Journal beginning on January 1. It will be sandwiched in between "Fiction for 2024" and "Nonfiction for January."

It's a way to motivate myself and keep myself from slacking off. And why would anyone want to slack-off from having fun?

Okay, that's it for me.

How about you? Have you set your new goals for the year yet? If you have, please feel free to share in a comment or via email. But also print them out and tape them on a wall near your writing desk.

And remember, the only valid comparison for any writer is to compare what s/he did yesterday or last week or last month to what s/he does today or this week or this month. Just do your best in every moment.

But should anyone out there who's reading this (Dawn? Vin? Johnny B? Anyone?) want to race me or something like that, hey, I'm all-in. I'll even cheer for you to win. (grin)

Okay, that's today, January 1, 2024. I hope to have the Journal archive for 2023 up on [the website](#) tomorrow or maybe the next day. Feel free to download it, of course. I've written some great topics in the Journal over the past year. You know, when I wasn't doing much of anything else.

Of Interest

[All works set to enter the public domain](#)

[1440 Newsletter Year in Review](#) Some great stories.

The Numbers

The Journal..... 660

Writing of Blackwell Ops 17: Julia Stern

Day 1..... 4204 words. To date..... 4204

Day 2..... 4284 words. To date..... 8488

Day 3..... 3355 words. To date..... 11843

Fiction for January..... ?

Fiction for December..... 119765 (done)

Fiction for 2023..... 520599 (done)

Fiction since August 1..... 405375 (done)

Fiction since October 1..... 303057 (this will be a new daily feature)

Nonfiction for January..... 1350

Nonfiction for 2024..... 1350

2023 consumable words..... 797222 (done)

2024 consumable words..... 1350

2024 Novels to Date..... 0

2024 Novellas to Date..... 0

2024 Short Stories to Date..... 0

Novels (since Oct 19, 2014)..... 82

Novellas (since Nov 1, 2015)..... 9

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