

Some inspiration for the WRITE IN, a BWW writers retreat where we do nothing but write.

This from Kazuo Ishiguro, our Nobel Laureate in Literature on how he wrote *The Remains of the Day* in four weeks (really?) in a 12 hour writing “crash” .:

“Throughout the Crash, I wrote free-hand, not caring about the style or if something I wrote in the afternoon contradicted something I’d established in the story that morning. The priority was simply to get the ideas surfacing and growing. Awful sentences, hideous dialogue, scenes that went nowhere—I let them remain and ploughed on.” Of course it helps to have a wife or whomever to cook, make money, walk the dog, change the sheets, have no needs of his or her own....etc. Let us try it out for five hours on a winter Sunday!

#1: William Gass.

<http://lithub.com/william-h-gasss-advice-for-writers-you-have-to-be-grimly-determined/>

—*from a 1976 interview with The Paris Review.*

If someone asks me, “Why do you write?” I can reply by pointing out that it is a very dumb question. Nevertheless, there is an answer. I write because I hate. A lot. Hard. And if someone asks me the inevitable next dumb question, “Why do you write the way you do?” I must answer that I wish to make my hatred acceptable because my hatred is much of me, if not the best part. Writing is a way of making the writer acceptable to the world—every cheap, dumb, nasty thought, every despicable desire, every noble sentiment, every expensive taste.

—*from a 1991 interview with Arthur M. Saltzman.*

Even an ideologically driven artist who is working well has got to see all around the subject. Oh, he can create a character who speaks brilliantly from a half-baked point of view, but he cannot create a drama of conflict between points of view unless he can imaginatively put himself in two positions. . . . Any work of art is going to be dangerous to a point of view. If you are an artist, you have to see not only why you can’t walk on air, but also why people who think you can, think so. Art objects are inhospitable to secure truths. People who are fearful of protecting their own truth can’t have them around.

—*from a 2005 interview with The Believer.*

Something gets on paper, and then it gets revised, and then it gets revised, and then it gets revised. And then I’m finally at the end.

—*from On Being Blue*

It’s not the word made flesh we want in writing, in poetry and fiction, but the flesh made word.

—from a 2011 *interview* with *Tin House*.

Too many writers write about their lives. It's easier, and it's seductive, and it can be catastrophic. "It happened to me, and therefore it must be interesting." You know, that's sort of awful.

#2: Pulled out of context from an article about feedback....this makes me want to scream.

"....As I looked up from the screen, I realized that though I had constructed several hundred pages of text, I had completely failed to convey meaning."

#3 Nick Harkaway, son of John LeCarré;

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/nov/11/nick-harkaway-gnomon-interview?>

"When you're writing you have to codify and formalize ideas and my experience is always that I have a firework going off in my head and I've got to describe the sound, the impact of the explosion that you feel in your chest and the colors and the smell...It's impossible to capture the sense and emotion that the firework brings on the page, but a writer just has to live with that and relish the endless possibilities of language, and beauty and style. That smashing explosion into words is the truth of writing for me."

Harkaway was talking to [William Gibson](#) – a writer he has admired since [Neuromancer](#) blew his teenage mind – and he learned that Gibson doesn't plan his fiction, but just gets a concept and follows the story. If it was good enough for Gibson, Harkaway told himself, he should give it a try. Armed with an image glimpsed in a tube station of a locksmith with a spray can marked "universal solvent", a figure from the far end of human development and a crime, in 2013 he hit upon the germ of an idea and "just started writing". He wrote the novel "like a 3D printer", swiveling round in his chair to demonstrate how he would add a chunk of narrative to each strand in turn before swinging back over to add the next piece. By spring 2016 he had a first draft and enlisted the help of seven or eight people to make sure it all made sense.

#4 James Salter

<http://lithub.com/james-salter-why-i-write/>

In the end, writing is like a prison, an island from which you will never be released but which is a kind of paradise: the solitude, the thoughts, the incredible joy of putting into words the essence of what you for the moment understand and with your whole heart want to believe.

#5 Pico Iyer

Every morning I wake up in our tiny apartment in Japan and I go to a corner and I just sit there for the

next five hours trying to sift through my projections, my distortions, trying to find the voice behind my chatter, trying to find, of all the things passing through my head, is any one worth committing to the page. As experiences of recent days go through me, as a writer I'm committed to trying to cut through the silly or surface things one would say or find about them and see if there's anything more durable in them.

#6 Faulkner

from a 1958 q&a with University of Virginia graduate students

Once he is in your mind, and he is right, and he's true, then he does the work himself. All you need to do then is to trot along behind him and put down what he does and what he says. It's the ingestion and then the gestation. You've got to know the character. You've got to believe in him. You've got to feel that he is alive, and then, of course, you will have to do a certain amount of picking and choosing among the possibilities of his action, so that his actions fit the character which you believe in.

from a 1947 [interview](#) with *The Western Review*

"You can *always* find time to write. Anybody who says he can't is living under false pretenses. To that extent depend on inspiration. Don't wait. When you have an inspiration put it down. Don't wait until later and when you have more time and then try to recapture the mood and add flourishes. You can never recapture the mood with the vividness of its first impression."

from Faulkner's 1949 Nobel Prize [banquet speech](#)

"Our tragedy today is a general and universal physical fear so long sustained by now that we can even bear it. There are no longer problems of the spirit. There is only the question: When will I be blown up? Because of this, the young man or woman writing today has forgotten the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself which alone can make good writing because only that is worth writing about, worth the agony and the sweat.

He must learn them again. He must teach himself that the basest of all things is to be afraid; and, teaching himself that, forget it forever, leaving no room in his workshop for anything but the old verities and truths of the heart, the old universal truths lacking which any story is ephemeral and doomed—love and honor and pity and pride and compassion and sacrifice. Until he does so, he labors under a curse. He writes not of love but of lust, of defeats in which nobody loses anything of value, of victories without hope and, worst of all, without pity or compassion. His griefs grieve on no universal bones, leaving no scars. He writes not of the heart but of the glands."

from a 1956 [interview](#) with *The Paris Review*

A writer needs three things, experience, observation, and imagination—any two of which, at times any one of which—can supply the lack of the others. With me, a story usually begins with a single idea or memory or mental picture. The writing of the story is simply a matter of working up to that moment, to

explain why it happened or what it caused to follow. A writer is trying to create believable people in credible moving situations in the most moving way he can.

#7 Hemingway

“The Old Man and the Sea could have been over a thousand pages long and had every character in the village in it and all the processes of how they made their living, were born, educated, bore children, et cetera. That is done excellently and well by other writers. In writing you are limited by what has already been done satisfactorily. So I have tried to learn to do something else. First I have tried to eliminate everything unnecessary to conveying experience to the reader so that after he or she has read something it will become a part of his or her experience and seem actually to have happened. This is very hard to do and I’ve worked at it very hard.”

8: Sandra Scofield, from “The last Draft”, a novelists’ guide to revision:

<http://lithub.com/how-important-is-the-first-draft-to-your-novel/>

A good essay on the importance of first drafts to your novel. It’s long and with interesting observations, so I won’t extrapolate except for this:

Come hither and create your own world. Put what you know and believe and want into story. Defy the randomness of real life; make meaning. This is a long-haul project and it is so much a part of who you are, you can’t imagine not doing it, not even if it takes years.

Maybe you, like me, write in your hidey-hole and people who know you have no idea how much you’ve taken on. Maybe you’ve found a workshop or a graduate program to help you in your endeavor. Either way, you must know by now that you have a world of figuring out to do.

Just know this: You are uniquely you, and the novel you write is one nobody else can.

9: Kazuo Ishiguro

“Write about what you know” is the most stupid thing I’ve heard. It encourages people to write a dull autobiography. It’s the reverse of firing the imagination and potential of writers. —*from an interview with [ShortList](#)* “Write towards emotions, not morals. In fact, start with relationships, authentic human drama, and then the characters develop naturally