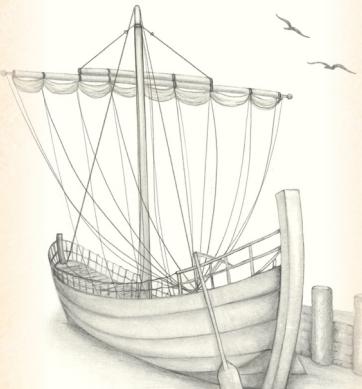




Historically Speaking

Volume 5, Number 1 January, 2026

How Writing Affects Me



What's happening?

The craft fair at Ridgeline High School was very successful for us. We did not sell any big ticket items, but we still took in enough to make it well worth doing. I had made 64 new oven rack push-pull squirrels, thinking that would be plenty for the weekend, but they sold out in the first 3 1/2 hours. I even had to make more after the fair for some who really wanted them. Audrey sold potholders, table runners, and much more. My sister, Roseanne, had wonderful knitted items and sold some of those. It was a great event.

This month's newsletter is deviating from the typical content.

I have recently been writing about and deeply considering the emotional impact writing has on me specifically and writers in general drawn from my own experience and my discussions with other writers. I have written a chapbook that serves as a possible seed for a book or a series of magazine articles. I have entitled it "Ecstasy Through Agony: A Writer's Odyssey."

A couple of you have received a copy of that chapbook. I hope that you don't find this newsletter as too much repetition, but I will draw heavily from that chapbook.

This all began as I was reading Strymon two years after writing it. I was intending to approach it with a fresh evaluation of my writing growth (or lack thereof.) I found myself crying as I finished the book (no apologies for that.) Yes, I realized that I have grown as a writer, with still so much more room to continue that growth. But that wasn't why I was crying. I thought about it for some time and came to the conclusion that the process of writing requires the writer to know the characters in the story in a way that is equal (and sometimes exceeding) our relationship with the people in our own lives. They become REAL to us.

Consequently, the trials, tribulations, successes, and victories evoke the emotional responses we have for those in our lives as well as in our own life.

To take a piece directly from the chapbook:

Dr. Maxwell Maltz, in his book PSYCHO-CYBERNETICS, makes a convincing argument, that the mind cannot distinguish the difference between that which is real and that which is vividly imagined. As writer's we attempt to create a vividly imagined story. It should not be surprising, then, that by investing so strongly in vividly imagining what we write, it becomes real to us.

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Ouranian Publishing of Spokane
304 N. Adams Rd.
Spokane Valley, WA 99216-2062
(509) 710-7185
website: ouranianpublishing.com



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We are so invested in our characters that we know more about them than what winds up on the page. Some of us ‘interview’ our characters. Our analysis of them comes from within, and we know the role our experience plays in their development, but then it usually goes beyond what we have experienced into that ‘vividly imagined’ realm.

And so, I find myself moved to tears by what evolves in my story and my characters. These feelings are no less powerful with those characters and story events than with the people and events in my daily life. The intention of this book is to explore the impact writing has on the writer. This definitely applies to writing fiction, but can also apply to poetry and non-fiction, when the subject is an emotional one and when the process of writing moves us.

“A writer needs to be emotional, because his/her task is to make someone else emotional.” Posted on Quora by Pooja Dechamma

I corresponded with some folks at Writer's Digest Magazine, to secure permission from the magazine and from several writers of articles in the magazine to use quotes from those articles in the chapbook and beyond into whatever else comes of this seed.

I admit I began my writing journey very slowly. Over the course of several decades, I managed to write some poetry, as well as newspaper, and magazine articles that found their way into various publications. I was not confident but knew I had something that I could explain, something that might inspire, or something that I had to get off my chest, and it was enough to set caution aside and risk the process of writing. Now I have published 7 books: a poetry collection, a contemporary novel, four historical novels, and one memoir. Those of you who have been receiving this newsletter regularly already know all of that. You also probably know that I am working on a new historical novel based in ancient Egypt during the Armana period (ca. 1350 and beyond.)

I am finding myself no less impacted by the real individuals in that book as they interact with my fictional characters. I welcome the emotional impact of all of these books on me and hope that some semblance of those emotions touch my readers.

Ecstasy Through Agony: The Writer's Odyssey

Stephen Lalonde



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