

ISBW S.19 Ep.10  
Realism Isn't Good Narrative  
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**SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

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**SPEAKER**

Mur Lafferty



00:51

so Hi there guys. Welcome to I should be writing this is the podcast for wannabe fiction writers. I'm your host Mur Lafferty. we stream live on Twitch Tuesday, Thursday 3pm. Eastern Time, that twitch.tv/mightymur. we take the Tuesday episode, which is more relaxed, and we send the recording to Patreon supporters who can't be here. And the Thursday recording we send out to everybody in the podcast feed. So if you want to get the support, if you want to support and get the Tuesday exclusive episode, and you can't be here live, you can help out at patreon.com/mightymur.

01:35

I've had a pretty good week writing. the trouble of reading in your genre is worrying that you're going to be influenced. But of course you're going to be influenced, we're all influenced by everything we read. But also, if you don't read within your genre, you're going to come up and say that you've got this exciting new idea about writing about monsters or robots. And they're really just metaphors for man. And hope to get a National Book Award while everybody in genre is throwing rocks at you. So it's good to read within your genre.

But I'm working on a time travel story. And as I'm writing it, I've got like Kage Baker going through my head. I've got Minority Report going through my head. I've got "is this

a good idea? Does it steal too much from them?" And when is an idea in genre sort of considered standard? And when are you copying? For example ansible is pretty much considered if you've got a space telephone. It's an Ansible Thank you Ursula K leGuin. But other things, I'm not sure and so I got in my own head this week with "this has all been done and it's been done better." But I didn't let it stop me. So I kept working I have about I got about 1200 words today more than that because I did a little bit editing too. And I'm up to about 6000 words on this project. Not too bad I do realize I'm kind of telling a layered story I've got the story of the time travelers and the story of the place they're going to so try not to get my head too much about it hit that yay button you got it started green. Let's hope it works okay, that works. That's good. We have hit the YAY button

04:11

but yeah, that's what I've been up to. If you would like to tell me what you've been up to or what's going on in your writing or just to share some good news let me know you can let me know in chat right now or you can let me know via email with mightymur@gmail.com. I'm doing great on my projects. Thank you started great. I see I'm hitting the YAY button for being prolific on my projects. Thank you. Kristianwriting has one rejection and one--don't say reprint acceptance. That implies that it's lesser. You say you have one rejection and one acceptance to celebrate. We are very, very proud of you kristianwriting. awesome.

05:00

And picturebook is complete and off to the printer. Congratulations Roth. And I don't know if Pauline's here, but I do believe Pauline announced another rejection in discord.

05:24

No, I totally missed underpope. Wow. Okay, thank you for playing so underpope's got three. Wow. Good job underpope. 123. There we go. The counter is working Yes. Okay, and for those of you playing at home, this puts 2023 rejection count up to 26 and remember folks around here we celebrate rejections because rejections mean, you're a working writer. We know rejection sucks, but you got to remember it's part of the job. And there are people out there who are too afraid to do this part of the job and you're not gonna get-- you signed a contract so can reveal you sold a poem to Strange Horizons? that's amazing. Congratulations. That's um yeah, Strange Horizons is one of the few

poetry sci fi poetry markets. So congratulations on that. But if you're listening to this later, we care about your rejections too. So email me if you want to be part of Team rejection 2023.

06:47

I'll give a moment see if there any more. And then we'll get started on the thing with the stuff. here we go. So a lot of times, a lot of things in the world have gotten so wild that people said, You know, if I wrote this in a story wouldn't be believed. And we've talked about the fact that say, I grew up with three Reginas and four Jennifers in my class. And a lot of times when something amazing or unexpected, or wildly coincidental happens. We sometimes think, hey, that would be really cool to put in a book and then or a story, and then we do it and then it's rejected. The thing is, life is not narratively neat. The fact that the teacher has to deal with five Jennifers in her class. That's a problem. But that's not a problem that is narratively good. I'm just saying if you had five Jennifers in your story, and you didn't bother to be like, Okay, well, this one's Jen. And that was Jenny and that one's Green Jennifer because she always wears green shirts and blah, blah, blah. It just pisses people off.

08:31

It was an Onion article about how a guy's a 35 year old man's life is narratively unappealing, or I can't remember the exact phrasing. But essentially how a man's life just has not followed the hero's journey, and how someone who was incredibly important to his life when he was in college has not reentered his life at all in the past 20 years, and that's just really bad storytelling. Because you thought if they were going to be that important in the first part of the story, they would continue to be that important or they come back. While we look for realism (in fiction) because we have to have something to anchor to when we're reading. There's still the issue of does it make a good story?

09:27

and sometimes, if something coincidental or wildly improbable happens that might not make a good story that might make something too easy. There have been a lot of terrible things that happened that feel like cardboard cutter evil overlord stuff in the past several years and while it did happen, um, editors might not want to hear it because it's not a neat narrative story, there needs to be conflict, there needs to be things in the way of your protagonist. If your protagonist just comes along and finds a bag of money on the street,

and the story is not “I found a bag of money in the street.” It's really not going to work because the editor is going to say that they didn't work for this at all. There's no-- they didn't earn this. And by earning, I mean, narratively, you know, you put a character through a certain number of conflicts and trials, and then whatever's at the end, is earned. And also, if they're a terrible person, and there's punishment, at the end, they will have earned that as well. So, if even if you one day found an envelope full of money, that's not narratively neat. Which is why even though you know, you grew up with 17 Johns, and three of them had the last name of Smith. And you did have a great aunt that died and left you a bunch of money and no other baggage at all, ever. That's not necessarily what will fit in the story. At least these days. I'm not going to rant about Tolkien again. names, names and stories need to be separate from one another. So people don't get mixed up on who's who

11:43

I read when I was a child, I read The Hobbit and I didn't like it. I thought it was kind of dumb. “What's In My Pocket?” is the worst riddle ever written in any literature ever. I'll fight you. But because I don't like the Hobbit, I never read Lord of the Rings. You know, you don't like the first one. Why would you go back for more? But when the movie started to come out, I figured I would give it a try. And so I read The Lord of the Rings as an adult. And that whole Sauron/Sauromon thing, pissed me off to no end. I was so angry. I'm just like, how is this what are the best or first or awesomest fantasy why we base our everything on it. And he can't even give us two bad guys with different names. There's other things in the book too, that's worthwhile. pause for a moment to catch up with chat -- kristianwriting says “I get so frustrated when books just drop characters and plotlines and the back half because something happened to them. Makes me feel like the book is wasted my time telling me about things that ultimately didn't matter.” I've been feeling that way with a couple of murder mysteries. Sometimes I realized that if a murder mystery brings in a new named important character around halfway through they're the murderer, everything before that was a red herring. Veronica says if in real life, you don't know how things are going to end and after the fact. Some things make more sense writing that way is not always easy. Yes. Look, can someone tell all the Russian novelist that will pre meet if you want to get all the Russian novelist to listen to my podcast? I can do that easily. These nine characters are all named Ilya. Okay, I guess I'll cope there are for Ivan democra wishes. All right? Yes. Actually, when I went to Russia, we had in our

group Victor, Victor, Victor, Yuri and Yuri from Odessa. Five guys. (we) did not know how to tell the victors apart but at least we had Yuri and Yuri from Odessa.

14:01

The Russian novelist have seven names for each character all of them distinct Okay. As a novel writer took Tolkien was an excellent linguist. Yes, yes, the linguistic stuff is amazing. which underlines Why the hell can't team distinct character names? "I did not finish Lord of the Rings as a kid because I got the names confused so at the end of Book Two I thought the main villain was defeated so I didn't read the third book" that's awesome

14:40

I felt this gaming meal I feel the same way about the hobbit people clutch their pearls when I tell them Yeah, I was really disappointed when the whole that's all I remember about the Hobbit was thinking the son of riddle, just not a riddle thing. Like Gollum should cry foul. That's not a riddle. "I shall be the lone Tolkien fanboy". In this book Tolkien did a lot of great things. Just the riddle and naming people were not two of them. Getting some of the Russian authors involved might require a seance. Well, true, Todd, true. Sullivan gotten back into writing because of personal stuff. But I really want to get back into it next month. Ceit, it will be waiting there for you. And we'll welcome you when you're ready.

I was having a kind of down period earlier today, I kind of felt like I was coming out of it. And then I came back, I don't know. But I forget so many times, that I'm my own captain. You know, there's still some, some switch in my mind that decides to turn off. And I think I have to wait for someone else to turn it back on, I have to wait for someone to give me permission to make this weird thing. And that's not true. The problem is, that's more work. You know, granted, we've got computers, which makes writing a novel a lot easier than people when they had typewriters or wrote longhand.

On the other hand, we have to handle a lot more of our careers. but it also gives us more avenues to do stuff, which is great. But also more decision making. I've been having this feeling of Think I'm gonna write up a newsletter about it just like the the myth of free will. I don't know if I'm going to call it that. But essentially, I keep thinking about the movie, Stranger Than Fiction, which was a great movie. But you had this character. And

he the whole magical realism thing is there's an actual man who lives the life this novelist is writing for him. But he does the same thing every day. Exactly the same thing every day. And while I don't want my life, to go on those rails, I realized with ADHD, that would be awesome. That would be fantastic to make sure I got everything done and did everything the same. It didn't have to think and didn't have to let myself wonder if I want to be distracted by the shiny thing over here. I think that sounds awesome. I would like to use my decision making capabilities for more important things. And this was relevant, somehow.

18:13

I guess it just connected to the fact that we have to make more decisions. I have a story I want to tell but I don't know if I want it to be a novella, a novel, an audio drama, or heck, maybe I want to write an interactive fiction. Jason Ramboz isn't in chat is he? Jason Ramboz laughs at me when I say I want to write an interactive fiction, he's right to laugh at me because I've been saying it for a very long time and still haven't done it. But sometimes I don't know what the story wants to be. But back in the day, you didn't have a lot of choices.

18:59

Kiki Says some people are good at world building and some people are good at narratives. There's a lot of famous writers who were only good at world building. Oh, yes, definitely. Premium Joyce having a day job because I never feel like I'm waiting for permission to write something. I'm often waiting for money but never permission. Yes. The only time it's acceptable to have characters with very similar names is when it's relevant to the plot ag Heather's Comedy of Errors The Importance of Being Earnest. Exactly. Christian Yes. It definitely works for Heather's or if you're Russian

Ceit says I'm pretty good at becoming a creature of habit, just too much change going on right now to start a habit. divorce by house and moving to set new house. Yeah. Oh yeah. major life events can Eclipse everything, especially your creative output. So don't beat yourself up. Do what you need to do to get through the major life event. The writing will be there when you're ready.

shiny things like listening to this podcast while I'm at work Yeah, sorry. I got nothing. Oh, doorbell delivery or serial killer back in a second premiere? How often is it a serial

killer? You have free will but then you have to make decisions. Yeah. And I think that the story about Barack Obama wearing the same suit every day, not probably not the same suit itself but you know, the same color suit. So he removes one choice from his mind. I've really been thinking about that. Because when you've got a whole lot of important things to think about. You don't want to think do I really want to wear that Garages Tee today? Or should I wear the Tee from Hades town? Hmm. And that's like mental energy that I could be putting into. Should I make this a novel or an audio drama or interactive fiction?

21:03

Yes, kristianwriting says premieres in Canada and we all know Canada's not have serial killers or anything that ever decision fatigue is a real thing. Yes. Under hope I don't think anybody thought that cat Rambo was at your house. Playing with dice. Cat Rambo is a real player. And I can see them being interested in dice, but

21:33

I still didn't make that jump it was a delivery Oh, is it your books Preme,

21:42

I'd say show us but I'm the only one with the camera here. So that won't work.

Um, I think I'm gonna go ahead and in the podcast proper right here and we'll hang out in the bar con and chat a little bit longer. If you want to see the entire episode, you can check us out live on Twitch Tuesday, Thursdays 3pm. Eastern time, or you can subscribe at the Patreon [patreon.com/mightymur](https://patreon.com/mightymur) or substack. I don't have any paid subscribers on substack but if I do I'll start pushing out content to them exclusively as well. But yeah, you can find my books at where books are sold. Or you can look [miverse.com](https://miverse.com) to find out what books I write. Station Eternity is my latest. Oh, I found out through someone else looking on there. The [amazon.co.uk](https://amazon.co.uk) that Chaos Terminal is up for pre order! It's going to be published November 7. I'd heard November I didn't have a date. So November 7, and it does not have a cover yet but you can buy Chaos Terminal right now and just forget about it and not have it weighing on your mind for the next six months.

22:58

Six? Yeah, about six months. So Chaos terminal is next book in the midsolar murders series.

23:11

Books are the best delivery or food or food and books Yes, we should have a delivery service called food and books and we'll never need money again. Yeah, but anyway, you can see me live where you can check out the podcast where podcasts are found. This is I should be writing and I think you should be writing too.



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