

DONALD LEVIN'S BLOG

Occasional posts, reviews, and guest bloggers

INDIE MONDAY

Today's Guest: Patrick W. Gibson



Beginning today, Indie Thursday becomes Indie Monday. Every other Monday, I'll be featuring other authors on my blog—authors who produce quality work outside the boundaries and strictures of the traditional mass-produced, mass-marketed commercial publishing world and traditional bookstore shelves. On alternate Mondays, I'll be making my own posts about the writing life.

Today's featured guest is **Patrick W. Gibson**. Recently I posed some questions to Patrick. Here's what he told me.

DL: *Welcome. Could you tell us a little about yourself?*

PWG: I'm a Michigan native and a Wayne State grad. In the past five years, I've also attended The Writers Studio and obtained a certificate in fiction writing from UCLA. My day job has taken me for extended living periods in Chicago, Toronto, and Japan. These experiences show up in my writing.

My short stories and flash fiction pieces favor a working class feel. I've been published by *The Flexible Persona*, *Medusa's Laugh Press*, *Wraparound South*, *Dark Ink Press*, *Fiction Attic Press*, *ARTIFEX*, *UofM Bear River Review*, and the Ripples in Space podcast.

My wife and I live in Northville and she's my biggest supporter in this writing adventure. We enjoy home and family, traveling, and have been avid SCUBA drivers. Three shark dives, without cages, and all limbs intact!

I'm also a hobbyist musician and my enthusiasm more than compensates for any shortages in singing and guitar playing ability.

I run the Northville District Library Writers Group. So, if you find yourself near the library on the fourth Wednesday of each month, around 7 pm, then join us for supportive discussion and feedback.

DL: *Tell us about your latest works in progress. Where did the ideas for those come from?*

PWG: I've completed one novel manuscript and I'm querying it right now with the goal of getting a traditional publishing contract. I'm also working on two more manuscripts. One is a sequel to the queried work, and the second is in a different genre, horror. All three are big city,

working class tales, grown from short stories, and born from my studies at UCLA and The Writers Studio.

Besides the big projects, *UofM Bear River Review* recently published my flash story about an elderly couple and their love for each other and an old Buick. It's a vision of love transitioning the physical challenges of age and dementia. I was drawn to the age and memory loss aspects from my own father's battle. The story's twist is fictional.

Artifex literary magazine published a creative non-fiction piece about my mother-in-law's journey from Nazi Germany to the United States via Canada. It's a little story set within a big story setting and deals with becoming a US citizen on the very day President Kennedy was assassinated.



And Ripples in Space produced my sci-fi story "Apprehension Soars" as a podcast complete with music and sound effects! I could describe the story, but it's more fun to listen to it [here](#).

The ideas for my work often come from family and family challenges. For example, *The Flexible Persona* literary magazine published my creative non-fiction piece, "Birthday with Dad." I spent one birthday with my father, and my recollection, told through a blend of baseball love and a musty estate auction, outlines a childhood. You can read it [here](#).

Other ideas for my work are all fiction. For example, the journal *Wraparound South* called for story submissions featuring contemporary Southern literature that "disrupts the expected." My piece featured reflection and upheaval in an urban Southern family. Read it [here](#).

And please check out my back-porch advice on writing [here](#), also in *Wraparound South*.

DL: *Why do you write? What do you hope to accomplish with your writing?*

PWG: I write because I enjoy creating characters, putting them into situations, and seeing how they react to the quandary at hand. I'm especially drawn to flash fiction, which challenges me to develop a character, tell a complete story including emotion and a twisted ending, all in the fewest words.



I hope to craft compelling stories that captivate readers and leave them thinking about their own situations. My work may be serious, comical, even educational, but at the core is characterization. I might apply themes others might choose not to write about and situations we may not want to deal with, think dementia, family alcoholism, absent parents, and divorce. But most of us have witnessed it, perhaps experienced it. I know my characters have.

DL: *Please talk a little about your writing process. What is your favorite part of the process? Least favorite?*

PWG: I love doing the research and reading everything I can, in whatever genre I'm working in. I don't think you can write well unless you read, reflect, and learn from others.

During the early stages of a big project, I like to write scenes from the beginning, middle, and end simultaneously. I do this because the plot is still malleable, the character development immature, and I'm really not sure where I'm going with things. But once I have a few dots, connection and refinement can occur.

I've grown to enjoy the editing process. Self-editing is one necessary discipline but working with a professional editor is very different. Your manuscript, the one you've worked so hard on and for so long, now becomes a team effort. It's no longer just about you! Trust and a solid

working relationship are crucial, for both parties. Similar comments apply to critique groups and beta readers.

I'm heavily involved in the query process, and it's new to me, so I can't say querying and publishing are my favorites, but I think any trepidation is due to their newness. Long term I expect I'll grow to enjoy them like the other aspects in this fascinating business.

DL: *Could you reflect a bit on what writing or being a writer has meant for you and your life?*

PWG: Writing and success with my published short stories has enabled me to step back from the day job that used to be all-consuming from a professional standpoint.

Being a writer has also allowed artistic growth beyond words on paper. One of my characters strives to be an actor, and I took a few acting classes so I could write about the fear of going on stage. I did that, but I also learned how difficult it was to give a ten-minute monologue, memorized, and delivered with honesty and realism.

I've worked with local musicians, notably Bill Boley and Jill Jack, to learn vocal, instrument, and songwriting skills. Bill runs a weekly rock/folk class in Plymouth that has built my confidence in front of groups. Nothing says performance like being called on to sing "Don't Stop Believing" in your best falsetto, while strumming a guitar. And Jill's Big Dream studio in Ferndale is a multi-disciplined inspirational space. It's amazing to see your poem transformed via chords, melody and voice into a three-dimensional entity.

All these actions have expanded my writing abilities and enriched my life.

DL: *What are links to your books, website, and blog so readers can learn more about you and your work?*

PWG: My website is the place to find links to my published work, follow my blog entries, and

join me on my writing and creative journey: <https://patrickwgibson.com>.

Follow me on Twitter at: <https://twitter.com/pwgibsonauthor>.

My Facebook page is: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100009860826706>.

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BRUTAL REVIEWS OF CLASSIC BOOKS

As part of my efforts at getting my name out in the world, I've often asked (begged? cajoled? pleaded with?) my readers to write reviews of my books after they've read them. Most of us have done that at one time or another, right?

While generally things work out for the best, occasionally we do get a review that shows a reader was, shall we say, singularly unimpressed with our creative initiatives. The blogs are filled with advice on how to deal with bad reviews . . . some say don't read them, some say read but disregard them, some say imagine the reviewers in their underwear, and so. My own way of dealing with the problem is to remind myself that even the best got lousy reviews, and it didn't stop them.

Here's a selective listing (culled from the Internet) of twenty scathing reviews of books that are now considered classics of literature. Most reviews were published contemporaneously with the books they review. They range from the snarky to the morally outraged, and they're a good reminder that not every book is to every reader's taste . . . and reviewers, like everybody else, are sometimes not very good at what they do.