

News Reporting Encroaching on Fiction Writing

Writers write in assigned lanes that are properly labeled. Most of my writing is fiction and is in the action / adventure lane. The readers know what they are getting when they read my books. Call it truth in advertising. But my first short story was published in a literary journal that included essays and poems. The first question that I was asked was, "Is this a true story or is it fiction?" I like to write fiction that is believable, so I felt my fiction story was a success.

Today, the line between fiction and non-fiction has become as faint as faded paint markings on an old city street. It is not that fiction has become more believable. It is that non-fiction has become less believable. So much of what we read in the news and on-line is simply not true. I have witnessed events that the news reported as factual, but their reporting was misleading at best and outright lies at worst. There are those who claim to fact-check what we are being told, but can we trust those who are doing the fact-checking to provide us with the truth? The measure of truth often is based on what some government expert or official tells us is the truth.

And there are stories that are intended to mislead us and cause confusion. They are called "parody" or "spin", but are fiction in the purest form. Mass dissemination of known false information for a specific malicious intent is called "propaganda" and is usually attributed to a government source. A lie will be accepted as truth if it is repeated often enough. And you can fool all the people all the time if you just confuse the issue enough.

When writing fiction, I add a measure of truth to my stories to make them believable to the reader. But even the pieces of the story that are true are labeled as fiction so as not to deceive anyone. Reports by the news media, on the other hand, are a varying blend of truth and lies that they label as fact. I am convinced this is done with a specific malicious intent to deceive and manipulate everyone. It is a sad commentary that what we read as news today has become indistinguishable from fiction novels. It is time to repaint the lines and force the news to get out of the fiction writing lane and back to reporting verifiable facts. Leave fiction writers space in our lane to tell tall tales and create adventures.

Marshall Ginevan