Quotations about the “Business” of Writing

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"Writing a book makes you an expert in the field. At the very least, when you hand someone a book you wrote, it's more impressive than handing a business card." James Altucher

“Therefore my default response to all “great” ideas in the writing business is to do with the ending. A good ending can redeem a mediocre idea. A bad ending can sink a really good idea. As soon as you know how your narrative ends – in whatever medium – then a huge percentage of the problematic issues that arise in the writing will be solved.” William Boyd

“Our main business is not to see what lies dimly in the distance, but to do what lies clearly at hand.” Thomas Carlyle

"I think that you've got to be prepared to write a load of nonsense to start with and then you can tart it up. The business of getting going, getting started, is enormously important, and this can be physical. Solvitur Ambulando as the Romans used to say, which means the solution comes through walking." Colin Dexter

“It’s important to think of the audience first. This is more of an entertainer’s perspective than an artist’s, but I think it’s equally valid (if not more so…). That’s why the hook is so critical. It’s universal, too, not just in writing or movies, but in business. It just has different nomenclature. Sometimes it’s called a logline, sometimes an elevator pitch. You’ve got to engage attention–to captivate. It’s not easy. I’ve written thousands of loglines on projects over the last two decades, and in almost every case, the harder something is for me to boil down into a single sentence or two, the worse it is as a story.” Jason Hallock, the top story analyst at Paramount Pictures

“Write as it comes, at length, and then revise it, and above all shorten it. In the business of writing, gold is only obtained, in my experience, by sifting.” Leo Tolstoy

“Cut like crazy. Less is more. I've often read manuscripts–including my own–where I've got to the beginning of, say, chapter two and have thought: "This is where the novel should actually start." A huge amount of information about character and backstory can be conveyed through small detail. The emotional attachment you feel to a scene or a chapter will fade as you move on to other stories. Be business-like about it.” Sarah Waters

"I write abundantly. And then my next step is to struggle to reduce the ornament, to reduce the abundance-to prune the book, in other words, the way one prunes a tree-so it can grow. This is my idea of a book." James Wright