

## words, words, words....

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I have been spending the past two days at work on book revisions, making my way page by page through, so far, two-thirds of a lengthy manuscript, guided by insightful comments from a fine editor, and also by having been away from it for a bit, so that I see (and hear it) with fresh eyes and ears. The repetitive phrase...SLASH. The cliché description...DELETE. The murky paragraph...CLARIFY.

I love this process. It is not exhilarating the way the first blast of creativity can be. But it has its own satisfaction to it.

I am not...my guess is that few writers are...aware of the eventual reader of a book when I am at this stage of working on it. That is another, remarkable kind of satisfaction that comes much later. And keeps coming, again and again. Today, for example, I got a very moving letter from a 12-year-old girl who has been diagnosed with clinical depression. She said that in my book "Gathering Blue" she was struck by the phrase "Pain makes you strong" and she was going to try to start thinking that way instead of feeling sorry for her own incapacity.

Another letter, in the same batch of mail, was from a man. He didn't say where he was, but he said this:

*Thank you for your wonderful characters and stories. They remind me that even though the world at times can be a scary place, and people don't always treat each other as well as they should, there is always beauty and love to be found. I have found a piece of that love and beauty in your wonderful books.*

I don't repeat these things here as testimony to myself! But as a reminder to myself as a writer, and to other writers if any are out there listening, that these words that we arrange and rearrange and rearrange again, on a page, make a difference to individuals. The phrases and paragraphs that we labor over and grow to love...they affect people, sometimes in profound

ways.

It's important work, I think. We should take pride in doing it as well as we can.

Tags: Untagged