



# Dream of Travel Writing

## Article Nuts and Bolts – Putting Together a Profile Piece

So this week we're gonna be talking about how to put together articles. We're getting back into a whole month of breaking down exactly how to put together different types of articles. And in the past, we looked at how to prepare a profile of a business. Now, one of the things that's really different between putting either a profile of a business and a profile of a person is that a profile of a business tends to be a profile of success if you wanna think about it that way. It tends to be a profile of overcoming adversity, of creating. There are certain themes that almost always resonate with the profile of a business. And something that happens in profiles of businesses is that even though this business might be something super specific... I read a profile with a group the other day where we were looking at a profile of somebody in the Nordic countries who makes skis from a particular type of tree that has fallen, and they're custom skis that are designed exclusively for each individual.

Now, it's a European business, an American business person might be like, "Well, my business wouldn't be like that in America." Or they might be like, "Well, my business isn't seasonal in that way," or, "Well, I don't have a custom business." And so when you do a business profile it's really important to pull out a lesson that is universal, not just for someone else who owns the business but for other people who are reading it who might not own a business. And that concept of taking something universal from one person or, in that case, one business' story and making it something that really applies to any old reader no matter what their life is like, we're gonna see even more as we talk about how to do a profile of a person.

Now, in the next couple of weeks, we're gonna talk about some other things that you might think of as a variance on this. We're gonna talk about how to do an interview which as you'll see when we look at it next week tends to be a lot more related not necessarily to how to write a good story, so to say, which we're gonna talk a lot about this week, but it tends to be related more to some rubric requirements on behalf of the magazine. So that's why I'm separating in the recent profiles because in the writing side they end up being quite different. And then we're gonna look at two other things that you might think of a kind of spin-off of a profile.

We're gonna look at how to write and as a told to story right, which is where you're writing the story of a person or something that they experienced and you're writing it in first person even though you are not the one that experienced it. And so that can kind of be a variant on a profile because you can think of it like a biography or like an autobiography that's ghost-written or something like that. Because you're covering a lot of the same themes that might be covered in a profile but the style is very, very different in terms of its narrative rather than what you'll see in the typical profile piece is that it jumps around quite a lot in time in a way that it doesn't have a lot of chronology involved.



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And then the last thing that we're gonna look at is the I call it kinda like a celebrity recommendations or celebrity picks. So this is a type of article which is increasingly common in front of book sections these days where an individual is interviewed, like you would do for a profile or for an interview piece, about things that they recommend in a certain destination. And then you do a roundup of those things so the for what you'll include in the roundup comes from the celebrity but then you're doing separate research and you might be including quotes from the celebrity on what they think about those different places.

So you could think of that as a more focused profile in a certain way. But specifically what I wanna look at today is why we should focus our time and attention on writing profiles. This is really a skill that I recommend all of you develop if you haven't done this in the past. And I think it's a skill that even if you have written profiles in the past, it really is developed over time. It's a type of writing that is very craft oriented, that you can always improve, that will be a different challenge with every person that you're interviewing so it's an exciting type of writing but there's some other really neat, tangible benefits that we can get from this.

And then I wanna talk about who we can profile. And in this pilot discussion, I'm gonna pull us over to the Travel Magazine Database and look through some things in there. Because every other magazine, I swear, that we've put in the database I'm always shocked about the things that are in there in terms of articles that people would never have thought about pitching, that are just such easy wins and more often than not, those ones that are really no brainer, easy wins, oh, my God, I could pitch 20 of these to this magazine, tend to be the profiles because so often when I'm talking to writers about what stories they've come home from a trip with, they're most excited about various people that they met and, of course, what those people are doing whether it's an initiative or a business that person runs or something like that. But they don't think or maybe they think but they don't know where to put a profile just directly on that person. And so what happens is that part of knowing where to place these profiles is having access to different magazines and so that's why I'm gonna pull us over when we talk about who we can profile, I'm gonna pull us over to the magazine database to look at some different samples there.

So after we talk about who we can profile and why we should profile, I've got queued up for you a really cool piece that came out recently which is a profile. And it's a profile... it happens to be a profile of a celebrity and it's... but that's not why we're looking at it. I know a lot of profiles tend to be of celebrities but I chose a specific one because it doesn't feel like your typical celebrity profile. It seems like a profile of a person who's doing something cool, so... who has had an interesting life and why he got that way. And one of the other reasons I chose this particular profile, especially, is that the profile doesn't make a point exactly. The profile isn't talking about how he did something exactly, it doesn't map out, like I said, a very strict chronology. So it's a really nice example of kind of the art of profile, what you can



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really do with these kinds of pieces and how you can use it to show whether it's a lifestyle or a question of what is possible with life, something like that.

So that's why I've chosen to show you this particular profile. Because it is a bit long and profiles do tend to be on the longer side, we're gonna just look at one article today because I wanna really walk us through, and we don't usually have time when we do longer pieces, to walk through the different beats and why they're changing from this to this. And because profiles aren't as formulaic as some other types of articles, I wanna make sure that we really have time to do that today so that you have an understanding of the kind of how they're put together and the structure. So we're just going look at the one article and then I'm gonna look at FAQ, some questions, both that I pulled together and also from you guys about how to pursue pitching profiles because there are some things about pitching profiles or any pieces that are specifically about a person that are specific that I wanna make sure that we discuss.

So let's get into talking about profiles. So this is kind of a provocative question which implies the answer here but I wanted to put on this slide because it really lays things out. Would you possibly think that profiles, this one particular article type, are the secret to developing the skills that you need as a travel writer?

Like I said, it's kind of a provocative question which assumes the answer. And I wanna explain why over the course of reading profile article over the years I've really come to feel this way. So profiles of individuals, like I said, how this need for universality, they need to take one individual person and show how anything that this person has done not only is interesting to some other person, to some editor or to you, but could be interesting to thousands if not millions of readers.

Now, that act of finding what's interesting to thousands or millions of people about something is fundamental to having pitches that get accepted. I see a lot of pitches in general but I see a lot of pitches and especially at conferences when they do pitch kind of critiques where they either read people's pitches out loud or people pitch live, there's a lot of pitches where the pitch is front-loaded with a lot of things that are interesting to the person proposing the pitch, before you get to the part that's interesting to everybody.

Now, there's a really easy real world situation where I'm sure you've seen a lot of this come up, which is that, for instance, say you're at a party or it happens to me just sitting in coffee shops listening to people talk to their friends, so anywhere where you might be hearing a person talk to their friends, for instance, people tell stories, sometimes it's about a thing that happened to them, sometimes it's about a thing that happened to other people. I think



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predominantly they end up being stories about things that happened to the person telling the story, but people tell stories.

And you can see, or if you're present you can feel the other side and all the other people who are on the receiving side of that story perhaps their attention kinda starts to wane or you can see that they start checking their phones or maybe they're like playing with the ice in their drink with their straw. They're doing various non-verbal cues that show that they are not tied into the story. And so what's typically happening there is that the person who's telling the story is not making sure at every juncture, at every sentence, at every pause, at every fact, that the people following that story are not just engaged but getting something out of the experience of hearing the story.

Now, this is something that's so easy to practice. Like you talk to your friends, you talk to your spouse, you talk to your mom on the phone, it's so easy to practice making sure that the other person receiving information from you is consistently engaged. But what I find that when people write pitches and particularly when they write articles, there's so many other things that you're thinking about that you can lose sight of that.

In copywriting, if any of you guys have studied copywriting or followed the website Copyblogger, I'll write it down because people always ask me, Copyblogger is a website that has been around since I started even considering freelancing I think, that it really breaks out a lot of copywriting mentalities and things that have been around for hundreds of years that are just known in copywriting, but they say 80% of the battle is getting people to read the title, and then once they read that first sentence, the job of every sentence is to get them to read the next sentence. But I think when people write pitches and especially when they write articles this gets forgotten because you're worried about so many other things. You're worried about are you telling them enough, are you remembering to mention this cool, important thing that you saw, that you forget that the only point of your pitch is to get the editor to say, "I wanna hear more," or, "I wanna assign this," but for them to indicate interest in that idea.

Now, with an article, obviously you have to flesh out the idea, so the only point of an article isn't to get them to say that I wanna read more or to indicate interest, but a good chunk of it is. So when you are working on a profile of a person, you are naturally confronted with thousands if not millions of things about that person that you could touch on. So what if this person, I'll take an example of somebody that I know that I was chatting with this week, what if this person is the writer, but they also have a two-page piece, they used to run a company doing websites and resumes and business coaching for people because they actually bought a recruiting franchise off of somebody else and found that they hated recruiting and it felt very sketchy, but that people really needed help with polishing themselves so that they



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could even be viable for different jobs. but now after doing that for years, they've decided that they wanna...

And you know, you could just go down the rabbit hole of all of the details about this person. How do you turn this person...and that's just their professional life, that's not even talking about this person's teenage daughter who she loves but feels like doesn't need her, all this stuff, or where this person lives or this person's background or where they grew up, how do you take all of those facts, or opinions as the case may be, all of these things that exist about a person and package it, not only into something concrete and not only into something that's cohesive and hopefully has some sort of chronology or at least thread that moves along through it, but where every single sentence of that is interesting to somebody else.

Now, a lot of people think about this as finding the story or finding the angle. There's a lot of journalism type buzzwords around the answer to this problem. But what I wanna posit today and why I'm really excited to look in-depth at one article with you guys is that cracking this on a profile, cracking this about one person makes cracking it about a destination or a business or a trip or any of those other things makes it suddenly snap into place. That figuring out how to do this about one individual, and particularly I feel like making someone else interested in another person, is hard for psychological reasons, which are that we have mechanisms that give us dopamine when we talk about ourselves, so naturally talking about other people that are not ourselves is less interesting and that's why copywriting tends to be in that you, you, you, you, you and how you can benefit from this thing because you physically, chemically feel more excited reading that.

So having that hurdle of having somebody read about another person, which we can objectively understand just from this anecdote that I used of, you know, sitting in a party or sitting in a cafe and hearing somebody else tell a story to somebody or, God forbid, listening to somebody on a first date, we can objectively understand really easily how hard it is to make somebody else interested in hearing about you or hearing about a person who's not themselves.

So cracking that formula on our profile will make it come together for all of your other writing. But it's much harder to train yourself and to really think about that and narrow it down when you're talking about a whole destination, or when you're talking about a group of indigenous people, or when you're talking about a whole experience that you had at a cooking school, or a whole trip that was 10 days on this island that takes 35 hours to reach from Japan. So it's a lot harder in those settings because there's not just one person and all of their facets to cover, but there's all of these different inputs and all of these different histories that you have to consider whether or not to include.



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So that's why I feel like profiles are something not only that we should consider because there are opportunities to write them all the time in front of us, but also because cracking this, understanding this, not just doing it well, but feeling confident that we can take an assignment to do this and actually execute it, will have waves across the rest of your writing.

So that being said, let's take a moment and move over and look at who you can profile. So I'm gonna switch what we're looking at from the slides to some websites that we're gonna look at right now are some entries in the "Travel Magazine Database." But as I'm doing that I'd love to hear from you guys in the chat box about different profile opportunities, perhaps, that you've seen in magazines that you read or magazines that you looked at pitching, or other types of people or other reasons that you could profile somebody. So, for instance, some of the things that we're gonna look at might be profiling somebody just because they've immigrated from a certain country, or profiling somebody who has a business that's doing something unusual. So if you have some cool types of profiles that you've seen in magazine publishing, drop that in the chat box while I switch over to the other window.

So Annalisa has jumped up to the plate and she's offered an example of a chef profile to focus, a visit to a restaurant or a food festival. That's a really cool idea. Yeah, I really like that. If some other folks have ideas of different profile sections, let us know in the chat box. So you should be seeing my screen now, I've got "Australian Gourmet Traveller" pulled up in the background. So what I have done is I'm gone ahead and opened some different magazines that have profile sections here to show you kind of a wide breadth of super different opportunities for profiles that are out there.

Now, some of the ones that I have pulled up, and I'm actually gonna go over these to start, are airline magazines. If you haven't heard me say it before, and even if you have, I wanna say it again, airline magazines are such a cool opportunity to get in with because airline magazines tend to be sharing editors between different magazines. You can get in with one editor and have a lot of different opportunities for very different places. But airline magazines are a great place to have one relationship where you can publish things on a lot of different places that you travel.

I've pulled up Qantas here. Qantas works with about 15 different freelancers every month so they really have a lot of need for articles. But then as you'll see here, this is all the sections that are written by editorial staff, they also have a lot of things that are written in-house. And so what that means is, is that articles that Qantas is looking for in its magazine from freelancers tend to be ones that they can't get anywhere else. So I wanted to bring your attention to this. And in case you are having trouble reading it, I'm just going to read it. This is a profile, kind of interview-based, but around a concierge of a hotel. Now, how easy is this



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to come up with? No matter where you are, no matter where you live, no matter where you travel, there are hotels where you could ask the concierge.

This is like such a thing that could go on your pocket magazine cheat sheet, which if you haven't heard me say, it's something where you just keep a list of magazine sections that are really easy to come up with no matter where you travel. So this "Ask the Concierge," this is actually a Q&A, so it's more of an interview style. But I really wanted to show this to you guys because it's an example of the type of story that is related to an individual that you wouldn't necessarily think about, but that it's so easy to pick up different places. Now, you'll notice that this magazine Qantas has a lot of different Q&As; that it does, it's also got a Q&A with a celebrity and a celebrity around travel topics. They really like Q&As; for this magazine. So this is something that I want you guys to consider, not just that airline magazines are cool because, as it says here, they pay a lot, but also that they offer you opportunities that no matter where you're traveling, you can pick up a cool profile or an interview. Now, I hope I have the right one. No, I don't have the right one.

So there's an airline magazine in Southeast Asia, and it's not this one so I'm sorry I opened the wrong one, where they are just looking for profiles like this one that I wanna show you from Mercedes-Benz, they're just looking for profiles of somebody who has moved from the destination that the magazine is about, anywhere else. And here in this one in Mercedes-Benz that I wanna draw your attention to, so this is a 1,000-word profile, so that's a good chunk of words, of an interesting Canadian or Canada-based person. That's a huge playing field, right? And what could be interesting? In this case, a renowned museologist, a comedian, a video game designer. So a profile of an interesting person, in this case, has a really wide bandwidth.

And I think a lot of people think that profiles can only be of celebrities or maybe of CEOs, and those do exist, profiles of people who you might think of as validated by the world as being successful, but you can also have things like this, like George Jacob, a renowned museologist, okay? So there's a lot of different profile opportunities out there where the consideration, the important thing is that they're interesting okay? So this is actually a combo one, this is an "enRoute," which is Air Canada's magazine. So this is a combo of a profile plus a Q&A at the end. And this is a profile of a frequent flyer. So this could apply, for instance, to...the examples that they've got here are an entrepreneur, a TV host, a Montreal-based illustrator. You can just be sitting on your plane to somewhere and chat with the person next to you and see what they do, or perhaps you see a guy, this often happens to me, I see a guy who is kinda chatty with the flight attendants, he's clearly kind of got like a business look. You can tell that he's probably on a plane two or three times a week for work.

So there are so many people that you can pick up that are frequent flyers. You might pick up people at travel conferences who maybe aren't in travel right now, but they have another job



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that's travel-adjacent and that's why they're looking at getting into travel blogging. Let's look at a couple of other examples here. Now some magazines, especially "Cherry Bombe" is an independent magazine, some magazines have profiles as the majority of what they do. They tend to have a lot of articles that are kind of freeform, longer feature type articles and a number of those are profiles. And this magazine "Cherry Bombe" which focuses on women and food is a big one in that category. So they've got this section called "She's the Boss" which is made up of 15 different articles that are around female chefs, business owners, CEOs, and entrepreneurs. Again a huge, broad category there, right? So there's a lot of different people that could fit into this, okay?

So, this case, these profiles take a very strong service angle, how to remake a retail icon, how to get a cookbook deal, how to take care of business by taking care of yourself. And this is a chef talking about her calmer, stress-free restaurant experience. So here's another independent magazine that I wanted to pull up which has a very cool an even broader type of profile. So five articles take the form of profiles can appear as Q&A but they focus on one person or multiple people around a theme and they cover the person's career and personal life with entertaining and thoughtful anecdotes. So what kind of people do they cover? They've got three people who have started movements involving victory gardens. They've got a graphic designer talking about her home and career in Cornwall. They've got a hairdresser who gives free haircuts to the homeless in the UK. There are so many different people all over the place doing different things that you might already be meeting. But another cool way to pull the people to profile for some things like, for instance, that human section or I'm gonna pull another one in here...

Oh, I think it's this one, yep. For that human section that we saw...or actually here's a great example so "Jerry" is a magazine that focuses similarly to "Cherry Bombe" on food plus something. So this is food and the LGBTQ community and this is another one of those independent magazines where they're purely feature-oriented and those features often end up being profiles. And this is a case where as long as the person fits into the narrative or the focus area of what the magazine is about, then you can pull an interesting story from them, if they seem to have done some interesting things in their life, then you can turn it into a profile, okay? Now, how that gets turned into a profile or how you pull interesting things from this person? That's what we're gonna get into and that's what we're going to talk more about. But I wanted draw your attention to the really different things available here.

And again, they don't have to be some profiles of celebrities, they... It's great if they own a business, that's often something that can be useful, but they could also be working within, whether it's the nonprofit world or the corporate world and doing something cool, or it could not really matter what they're doing, for something like that "Leaders of the Pack" one that we looked at before in "enRoute" which was the Air Canada magazine okay? So I hope that





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sort of small tour that we did has helped you guys think a little bit differently about who you can profile.

But the idea really is that any time you're traveling, whether these are people who you're talking to who run places that you have stopped on your trip, whether you're on an individual trip of your own design or whether you're on a fan or there are other travelers that you're chatting up, or they might just be people that you overhear in the hotel lobby or that you overhear in the coffee shop. As you are out there traveling, even if it is in where you live rather than traveling out there in the world, there are people who do something that matches a profile section that a magazine already has that is already open to freelance writers.

So when we talked about business profiles a couple of weeks back, I talked about how I'm really seeing a huge shift in magazines, that a lot of coverage is going toward profiles. So some of that is particularly business profile-focused, but a lot of it is these straight person profiles, like we're gonna talk about today, or those other things that I am gonna talk about later on, like these celebrity recommendation pieces or the more Q&A interview style pieces.

Now, it seems a little odd, right, because a profile of somebody or an interview seems like it's not universal, it seems like it's not gonna be such an easy read to get readers into, but for the reason that we talked about before about universality, as long as they're written well, the opposite of that is actually the case. So like I said, I've pulled up a really cool profile for you guys for us to look at today together.

So let's go over now and look at what the profile looks like on the page. So like I said, this is a long profile and I want us, and I've made sure to save time to do this, I want us to have time to go through it and see how the beats move from paragraph to paragraph.

So beats is a concept that actually comes from theater rather than writing specifically. So you could say that beats comes from writing because it comes from screenwriting or writing plays and dramaturgy and things like that. So, Sharon made a good point here, that there's also beats which are beats for news. So let me explain what that is first because it might also be something that some of you are familiar with. So news beats are areas of coverage that somebody who might be called a stringer, which is a whole different term that we can get into, but news beats are a category of potential topic ideas which naturally fall upon a particular writer. So sometimes these are large things like sports or something that often gets covered in local news as things like committee meetings or city council meetings and things like that.



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So that's the word "beat" in a strictly journalism sense. So beat in a more craft writing sense means a change in drive which often displays itself as a change in tone. So I'll tell it to you in the dramatic as in the play sense for a minute because I think that's a little easier to understand. So in theater, when a person who's acting in a play gets a script, an exercise that they sometimes do is that they read through the scenes that they're in. And just from the words on the page, they think about where the tone or the pace or the focus of the scene seems to shift and they make a little line and they call it a beat. And then for that particular actor in every beat, they have a certain motivation. So in one beat, their motivation might be that they're impatient because they need to go to a meeting.

And then maybe somebody says something and then there can... their primary drive changes to be concern for the well-being of the person they're talking to because perhaps what changed the beat was that the other character said something emotional. They said that their mother had died or something like that.

And then as the person is talking about their mother being died... perhaps their mother having died, perhaps they start blaming the actor that we're pretending to be. They start blaming that actor for how they feel or for something else that has happened. So then there's another beat, and now our actor's motivation has shifted, that they're angry or they wanna defend themselves and their justifications. So the idea is that a beat in writing is every time there is this emotional shift in what's happening. Now why does that matter in profiles?

It matters in profiles because they're inherently about one person. But it also matters because a profile in many, many ways is this dialogue between three people. It's the dialogue between the person who's being profiled, the author who's writing the profile and the reader. And that's because of what I was talking about earlier about this constant check-in that should be happening, and I'm making hand gestures that, of course, you can't see, but this constant check-in that the reader is still with it, not just still with it, but still with their involvement, still with their investment, still with their interest in the piece.

So part of how we do that in a profile with beats is that as we change not just the words on the page, the content and what we're writing about, but as we change the pace and the tone and the emotion, we pull that reader through the journey. So I know this is a lot more crafty than we usually get in terms of what we talk about with these type of stories. But in profiles we just can't avoid talking about these things of pace, tone, emotional drives, okay? So that's why I wanted to take the time to go through one piece in a lot of depth because when you look at profiles they tend to be longer pieces. And unless you really go through and almost diagram it, which is what we're gonna do together. it can be really hard to see where those beats happen.



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So what I wanna do on the side is that as we are talking together... And I want you guys to interact and tell me what you're seeing as well. So again, if you didn't see it before, this is the link again to open up the piece, so make sure you have that open if you can. So what I really want us to do together is to talk about what beats we're seeing and how they're moving along. So I'm gonna type these along in the background just so that...some of you are in a good place where you can take notes, I know there are some people who listen to these while they're at work kinda along in the background. I'm gonna have those so that we can visually look at them later. So let's go ahead and get started. So like I said, the piece is about a celebrity, obviously, and it's tied to his movie release. And I'm gonna switch the screen now, so rather than see my notes, you're going to be seeing...there we go, rather than seeing my notes, you are gonna be seeing the screen that has the profile.

So this profile is about Woody Harrelson, it's tied to the fact that his movie has just come out, but in a lot of ways, most ways, it has absolutely nothing to do with that. So, the title is "Woody Harrelson, Rogue Number One." The tagline is "Hollywood's cosmic cowboy is working furiously – all while performing science experiments on his reality." So it's weird and I've read the piece and I'm not even really sure that I would say that's what it's about but it's definitely intriguing, isn't it? So we know first and foremost that the concept that the writer is trying to get across here is Woody Harrelson's experimentalism okay? So he dives right into that. So he says, "Woody Harrelson is 56 now, turning in mature, nuanced performances in lauded films including 'Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri' and 'LBJ,' the kinds of roles one might associate with Tommy Lee Jones or the late Sam Shepard. And, of course, he stopped smoking pot."

So they start with this really dry kind of lead, kind of giving you a background on a person. Now the thing is do you need background on Woody Harrelson? Maybe not but he takes the background that he's giving you and he focuses it. He focuses that background on what he wants you to be thinking about Woody Harrelson, as a person as being like right now. And then he kind of throws it, he says, "And, of course, he stops smoking pot. That was the news last year, anyway, when Mr. Harrelson, a cannabis evangelist on the level of Snoop Dogg, told reporters that he had broken off a long-term marriage with his intoxicant of choice. 'It was keeping me from being emotionally available,' he told New York magazine. So it was a somber new Woody I expected when I dropped in on his Maui home last month to discuss his role in 'Solo: A Star Wars Story,' Ron Howard's splashy new film, which opened on Friday."

This was not the Woody I got.

Now, this whole bit there, until where I stopped, is pretty much the lead but what is this lead doing? This lead is background, this lead is straight background. We don't have a scene, we've got some sourcing, and we've got some details, but we don't yet have the scene. Now,



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I wanna say that this is an unusual lead for a profile piece. Profile pieces tend to start a lot more in medias res which is right in the moment, and sometimes it's a little bit tried and true to the point of being trite so do be careful of this, the lead will be the arrival of the individual to the interview, or I've seen one, there's a really interesting one on Christian Bale before he became like a polished leading man, when he was still kind of a bit psychotic and screaming at reporters, where it was basically talking about him sitting in his chair like twitching and kind of hiding in his hoodie and things like that.

The lead that we've just seen is a bit unusual and it almost strikes me like the part that we're getting to now is actually what the writer wrote as a lead and then their editor told them that they needed to give some more background on it, so I just wanted to say that about what we just read, but it certainly sets you up to be intrigued, so. And then it continues, "It was an overcast Thursday morning, and I was seated at the kitchen table of one of Mr. Harrelson's two houses on Maui. The glassy dwelling is perched several thousand feet up the slopes of the Haleakala volcano, with sweeping views of Maui's northeast coastline in the distance. The plan was to hike the densely wooded property. As I waited for Mr. Harrelson to descend from upstairs, his wife, Laura Louie, wearing a blue fleece vest, was in the kitchen preparing a late-morning snack of fresh fruit smeared with spirulina and almond butter. Ten minutes later, the sound of footsteps."

So what's happened here? It's not yet a scene. Right now we're setting the scene. So we've got tons and tons and tons of description going on, right? We're even told the color of the fleece vest that Woody Harrelson's wife is wearing. So we've got tons of description setting the scene, and then we get into the first scene where we meet the protagonist, okay, who in this case is, the protagonist, of course, is the focus, and in this case, it's the focus of the profile. So he arrives, "'Dude!' Mr. Harrelson said, in that familiar bad-boy drawl. He was wearing white beach pants, his yoga-toned torso draped in a well-worn 'Free Willie' T-shirt with an old mug shot of Willie Nelson." Who will play later in the piece, by the way, so that is a detail that they've planted there quite purposefully. "It was not just his attire that made him look like a 1990s slacker. He moves with the lackadaisical ease of a man half his age. He ambles more than he strides, loose limbed and carefree, like a restless teenager looking for mischief."

"As he slumped into a wooden chair and planted his elbows on the table, we traded war stories from the afternoon before." So this tells you that even though this is the first scene when we, the reader, are meeting Mr. Harrelson, this is not when the writer met him, okay? Sorry, I am saying "Mr. Harrelson" because that's what they're saying in the article. So "...traded war stories from the afternoon before, when Mr. Harrelson lured me into a pickup soccer game. It was a serious game. I lasted 20 minutes and mangled my knee in the process. He went the distance."



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“‘You almost got a goal, though,’ he said in the paternal tones of a Little League coach consoling a strikeout victim. Yeah, I said with a shrug. I hit the crossbar and missed by an inch, ‘A millimeter!’ he said.”

“After a brief exchange of pleasantries, he reached into his pocket, pulled out two cannabis cartridge pens and slapped them onto the kitchen table.”

“‘I was 20 months off of this, 20 months!’ he said, glancing down at the pens as if they were long-lost friends. ‘And then, Willie happened.’”

So what’s happened in this little bit that I’ve pulled us down to here?

So we met him, right? He said, “Hi.” I would keep this in the frame but there’s this photo in the middle. But then we have a scene where you’ll see that the writer is mixing in dialogue. “Yeah, I said with a shrug. I hit it...” but he doesn’t have this in quotes. So this scene itself, the way that the scene is presented, the way he describes being with Woody Harrelson itself is casual, itself is this lackadaisical back and forth. So this is something that you see in profiles, that the tone, the pace, the way that you outline the scenes should also come across with the emotion that you want the writer to experience as if they were with that person. So this is one of the reasons why profiles have more craft and less news, so to say, is that you need to use all of your faculties, which is word choice as well as tone, pacing, sentence length and things like that, yo convey an experience, and this goes back to what I was saying about how nailing this will make the rest of your travel writing, I really feel, fall into place.

And I just wanna say also I read a lot of profile pieces, in fact, I read another one that I thought I really loved that I was gonna share with you this week and then I read this one instead and I decided this was the one. So there’s a lot of good examples of these out here. And in addition to “The New York Times” where this piece is, some other good places to look are...”GQ” has some nice ones, a lot of the women’s magazines have nice ones, also “The Atlantic” sometimes has really nice ones. So there’s kind of pillars of journalism where you can read some really great exemplars of profiles on a pretty much weekly basis, okay.

So now we’ve got a beat, right, we’ve got that change, like when I was talking to you about the scene that we made up where the character, a character, has transmitted a piece of information that has caused everything to change. So earlier, that change was this was not the Willie I got. This time the beat is, “And then, Willie happened.” So the beats you’ll see here are incredibly, clearly defined in these profiles and that’s because... Well, profiles are made



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up of scenes in the same way that a lot of narrative pieces are. As I mentioned, the chronology is often way less clear than your average feature.

When you're profiling a person, you might be talking about their childhood while going back and forth between the interview that you're having and then talking about other things that lead up to stories that they told you in the... There's all sorts of jumping around that happens. So when we switch, we need to signal that to the readers very clearly, okay. So now he's got a subhead as well, which helps know that we've changed, so he says, "Willie Nelson, Ultimate Enabler."

But we've stayed in the same scene but now Mr. Harrelson is telling a story. So you'll see here how there's also this extra transition to let us know we've changed in time.

"Taking a deep draw on a vape pen, Mr. Harrelson launched into the story about his breakup and reunion with marijuana."

It started in 19...not 19, sorry, "It started in 2016, a few weeks before he was to shoot 'Billboards' near Asheville, NC. Wanting to get the partying out of his system, he embarked on a 'friendship tour' in Los Angeles, Houston, and New York. 'That's the nice way of putting it,' he said. 'It's better than calling it a 'you're-going-to-host-me-at-your-house-while-I-have-a-bender tour.'"

Now, again notice how he alternates between actually having quotes and glossing over the quotes. And here he's put a quote in because it's fantastic, right? "It's better than calling it a you're-going-to-host-me-at-your-house-while-I-have-a-bender tour." Now, this is really important when you do profiles, you are gonna have tons of quotes. I'm really big on getting quotes down exactly verbatim when they happen because they can be a big driving force in your piece. So having this whole piece...section right here rather than summarizing it. I'm not sure if you would go into such huge detail about it if you didn't have these great quotes. So that's something to also consider is that sometimes you have quotes where the quotes are so demonstrative of the person that it's better to make a scene out of the telling rather than to summarize it. And this can be one of the ways that you pick what scenes you're gonna have. So in my notes, I'm gonna say that now we have another scene which is really a reminiscing of the story of the bender tour. So, so far we've got background and then we've got two scenes, we've got meeting the protagonist and the story of the bender tour.



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“The plan was to dry out in Asheville, but it turns out that the picturesque city ‘has, like, one microbrewery per person,’ he said, so he kept partying, “drinking a ton of beer, smoking one reefer after another.”

“It took a tool. One night, a ‘really weird’ sensation took over his body, he said, ‘a crazy restlessness, unable to sleep, my lungs burning.’”

“He looked up the symptoms and self-diagnosed it as adrenal exhaustion. He took the next day off, then another, then another. ‘By Thursday,’” he said, “‘it’s four days,’” “‘This is a record!’”

And it went on for a year and a half.

“Some were happy for him; Willie Nelson was not. The two are poker buddies on Maui with Owen Wilson and Don Nelson, the Hall of Fame basketball coach, and Willie did not take kindly to a weed-free Woody.”

So you’ll see we actually had another beat here. We had the story about Asheville, and now we’ve switched to the story about Willie, okay? So we’ve actually switched scenes now and now we have the scene of Willie Nelson, breaking him out of his sobriety. But even though these scenes are in reality quite short you’ll notice that we have a lot of them which is different than when we do narratives. In narrative features, we wanna have three scenes. And this is why I told you that structurally profile pieces are a bit different. You tend to have more scenes that are shorter in these profile pieces because you’re jumping back and forth a lot of the time.

So he said, “It was ‘a slap in the face,’ Mr. Harrelson said, ‘It just unnerved him. He’d keep offering it to me, and I’d say, ‘Willie, you know I don’t smoke anymore.’ He’d always act it like was the first time he’d heard it.”

“Then, over one game, Mr. Nelson broke out a special blend he called Willie’s Reserve. ‘That’s not fair because the only way I’m going to taste the Willie’s Reserve is if I smoke it,’ Mr. Harrelson said. So after winning a huge hand, he caved.”

“I take a big draw on it, and Willie says, ‘Welcome home, son,’ he said.”



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“Spying the pens on the table...” now we’ve come back to present tense, okay? “Spying the pens on the table, Mr. Harrelson grabbed a small blue one and offered it to me for my swollen knee. ‘This is just a CBD pen,’ he said, referring to cannabidiol oil, a non-psychoactive extract that is said to alleviate pain. ‘There’s no THC in this. It’s good for calming and stuff.’”

So this rounds out, it kind of book-ends those scenes that we were in by bringing us back to the beginning. But what happens next? Have you really felt the beat here? There’s a little bit of a beat of us coming back to the present tense, right? But I couldn’t quite say that we know what’s happening next and so this is one of those times when the beat is introduced artificially by the subhead, okay? So even though the next line, “Mr. Nelson was not the only person who thought that order had been restored to the universe,” flows, it doesn’t flow with this.

It flows from this part where he says, “Welcome home, son,” but it doesn’t flow from coming back to the present. So why does he do this? He does it in a way to signal a shift from us which is that we’re leaving storytelling mode and now he’s gonna go into telling us more background, okay? So the next part that we have is background.

“So Mr. Nelson was not the only person who thought that order had been restored to the universe.”

“For three decades running, Mr. Harrelson’s excess has been part of his charm. He is Hollywood’s cosmic cowboy: a raw food gastronaut, cannabis connoisseur and eco-warrior who seems intent to peer at life through kaleidoscope goggles.”

So this is a lot of summary here, okay, and not too much explaining these things.

As a Hollywood actor, he is a highly bankable male lead. But as an idea, he remains a reminder to the rest of us mortgage holders and 401(k) planners, maybe you do not have to go gentle into that good night, maybe you can party, party against the dying of dawn.

“We are the picture. He is Dorian Gray.”

So if you think about it, this is background in a way but it’s also commentary. So I’m gonna note that over here. So we’ve got background and commentary. And then we come back to the present again.





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After our snack, Woody slipped on an indica green fleece vest and led me out on a hike around his lush property.

“His reputation as Hollywood’s haute hippie is well deserved. He wore a white Armani tuxedo made of hemp to the 1997 Golden Globes, weaves reference to Paramahansa Yogananda’s ‘Autobiography of a Yogi’ into casual conversation and says he spent only \$500 on his 2008 wedding to Ms. Louie. (They have been together since the ‘Cheers’ days in the 1980s and have three children: Deni, 25, Zoe, 21, and Makani, 12.)”

“So how did an astral voyager manage to claw his way to the top of a cutthroat business? Mr. Harrelson seems unsure himself. ‘I’m a good little worker, a hard worker,’ he said. “”But I’m also a world-class lollygagger. I really would prefer nutso to do.””

“We headed down a steep road...” okay, so now we’re getting back into the scene but you’ll notice here that this quote, which moves us into the scene of him talking is a bit of a beat. So we’ve got this background, we’ve got this commentary and then we have a quote which we suppose is happening on this hike and we go back into the hike. So now we’re back into a scene which is the hike. And we’ll talk later about the purpose of this scene. I’m gonna read a little bit faster to make sure we can get through it because it kind of goes on for a bit.

“We headed down a steep road from his house. At that altitude, you feel little of Maui’s hang-loose beachiness. With a low fog hanging just above the loquat trees, Norfolk pine and lush ferns, the property seemed vaguely mystical, like a scene from Tolkien.”

“The light mist was turning the road slick, so Mr. Harrelson padded carefully in a pair of gray Allbirds sneakers, the same kind he got for his fellow Lone Star psychonaut Matthew McConaughey. ‘He was like, ‘ya put these on, ‘ya ain’t gonna wanna take ‘em off,’ Mr. Harrelson said, imitating Mr. McConaughey’s lazy drawl.”

Being lazy is enough of an art for the two of them, Mr. Harrelson said, that they warped the English language to suit their shared desire for dawdling. Instead a “planning a vacation,” for example, they came up with “teeing a lollygag.”

“But if Mr. Harrelson’s ultimate goal is to do ‘nutso’ (Woody-ese for doing nothing), his life of late is a dismal failure. Mr. Harrelson has been reeling of five or six movies a year, while fellow marquee stars like Brad Pitt and Robert Downey Jr., no slouches, are good for maybe a couple.”



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This year, he lollygagged his way to a best supporting actor nod for “Billboards,” qualifying once again as a scene stealer, even in a film for which his fellow stars Frances McDormand and Sam Rockwell took home statues. (Mr. Harrelson was nominated in the same category in 2010, for the military drama “The Messenger,” and for best actor in 1997, for “The People vs. Larry Flynt.”)

It is not so hard to see the appeal. Whether he is playing a lovelorn misanthrope in last year’s quirky indie “Wilson” or an intergalactic desperado in “Solo,” an innate likability, a folksy decency, shines through. Basically, he has become a stoner Jimmy Stewart.

Is that the beat? It feels like the beat to me but you’ll notice that we keep going in this in and out. And this is one of those things that I was saying happens a lot here, which is that we have these really micro-scenes where we’ve got the description of the road that they’re walking on, which leads us to this great quote about the shoes, and then more kind of slightly background description about his vocabulary, which then leads into the background about his movies and then we finally get a quote. So we’ve got the scene of the hike where we’ve got background...so we’ve got a description of the hike and then shoes with the quote, and the shared language around being lazy that he had developed. And then we get the background on what he has been up to and how it’s not so lazy. The scene, when we look at this, so there are so many scenes that I’m having trouble staying on the slide.

This is not to say he craves the spotlight. Mr. Harrelson said he was originally drawn to Maui in part for its distance from Hollywood. It’s where Lindbergh moved to, because it was so remote, and he was like the world’s first mage-star, Mr. Harrelson said. He just wanted privacy.

So you can see that this lead-up is really to use this great quote, right? So it’s all kind of vaguely a part of the scene but we really don’t talk about where they’re walking or what they’re seeing, we’re framing background on him around these quotes.

As we walked, his energetic black-and-white mixed breed, Monkee, bolted into the brush of a neighbor’s property, causing a violent rustle. Monkee! he shouted. I hope it’s not someone’s chickens.

“Bird murder apparently averted,” this is the one thing really about the hike that we see, “we continued along the road, talking about his upbringing. His father, Charles Voyde Harrelson, went to prison for the murder of a grain dealer, so Woody was raised as a scripture-quoting Christian by his mother, Diane Lou Oswald. The first time he thought about acting was in



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high school, when a group of football players goaded him into doing an Elvis Presley impersonation in the school library.”

“As we strolled down the path, Mr. Harrelson, arms swinging merrily, suddenly broke into a throaty rendition of ‘All shook up.’”

And I just got louder and louder, he said, and then the people started gathering around and clapping along. My inner performer came out. A girl named Robin Rogers invited him to the drama club. I was like, well, if Robin Rogers wants me to do a play, I’m going to do a play.

And now, four decades later, he was about to embark on a marathon publicity tour for ‘Solo,’ with red-carpet premiers in Los Angeles and New York, and appearance on “The Ellen DeGeneres Show” and “Jimmy Kimmel Live!”

“It’s part of the job, but after,” he said with an audible exhale, ‘I’m going to tee up a monster lollygag.’”

And this is a really nice beat here, right, because we’ve had, you know, a little bit of scene and we’ve had some background talking about how he got into acting but then we got this nice shift. And this shift, I mean, tee a monster lollygag, leads us into an actual lollygag, it leads us into talking about their lunch. And their lunch is included because as you’ll see, it really shows a lot about Woody Harrelson.

So the author says, “After the hike, we settled back at the kitchen table for lunch: a generous bowl of quinoa, sprouts, hijiki seaweed and avocado. Despite growing up in the barbecue belt (Texas and, later, Ohio), Mr. Harrelson says he is ‘philosophically, a raw foodist.’”

“His quest for gastronomic purity is infectious. As I munched on raw crackers smeared with macadamia nut butter, the thought of devouring, say, a cheeseburger seemed as wrong as munching on thumbtacks. Having recently dropped 35 pounds on an extended cleanse, Mr. Harrelson suggested a three-day mini-cleanse for me.”

“You might go through a healing crisis that might be a little bit tough,” he said. “I luckily never go through those anymore, because I eat really clean.”

Really?



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“Realizing he was proselytizing, he caught himself.”

Laura looked up my name in a name book once. It means ‘sentimental sermonizer.’ I thought, “Oh, that’s ridiculous.” But then he heard his family laughing, “which can only mean that they thought it’s totally accurate.”

So this scene about the lunch shows us this other side of him, it shows that side where he’s a bit of the hot hippie that they were describing before, right? So this is the lunch scene. And then I get back into... You see, there’s a beat, these quotes are often used for beats, right? So they talk about the healing cleanse, about the cleanse, but then this kind of closes that, right? So they’re talking about the sentimental sermonizer. And then they move into what does that mean.

That quest for greater meaning extends to his film career. Despite steady work in blockbuster franchises including “The Hunger Games,” he loves art house fare. ‘With any indie, there’s a 99 percentile chance that people won’t be seeing it. But you’re like, “Damn, it’s good,” he said.

Even though he seemed to be surprised to be offered a major role in “Solo.” Mr. Harrelson plays Tobias Beckett, a grizzled interstellar bandit who adopts the young Han Solo into his outlaw crew.

“Once again, Mr. Harrelson proves the scene stealer, doling out folksy wisecracks and sly threats in a gunfighter drawl that somehow shrinks the light-years between Tatooine and El Paso.”

In a world brimming with “Star Wars” obsessives, Mr. Harrelson would not seem to be one. When he was offered the role, he said, “I was kind of psyched, like, ‘Oh, geez, this is gonna be really cool, to be in a ‘Star Wars’ movie.’ Unexpected.” But he turned it down.

He might not have accepted if it were not for the film’s producer Allison Shearmur, who also produced the “Hunger Games” films that he starred in. “It’s sad Alli Shearmur died,” he said, referring to the producer’s death from lung cancer in January, at age 54. “That really broke my heart.”

“She was the one. I turned down “Hunger Games” twice and she wouldn’t take ‘no.’ I turned one down, believe it or not. She wouldn’t take ‘no.’”



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Once he was on set at Pinewood Studios in London, brandishing his blaster, Mr. Harrelson had no problems connecting with the character. “He’s a criminal,” Mr. Harrelson said. “And honestly, if I hadn’t run into Robin Rogers that day in the library, I probably would’ve become a criminal, too.”

So you’ll see here that both of these scenes are longer now. We’ve got here this lunch scene goes on from here and also this hike scene was going on the author here, right? So we’ve got scenes that are staying a little bit more in the present tense for longer but this scene also accomplishes some nice background. So it gives us the background that even though he takes his big roles, he frequently has to be goaded into them. So it’s a background about how he chooses his roles, okay?

So next we’ve got...it seems... “A film that seems to lie a lot closer to his heart is ‘Lost in London,’ which is also being released this weekend, on Hulu and iTunes.”

So we’ve seen how it seems like this piece is being done because the Han Solo movie is coming out. But we have the transition which tells us that he really cares more about these art films, and now we’re hearing he actually is one of those coming out now as well.

“A cinematic equivalent of primal scream therapy, the film is Woody at his most Woody, a brutally honest mea culpa wrapped up in an experimental black comedy that he wrote, directed and stars in, recreating a horrible night in 2002 when he ended up in jail.”

“At the time, his career was in a lull and he was starring in a West End play, when one night, two women approached him, offering a ‘walk on the wild side.’ They were joined by a third. News of his menage a quatre was splashed across a British tabloid.”

Mr. Harrelson responded with an epic bender. After tossing back drinks at a Soho nightclub with Leonardo DiCaprio, he ended up drunk in a taxi. An ashtray was smashed. A door handle broken. Mr. Harrelson led the police on a foot chase, got arrested and spent the night in jail.

“I’ve been pretty lucky in life, but that was the time where everything just seemed to be going bad,” he said. His film career was tanking, he was a tabloid laughingstock, and his long-term relationship was in peril. “All the obstacles seemed so insurmountable,” he said.



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The guilt from that night lingered. “I would have wanted the story to just completely do,” he said, but “it wouldn’t leave my consciousness.”

Years later, he decided to work out his bad memories with his most personal and ambitious film yet. Changing only a few details (like swapping out Mr. DiCaprio for Owen Wilson), he attempted to recreate that night in real time, shooting the entire film in a single take across 14 locations in London, and streaming it live to 500 theaters around the world.

“It could have been a disaster (The Guardian called it a “miraculous oddity”), but, hey, that would have been part of the journey, too.”

In the end, Mr. Harrelson said that he was fascinated by the honesty of portraying himself as an antihero looking for redemption (as well as a few laughs). Would the audience forgive his excesses, as his wife had?

Now, there’s a beat here where we’re switching from this very straight, this is a very straight story about that film and how he shot it and how he screened it, to now we’re getting a little more philosophical. What was the commentary on this? So we’ve got a scene which is really relaying very chronologically the story of the new film, okay? And then we go out, now where we think the present day. We don’t know exactly when he said this though.

He says, “I mean, she’s the most understanding woman I’ve ever met,” he said. “She’d have to be. Just imagine living with me for 30 years.”

“The film may be a warts-and-all self-portrait, but it also seems to capture a deeper truth about its creator: People expect Woody to be out there, testing boundaries. They would not want it any other way.”

“That point was driven home to me the day before,” so you feel that little shift here, “They would not want it any other way.” is a bit of a shift, right? That point was driven home to me the day before, after our soccer match. With the daylight fading, Mr. Harrelson and a few of the guys hung around, gathering in circles on the sidelines. One of them toted over a chess set, placing it in the grass between himself and Mr. Harrelson, a skilled player.

“As they started a tense round of speed chess, pipes were passed and the smell of cannabis wafted into the humid air. Mr. Harrelson took a deep hit while staring intently at the board,



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unaware that his wife and younger daughter, Makani, had pulled into the parking lot to ferry him home.”

“Daddy, you’re not supposed to be doing that! his daughter said. A look of guilt flashed across his face. Then she threw her arms around his shoulders, embracing him in a long hug.”

Now, this is very classic, to end a profile with a scene. So in the way where we’ve talked about, I’m gonna go over to my notes now, in the way where we’ve talked about narrative pieces having this step, step of three different scenes that lead us to our final point, you can see here that, here it is, that the scene with daughter chastising him and then hugging him is meant to be a microcosm for how his whole career has gone, and they’ve got the film as the last thing before that because the film is also a microcosm of something that went totally wrong and then he was able to turn it into a hug in a way.

Let’s look back at how that concept has played out throughout the piece. So we’ve got these scenes where we’re in the kitchen, we’ve met him, and this is the day after the soccer match. And in the kitchen, we have all of these things. We’ve got we meet him, we hear the story of the bender tour and about Willie Nelson breaking him out of his sobriety.

Now, this is really interesting because you would think being sober would be a good thing, but to his people, to his friends, that was weird. So this is also a story of him doing something that was “wrong” and then being reembraced, okay? Now, on the hike, we’ve also got some sort of rambling, meandering stories, you could say, right? We’ve got the shared language he has with Matthew McConaughey about being lazy. There’s background about what films he’s been doing recently. And then there’s a story about how he got into doing acting. And that’s kind of what wraps that up before we get to this hippie hot lunch.

And in that story, the football players have goaded him into doing an impression of Elvis, but then more and more people keep coming and clapping and he’s celebrated. So what’s happened here, even though there’s all this other background, you can see all of these different, little, mini scenes that are going on, this being woven into this. Each of the sort of the cherry on each of these larger meta scenes is a story of a moment in which he’s like done something that seems like he should be chastised or seems wrong or seems something and he’s applauded for it, he’s embraced. So I told you when we first looked at the story that I thought it was interesting that they called that... I’m gonna go back up, I know that you guys aren’t on the same page necessarily, but they said “Hollywood’s cosmic cowboy is working furiously – all while performing scientific experiments on his reality.”



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I don't know if I feel like that scientific experiments on his reality is an accurate moniker and often the deck or that subhead of a story has that characterization where it seems like a little bit off. But I definitely think that we can see that the writer is performing some really cool experiments here, you can say, with how they put this together. So we've got here is that kind of success, here is that success. We've got that other one here with the story of his film and about how he got into acting.

What you see here of the structure, and the reason why I wanted to really take the time to go through a whole piece, is that, like I told you, they jump around a lot. So he'll be sitting with the protagonist and then we've got story after story, which has some commentary in between and there's some background of what he's been doing. And then we've got them walking but then there's stories happening as they're walking. This is really normal for a profile piece. So some other things that you commonly see in a structure or a profile piece, like I told you before, is they do typically start with a scene, and I really feel like that part that came before the scene here might have been something added afterwards and it felt like that scene in the beginning where he describes sitting in the kitchen, which is really where that piece was intended to start.

And so what you did see here though which is very classic is that rather than have a wrap up where the writer tells you what to think about the character, they almost always wrap up with a scene that allows you to draw your own conclusions about the person being profiled. But then within that, within the scenes that are happening, before that or in the middle of that first scene and that last scene, you have what you might call meta scenes where the writer is with the person being profiled and stories are being told, chronological shifts are happening within that scene. And there is also background laced in between each of several mini stories or mini scenes. So this is really typical for how a profile is put together. So on the one hand, it means it can be a bit crazy-making because you're including so many different scenes, right? We've got 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 15 scenes on this piece probably with 3,000 or 3,500 words.

So if you had a piece that was like a more normal 1,500 words you could very easily have 8 different scenes, 8 different back and forths that you're doing in a profile piece. And that means that you just keep them all to a word count of like 150 words or 200 words or something and keep them tightly within that. But it doesn't mean that you have fewer scenes. Profiles are really built around giving different facets of a person that build up to not stating outright what you want as the writer, or what you want the reader to understand about the person being profiled, but that lead-up to a scene, that encapsulates all of those other ones that you've talked about for the reader to decide for themselves what they think of the person being profiled. So it's pretty much always a scene.





# Dream of Travel Writing

## Article Nuts and Bolts – Putting Together a Profile Piece

Now, something that you'll see here which is very classic for let's call it a big budget profile, whether that big budget is a big magazine or a big celebrity or whatever, is that the person doing the profile tends to spend more than one sitting with the person being profiled. So sometimes I'll meet them on completely different occasions and sometimes as it is in this piece, they will meet them several times in one day. So I promised we'd have time on how you pitch this so I wanna make sure that we get to that.

So something that happens here with profile pieces is that you do not know in advance what it will be about, very much like destination pieces. And again this is one of the reasons that I love profiles as a way to train your ability to write destination pieces is that you need not only to have the aggregate of the interviews or experiences with the person you're profiling to figure out what you're gonna write. But you also need to think on them for a bit. So when you're pitching that you will profile a person, you can pitch about what's interesting about them that's already known or that quick why, why the person picking up the magazine that the editor edits would jump to read about this person, but you can't pitch where the story will go. Now, you also can't do it because you don't wanna do the interviews first. Why don't you wanna do the interviews first? First of all, because you don't know what direction the editor might want you to take the piece in.

Secondly, you don't really know where the piece might appear, you don't know where it's ultimately gonna be accepted. But you do need to get permission to do the piece first. And so what that means is you say, "Hey, I'm thinking about doing an article for you." And you might say when you pitch it to X magazine or if you're not super confident in your ability to place in X magazine. You might say, "I'm pitching a profile article about you to a number of magazines. Would you be available to participate in it if it gets assigned?" That's all you need to say there. So you don't need to go into a lot there about what the piece will be about, about where it will be published because you don't know until you get the pitch. You don't wanna get into a situation that will negatively impact your relationship with the source and with the story where you've said it's gonna be somewhere and then that's not where it's placed or you've said it's gonna be about something and then the editor wants it to be about something else.

And thank you, guys, so much for joining. I hope you enjoyed that piece and I know it's probably better reading it on your own than with me but I hope that the commentary was helpful. I hope that it will influence on just how you read other profiles in the future, but also that you might start getting into thinking about doing your own if you're not already. So thank you, guys, so much for joining me. I hope that the rest of you guys have a great rest of your evening, the rest of your day if you're out on the West Coast, and a great weekend, and I'll talk to you guys next week.