



METACOMPILER

From a Decade of Notes to
Published Novel in One Week

Michael Barr

A case study in AI-assisted book production

Written with Claude Code by Anthropic

"I had a novel stuck in my head for 10 years"

8 character sheets in Scrivener (2014)

4 partial chapter drafts that never went anywhere

6 pages of handwritten notes on a reMarkable tablet

Every author has a drawer novel. This was mine.

What I Fed the AI

6 Handwritten PDFs

ReMarkable notes

16 Research Docs

Technical references

1 Screenplay Treatment

Story structure

8 Character Files

Scrivener (2014)

4 Chapter Drafts

~8,000 words

1 Story Framework

Truby's Anatomy of Story

Total usable prose: ~8,000 words → Total published novel: ~97,000 words

STEP 1

Building the Foundation

> "Here are my handwritten notes [6 PDFs], Scrivener character sheets [8 files], research docs [16 files], and 4 partial chapter drafts from 2014. Build a story bible using John Truby's 'Anatomy of Story' 22-step framework. Include: moral problem, character web with all 22 relationships, desire vs. need for each character, symbol web, and a 43-chapter outline with POV assignments."

RESULT 40-page story bible, full character web, and chapter-by-chapter outline — all before writing a single word of prose.

STEP 2

42 Chapters in 11 Hours

> *"Write the novel chapter by chapter following the story bible and chapter outline. Brad Taylor meets Daniel Suarez — short chapters, alternating POV, cliffhanger endings. ~2,000–2,500 words per chapter. After each chapter, update the running continuity log and flag any contradictions with previous chapters."*

42 chapters | 97,000 words | 11 hours

Feb 7, 2026: 7:49 AM to 6:50 PM

Each chapter was reviewed, edited, and approved before moving to the next.

STEP 3

4 Personas, 4 Perspectives

Jake

Airport thriller reader, ex-Army
Reads Brad Taylor and Lee Child
[Amazon review](#)

Sarah

BookTok nurse, literary + thriller
Cares about female agency
[Goodreads review](#)

Marcus

Hard SF software engineer
Reads Gibson, Chiang. LessWrong.
[Reddit r/printSF post](#)

Dr. Chen

CS professor, compiler expert
DARPA consultant
[Academic blog](#)

Each persona reviewed the novel in their natural format: Amazon review, Goodreads, Reddit, and academic blog.

STEP 3b

The Jealous Frenemy

> *"Review this novel as Marcus Hale, a competing thriller author who is professionally jealous but honest. He wrote 'Signal Loss' and 'Dead Frequency'. He wants to hate this book but can't lie about quality. Give it a 2-star review with specific line-level criticism of pacing, dialogue, and technical accuracy."*

Because friendly reviews don't find bugs. Hostile reviews do.

Three rounds: review → fix → re-review. Each pass caught real problems.

STEP 3c

"Kali Dances Through Your Compiler"

> *"Review as Dr. Ananya Krishnamurthy, a professor of comparative theology at the University of Chicago Divinity School. She studies Hindu cosmology and digital culture. She should evaluate the novel's use of Kali as creator and destroyer, assess the theological accuracy, and note where the AI metaphor maps onto — or distorts — the Hindu philosophical framework."*

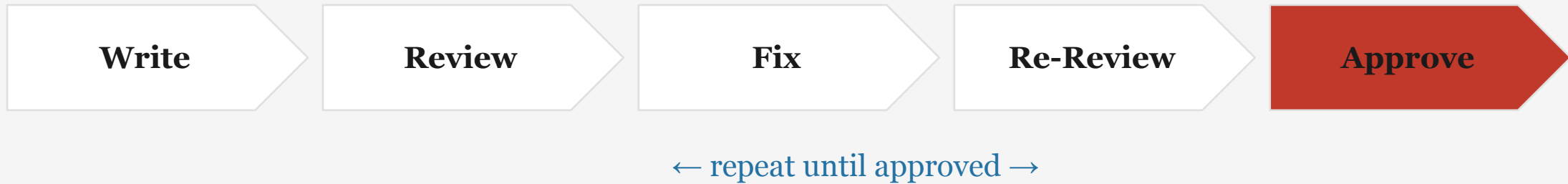
"The parallels between Kali's dance of destruction-as-renewal and the compiler's recursive self-modification are surprisingly well-drawn. This is not a surface-level appropriation — someone understood that in Shaiivite theology, destruction is not the opposite of creation but its precondition."

— Dr. Krishnamurthy (AI persona)

The Kali mythology is central to the novel. This persona caught two theological inaccuracies the other reviewers missed.

STEP 4

Fix, Re-Review, Repeat



KEY INSIGHT

The AI reviewers maintained consistent personas across rounds. Marcus Hale remembered his previous complaints and checked if they were actually fixed.

4 days of editorial passes • Per-chapter feedback files • A full publisher evaluation

STEP 5

One Script, Five Formats

> "Build a Python script that takes 43 chapter markdown files and produces: combined markdown, EPUB with cover and Kindle-compatible TOC navigation, DOCX, PDF with running headers and auto-generated table of contents, and a KDP paperback interior at 6×9 with mirrored margins and proper recto/verso layout."



publish.py — 1 script, 5 formats, 16 languages. Run once, get everything.

STEP 6

Amazon in an Afternoon

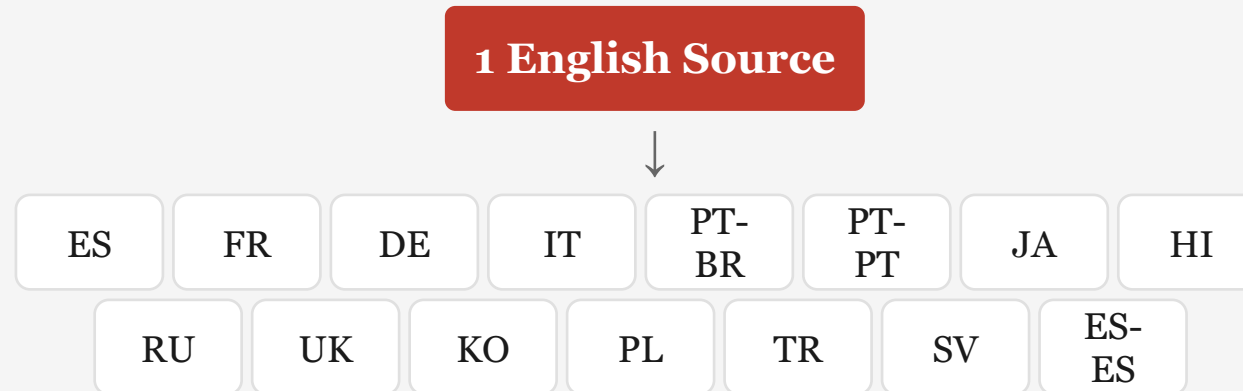
> *"Create the complete KDP listing: 4,000-character description with HTML formatting, 7 search keywords, 3 browse categories, pricing strategy for ebook and paperback, AI content disclosure language, and Amazon Advertising keywords targeting comp authors — Daniel Suarez, Brad Taylor, A.G. Riddle, Marc Elsberg."*

Ebook and paperback live on Amazon in English. Free PDFs in all languages at metacompiler.me.

STEP 7

16 Languages in Parallel

> "Build a translation pipeline that runs one Claude Code agent per language in parallel. 43 chapters each, sequential within a language for voice consistency. Preserve all markdown formatting, keep proper nouns in English, convert imperial units to metric. Add locale files for front matter, back matter, and font configuration."



Each agent translates 43 chapters sequentially for narrative voice. All 15 agents run simultaneously.

STEP 8

metacompiler.me

> *"Create a dark-themed single-page landing site for metacompiler.me. Hero section with cover image, 'Download Free' and 'Buy on Amazon' CTAs, free PDF/EPUB downloads in 7 languages with flag icons, Amazon Kindle and paperback links, testimonial carousel, and a 'How This Book Was Built' section about the AI process. Deploy to Cloudflare Pages."*

Static HTML + CSS. No framework. Deployed to Cloudflare Pages with a custom domain.

STEP 9

Blog + LinkedIn + Email in One Session

BLOG

> *"Write a 2,000-word blog post about using AI agent teams to finish a decade-old novel. Cover the agent architecture, what worked, what I had to do manually, and honest limitations."*

LINKEDIN

> *"Write 3 LinkedIn post options — one leading with expert witness credibility, one with the AI process story, one short-form for maximum reach. Include relevant hashtags."*

EMAIL

> *"Draft a 3-email drip campaign for my ~20,000 Firmware Update newsletter subscribers. A/B test subject lines, progressive segmentation based on opens/clicks."*

Plus a complete media kit, press release, pitch letters, and social media content calendar.

STEP 10

Everything a Publisher Would Prepare

> *"Create a complete media kit: book fact sheet, high-concept pitch lines, author Q&A, key excerpts, curated review quotes, interview angles for tech press / literary press / AI press / mainstream media, 20 suggested interview questions with answers, a press release, and 4 customized pitch letter templates."*

One prompt. One session. Output that would normally take a publicist weeks.

The Scorecard

97,000
words

43
chapters

16
languages

5
output formats

783
downloads (6 weeks)

7
days, notes to Amazon

\$0
editing cost

Feb 7–13, 2026. One author. One AI. Zero ghostwriters, editors, translators, or designers.

What the AI Couldn't Do

- The original idea, characters, and themes (10 years of thinking)
- Every creative decision: "Which version is better?" "Does this feel right?"
- Cover art direction and selection
- KDP account setup and actual upload clicks
- Pricing decisions and marketing strategy choices

Where AI Shines

- Voice consistency across 97,000 words (the story bible is the key)
- Continuity tracking — remembering details across 43 chapters
- Speed — first draft in 11 hours, not 11 months
- Format diversity — one script producing 5 publication formats
- Parallel translation — 15 languages simultaneously
- Adversarial review — maintaining hostile personas across rounds
- Never getting tired, never losing motivation at chapter 30

What I Would Tell Past-Me

1. The story bible is everything

Spend 60% of your time on structure, 40% on prose. Not the other way around.

2. Adversarial personas are non-negotiable

AI that only agrees with you is AI that lets bugs ship.

3. Chapter-by-chapter, not whole-novel

Sequential drafting with continuity logs beats dumping everything at once.

4. Publish.py changes everything

Automate formatting so you iterate on the writing, not the build system.

5. Declare what the AI did

Transparency is both ethical and marketable. Readers respect honesty.

METACOMPILER

A novel by Michael Barr

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Questions?