

Musings of a Bemused Author - Writer's habitats

The writer Graeme Harper defines a writer's habitat as "somewhere personal in which a particular creative writer is most likely to be found – not merely a physical place but also a representational space of modes of thinking and modes of action" (Harper, 2010, p.2). In this logbook entry I will examine some aspects of these habitats, such as writers' routines, locations and actions. I will also explore how some of these habits and habitats apply to me as a writer.

The author Stephen King defines his routine as, "Mornings belong to whatever is new – the current composition. Afternoons are for naps and letters. Evenings are for reading, family, Red Sox games [...]" (King, 2012, p.174). At face value, this appears to be a fairly rigid structure. However, regarding his schedule, King also states, "I used to tell interviewers that I wrote every day except for Christmas, the Fourth of July, and my birthday. That was a lie. I told them that because if you agree to an interview you have to say *something*, and it plays better if it is something at least half clever" (King, 2012, p.175). In his statements regarding a standardised approach, King appears to be purveying his writing as a serious time-bound endeavour. He appears to be implying that writing is his highest priority. However, he admits in his follow-on statement that he does not always stick rigidly to this schedule, which I argue gives an insight into his job of writing as being a lower priority. I would further argue that it is also a vain attempt at improving readership support and therefore, his book sales.

Unlike King's perceived routine, my present approach is unstructured. For instance, I will often mull over, make notes, plot and write larger sections of fiction wherever I am, and whenever the mood takes me, though this also depends on the

tools to hand. If I need to work through a rough idea or thorny plot issue, I may take the dog for a walk. During that time, I will make notes via the Evernote app on my phone, as it will replicate to all my writing devices for later perusal. Over time, I expect an evolution of this unstructured approach toward a more rigid or blended approach as I pursue my writing career.

When asked about his schedule and process of writing, Ernest Hemingway said, "When I am writing on a book or a story, I write every morning as soon after light as possible [...] you read what you have written and, as you always stop when you know what is going to happen next, you go from there" (Hemingway, 2007a, p.38). Personally, I find stopping when I know what is coming next a confusing process and would rather continue writing. Stopping the flow of writing in this way obstructs my ability to get anything down on the page when I restart. Not that I write to a dead end, but I will ensure I have notes on next steps which may need further thought before committing to the page.

Continuing the theme of 'writing location', the English poet Ted Hughes said, "Hotel rooms are good. I've had several huts of one sort or another. Ever since I began to write with a purpose, I've been looking for the ideal place. I think most writers go through it" (Hughes, 2008, p.275-276). From my perspective, I have swapped and changed locations multiple times in search of the ideal writing spot. What I found was that depending on the time of day, the mood I am in, the noise (or lack of) in that location and the other people in the vicinity, all affect my ability to settle into writing.

When asked about some of her writing habits during an interview with the Paris Review, the American novelist Toni Morrison appeared to have a similar approach to my own. She said, "Sometimes something that I was having trouble with

falls into place, a word sequence, say, so I've written on scraps of paper, in hotels on hotel stationery, in automobiles [...] If you know it really has come, then you have to put it down" (Morrison, 2007b, p.359). Akin to Morrison's approach, when I have an idea, wherever I am, I have to get it down somewhere or risk forgetting it. In doing so, I state that unlike some writers, my habitat extends beyond a defined location and environment giving me an envious position for some.

In summary, I believe every writer is continually searching for an ideal habitat and schedule in which to write. This can be as loosely or strictly constructed as suits the writer and their approach to writing. I would also add that these habitats will evolve as the writer pursues their craft.

797 Words (excluding title, footnotes and bibliography).

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