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1

Intention

Asking that Big Question

At what we might call the ‘big question’ level of creative writing, the level at which you make the personal decision to do some writing, you have deemed to put other things you have to do or like to do aside, to take the time, find the place, employ whatever equipment you need (laptop, pencil, phone), do whatever you can to set forth or to continue with creative writing. You have expressed a macro intention or intentions. This means that your state of mind concerned with writing, your holistic mindset, anticipates that you will act in a certain way.

There might not be an easy or effective method of dividing your holistic mental state into smaller components. In fact, it might be that your determination to do some creative writing is comprised of many integrated parts, a number of which are not easily accessible to you. Such a suggestion

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has informed approaches to creativity throughout history where the mystery of why and how creativity happens has encouraged commentators to suggest creativity is largely critically inaccessible to us; or, at the very least, that we can understand only some elements of it.

Other elements are said to be transcendental, that is, they are beyond ordinary human experience. What this idea encompasses is inclusive of your emotions, your intellect, and your imagination. There is an interaction and an integration in creative practice of these complex elements. Add to this your choice to intentionally make your writing creative and the answer to the big question, the macro element of your decision making and your determination, is connected to a particular form of human endeavor, an identifiable artistic practice and a distinctive mode of communication.

There are clearly cause and effect associations, one thing following another, in your decision to become a creative writer. Associations also in that you have certain expectations about your creative writing, and about your experience of doing it. Your sense of the experience your creative writing will provide for you is associated with your natural desire for the predominance of pleasure over pain – in the simplest terms, that is. In short, your intention has several dimensions, connected with your feelings, your intellect, and your imagination. We can hear something of that melding of feeling, thought, critical thinking, and imaginative empowerment in the words of Neil Gaiman, whose works include comic books and graphic novels, films, novels, and more, perhaps even something of his intention, when he writes in *Fragile Things: Short Fictions and Wonders*:

Stories like people and butterflies and songbirds' eggs, and human hearts and dreams, are also fragile things, made up

of nothing stronger or more lasting than twenty-six letters and a handful of punctuation marks. Or they are words on the air, composed of sounds and ideas – abstract, invisible, gone once they've been spoken – and what could be more frail than that? But some stories, small, simple ones about setting out on adventure or people doing wonders, tales of miracles and monsters, have outlasted all the people who told them, and some of them have outlasted the lands in which they were created. (Gaiman, 2007: xxxiii)

Fragile beauty and yet, potentially, robust longevity, Gaiman suggests – clearly, in his description, something that attracts him to being a creative writer.

Can you write creatively, unintentionally? Undoubtedly! But in that instance creativity, which is most frequently viewed as a positive element in our lives, an ingenious contribution to various human practices, could instead be seen as a negative. Think here of the work-related email that is too offbeat or too whimsical, or the technical report that is too fanciful. The suggestion in those instances that your writing is 'creative' would not be a compliment but a criticism.

The macro level of engagement with creative writing involves your intentions. This macro, or proposition, level is where you are making the decision to actually *do* some creative writing not just talk about doing it, perhaps dealing with what that doing will mean for your daily life, considering how to put your decision into play, what steps to take, exploring what you know about creative writing generally, perhaps what you know broadly about the form and genre you're attracted to writing. At this macro level, your intentions involve:

Commitment – This means a decision made, some emotional engagement, a tacit or explicit promise to yourself.

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It does not yet mean action. Intention is not in itself *doing* writing. But it does mean striking an agreement with yourself, one that you aim not to break. The term ‘commitment’ also suggests writing involves a degree of labor. How much labor is involved varies greatly between creative writers and between projects, and although there are suggested well-worn measures of effort in creative writing (for example, the notion that a novel is according to its length alone a big effort) there is actually no absolute or proven correlation between how much effort you apply and how successfully you reach your creative writing goals. Certainly it would be simpler, and perhaps even more ethically satisfying, if there was a creative writing commitment equation along the lines of Amount of Effort \times Length of Effort = Amount of Success. It is common to hear suggestions akin to this equation. For example, ‘creative writing is hard work; it involves a large amount of conscious editing, and it takes place over long periods of time with frequent revisions’ (Sawyer, 175). Perhaps, sometimes. But the general truth about amounts of effort involved lies elsewhere. Knowledge about creative writing plays a role, an affinity for a particular genre, psychological traits such as the ability to live with uncertainty and flexibility and self-confidence. Commitment is a component of intention, not a measure of your potential for success in creative writing.

Planning – This might involve some outward expression of your intention. For example, you might tell a partner, family, or friend that you will be unavailable at a certain time (you might or might not openly declare that you’ll

be writing). You might physically begin planning a story, a novel, a screenplay, jotting down notes or ideas for a poem or play. More likely than any of this, the first signs of your intentions will be expressed by your internal rather than external planning. Internal planning is significant because creative writing is not only its physical evidence (drafts, emails to a publisher or editor, completed works); it is also your thinking, emotional engagement, speculating, imagining. Internal planning is not necessarily before a physical act of writing; it can also occur multiple times during your writing actions. In fact, over the period of composing a work while your decision to undertake some creative writing is maintained, and in being so is supported by your physical actions of writing, your internal planning might be altered, impacted upon by conditions experienced during the composition of the work, by your changing thoughts and emotions, and even just simply by the logistics of getting from the beginning of writing a work to the end of writing one.

Reasoning – Being emotionally committed to undertaking creative writing relates to your personal belief in creative writing as a form of expression, as a method of exploring and presenting not only information (which indeed might not benefit in other writing circumstances from the influence of the imagination and of creativity) but also your feelings. Nevertheless, writing is a type of human communication that involves the organized use of words, which are units of language that carry a meaning.

So emotion, part of your proposition, your macro decision to be a creative writer, is also attached to written

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language as a significant component of human interaction that symbolizes and communicates. Creative writing is not therefore entirely an outpouring of emotion; it is also a concerted organizing of communicative and symbolic elements. To do that organizing, your writing involves reasoning. Your intentions involve reasoning about the choice to write creatively, and they involve comparative reasoning about choosing creative writing over other modes of art and other modes of communication. Along the way, in the composing of a work, your reasoning also influences your choice of the tools of language that you use and how you use those tools.

Perception – When you decide to undertake some creative writing you also address questions of perception. Your perceptions of creative writing and about the results of such writing, how you regard these and how you understand these, your mental image of these things. Perception involves your interpretation of sensory information. So, your experience of having seen or heard works of creative writing – even the physical sensation of writing, or the look and feel of physical objects associated with creative writing, such as books – influence your intention. Perception also relates to what can be called ‘normalizing’, whereby you have a set of activities you would regard as a ‘normal’ part of your life, or which you perceive can be introduced into your life. Intention at this macro level also relates to social and cultural norms, contexts through which you navigate the world. We come to understand social situations because we develop a set of interpretative understandings of what other people are doing, what they want, how they might behave. With

this in mind, your own intention of undertaking creative writing will also relate to the intentions you perceive in other people.

At your decision point, that proposition level of creative writing where you answer that big question ‘Will I be a creative writer?’, your desire to write is connected to your belief that your commitment, reasoned progress, and truth of perception about the experience and results of your creative writing will ultimately bring you some form of satisfaction. Taking a moment or two to consider this provides you with a practical, interpretative tool for understanding your decision to be a creative writer and for examining how that desire to write creatively impacts on your actions that follow.

Compositional Questions

Your affirmation that you will undertake some creative writing is the framework into which your other writerly actions all fit. These writerly actions are at what we can call the micro level of individual action, day-to-day writing decision making, compositional querying. That is, while intention clearly influences your decision making at the macro level, it is also something with which you as a creative writer work regularly when composing a work. After all, such writing involves your reasoned action. Creative writing is a specific kind of writing, with specific characteristics and specific results, so accidental creative writing is writing that was meant for another purpose and is unlikely to be successful for that planned purpose. Imaginative, reasoned, in numerous ways planned, and applied creative writing

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based on your perceptions – this is the basis of your intention to be a creative writer or to continue to undertake some creative writing. You make a decision to write creatively and you animate, maintain, and nurture this – that is the definition of being a creative writer.

As there is a larger framework for your desire to write creatively, so within that framework are intentions that will be displayed in your micro level thoughts and actions. More extensively, your intentions will influence your reasons for creating individual works of a particular type, in a particular genre and of a particular form, your methods and patterns of creating (which could include your choice of a place to create and of an instrument with which to create).

Type, Genre, Form

Type, genre, and form are words sometimes used interchangeably by commentators. These three words will be used here in a specific way. **Type** here refers to works with common written characteristics (for example, poetry, screenplay, novel). **Genre** in this instance means a category, works of creative writing with agreed inter-type conventions (for example, comedy, horror, tragedy, science fiction, romance; some observers also define fiction and nonfiction as core genres, and that too is the convention suggested here). Genre or categorical definitions shift over time and are open to cultural influence and interpretation as well. **Form** here is referring to the organization of a work, its construction. You could therefore be working on a novel (type) that is a comedy (genre) presented in letters (form).

Type

Your choice of what type of writing you engage in can be well explored from the point of view of attraction and of satisfaction. In essence, you favor a certain type of creative writing because it attracts you and promises you your preferred form of satisfaction. Choice of type could be said to work at both a micro level (that is, influencing individual compositional action) and at the macro level (that is, how you envisage your writing, are motivated to do it, project an end result of doing it). Here there is something of a moment of truth.

Imagine that while you are enchanted by poetry, as an art form, as a mode of communication, that you might even consider the challenge of writing poetry to be a writing challenge above all others, you nevertheless intend to write a screenplay. The reason for your intention is simple enough. While you admire the writing of poetry, the end results of poetry writing, the physical object that is a poem, generally speaking the entire artistic and communicative contributions to humanity of poets and of poetry, your intention in your creative writing is to write something that brings you financial reward and you do not believe writing poetry will ever do that. Given our media versus literary consumption habits in the contemporary world, that is probably a fair assessment.

The elements of your choosing of particular type of writing are complex but accessible. Your choice is likely first informed by your awareness and admiration. This does not mean that you necessarily have an extensive experience or knowledge of that particular type of creative writing. Simply, that you are aware of its existence, most likely have

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felt and appreciated its influence, and that you are prepared to act upon your interest. Your perception, reasoning, commitment, and some preliminary internal planning inform your choice, and your choice informs your intention. You might not have yet written anything of the type you are intending to write, but you have experienced that type of creative writing as reader or audience. As reader or audience, you are able to relate examples of this particular type of writing, perhaps both those you admire and those you find wanting, and you might have considered how genre and form interact with this type of creative writing.

Your intention in choosing a particular type of writing, by the simple logic of knowing the type in some way, is to reproduce the type you have experienced. In other words, if we take type to represent works with common characteristics then, in order to produce a type of creative writing, your intention is to map your own writing on to what you have identified as those typological conventions. Of course, if you have only experienced a type of creative writing as reader or audience not as a writer, then it is likely you do not have a developed sense of what the actual writing of that type of such writing involves or sometimes even of how a final work appears. Two good examples of this are the screenplay and the libretto.

In the case of the screenplay and the libretto, the writing type defined by the final work does not give you knowledge of how either of these two are produced, or how they might appear in their final written form. This is because both of these creative writing types act as guides for another art form, film in the former instance and opera in the latter. You can work backward from the finished work to the type of creative writing behind it, but in that sense you are

beginning where the work is completed, and attempting to reconstruct the creating of the work without access to observed or reported evidence of how it was and is actually done.

If your attraction to a certain type of writing is defined in the first instance by the satisfaction you gain from the finished product that in itself is not clear-cut evidence that you will gain satisfaction from undertaking that type of creative writing. So, for example, if you get considerable satisfaction from *reading* a novel this is not evidence you will gain any satisfaction from *writing* a novel. Here we see the difference in type between defining creative writing as its final physical appearance and defining creative writing as the actions of writing creatively. The former might be the way in which you first encounter evidence of a type of creative writing, probably where you first come to admire a type of such writing, but it is not in itself the actions of writing, the actual practice of creative writing.

Your intentions in relation to types of creative writing therefore raise important questions about your desire to be a creative writer. That desire, which is a strength of feeling directly related to your motivation and willingness to take action, gains from one or more of the following:

Exposure to the experiences of other creative writers, and particularly (though not solely) those working on similar types of writing. That exposure might be through direct observation of those writers writing, but much more often it will be via such things as reading autobiographies and biographies of creative writers, or reading their memoirs or interviews with them, or listening to particular writers read and speak at public events. And, of course, it is

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bolstered (if not completely satisfied) through exposure to their finished works. Mario Vargas Llosa, in his discussion of his love of the works of Jorge Luis Borges, not least relating this to their shared Latin American heritage, calls reading Borges ‘a sinful passion’, noting that since his youthful discovery of his works that passion has ‘never faded’. ‘Re-reading him,’ Llosa says, ‘which I have done from time to time like someone performing a ritual, has always been a happy experience’ (Llosa, 1991: 3). Exposure to other writers, endeavoring to ground their final works in stories of their composition, strengthens familiarity with your writing practice, generally; and, given your interest in a particular type of writing, and intention to write that type, it can also provide you with an opportunity for direct experiential knowledge.

Education connected to types of creative writing. Classes with versions of titles such as ‘Writing the Novel’ or ‘Writing Poetry’, or ‘Writing for Digital Media’ highlight specific typological elements. While there are benefits in intersecting discussions between creative writing types – because all such writing uses language and language structures; all such writing imaginatively employs word choice and rhetorical devices; all such writing is by definition seeking to provide inventive, original expression – those classes that focus on specific types of creative writing offer the opportunity for more in-depth exploration of types. Given that in contemporary education these are often incorporated into a program of study involving exposure to multiple types of creative writing, they also give opportunities for making informed practice-based comparisons.

The experience of attempting to write. We hear of the importance of failure in ultimately reaching success. Nevertheless, your desire to write is very unlikely to be your desire to fail. We always find through writing practice those types of creative writing with which we appear to have more success. Failure with other types can of course lead to or support that conclusion. The reasons for your success might include your ability to conceptualize form in certain types of writing but not as much in others, or your confidence in patterns of composition that best support certain results. This is simply to name a couple of examples. There are cognitive reasons for this as well as cultural ones, that is, your individual processes of memory and reasoning and coming to know, as well as the influences of arts and modes of communication that follow particular patterns or present ideas, themes, and subjects in particular ways. Without actually doing some creative writing there is no way of determining the type of creative writing with which you will have most success. What will be successful for you as a creative writer is not wedded either to the levels of your critical understanding or the final results of creative writing. That is why extremely skilled literary critics are not by default always successful novelists or poets. In fact, it is only rarely the case. There is also the significant question of how you define success.

Your definition of success will be incorporated into your intentions. If your intention is to write and illustrate a picture book to entertain the younger members of your family, and ultimately you do that and get that result, it would be spurious to consider that your writing was

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unsuccessful, based on other expectations. If you write a short story with the intention of winning a particular short story prize and it does not do that, then your intentions have not been met. If you write poetry because you find it assists you expressing ideas and emotions that you do not feel are otherwise satisfied, then your intention has been met and you have been successful.

Types of writing can certainly be delineated according to their physical shape, the manifestation of their common characteristics according to a critical analysis of structure and appearance. But if you begin as a creative writer by thinking of creative writing type from the point of view of your writerly intentions, where you undertake a particular type of writing because you are attracted to it and it provides you with satisfaction, then success is defined by meeting your intentions. This doesn't change the fact that creative writing types refer to common characteristics observable in the completed physical object, that is, say, a novel, a play, a poem. What it does do is focus your attention on undertaking creative writing rather than focus on established final appearances of texts. Such observable types of writing are based on visual, concrete archetypes and their supporting textual paradigms. In essence, this means that the outward appearance of a novel will appear to be that of a novel, and its internal forms and their function will match expectations, however broad these might be, of what it means to be a novel. It is always more conceivable that a creative writer will work toward such typical, observable examples; after all, these are accepted, observable models based on repeated patterns of appearance, usually established over some time. However, creative writing is also imaginative

and inventive. In being so, when you begin at the point of your intentions, and you engage with your writerly actions that follow, then your creating of any type of creative writing always has the potential to challenge archetypes and established paradigmatic models. Your experience of writing creatively is in this way both learning the typological conventions to which you are attracted and potentially questioning them, endeavoring to alter them or to recreate them to better suit your intentions.

Genre

Your intention in choosing a genre has origins beyond typological conventions, beyond definitions of type. In the case of genre, your creative writing intentions are associated with your appreciation of particular aesthetics, content, style, and tone. Choice of genre could also be said to work at both micro and macro levels – though in genre's case relating to codes of communication, with both public and personal dimensions.

Your own appreciation of the aesthetics of a genre draws from your sensory responses, whereby you encounter a category of creative writing, a genre, and you respond positively to it. You thus intend to pursue a certain genre of creative writing because your encounter with it brought you pleasure. Simply, the genre made you feel something; you had a physical reaction of which you are either conscious or unconscious – for example, a reaction that is manifest in your laughter at a comedy, or your tears during a touching moment in a drama, or your sense of awe felt in response

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to a work of science fiction. That reaction has been strong enough that you intend to act on it.

The aesthetics of genre are also more than this. You choose a genre that not only produces a sensory response from you but appeals to your emotions: you are moved by the genre to feel something. Accompanying this, your aesthetic response entails your intellectual judgment. Senses reacting, emotions engaged, you analytically consider the genre – judging that it is apt for the subject or theme, or that it has an exceptional ability to connect ideas and response, or that it is superior in its precision or its depth of investigation or its ability to entertain, or in its associations with the experience of your own life, or that it has value based on cultural, economic, or political conditions that influence your sense of its value.

In addition to subject and theme your intention to write creatively in a particular genre also relates more broadly to content. This is initially based on how you imagine your perceived content will benefit from the recognized conventions of a particular genre. Let's say you intend to write a story with a primary theme concerned with the bonds across humanity, as established in the stumbling discoveries of urban youth, combined with a subject that focuses on a fascinating piece of American history (say, the conditions of postwar industrial Alabama, in the years leading up to the Montgomery Bus Boycott). You envisage this content will best flourish in a drama. You don't envisage this content will best be developed as a work of science fiction or comedy. This choosing of genre has asked for your aesthetic judgment, drawing from your sensory responses, your emotional engagement, and your intellectual analysis. How you see content relating to, or not relating to, a particular genre is directly a result

of such judgment, responses, and analysis. Your most productive choice of genre in this way is always based on two primary concepts: ‘suitability’ and ‘fitness for purpose’.

Suitability refers to how you envisage a genre as the container and fosterer of your ideas, your interpretations, your creative arguments, as we might call those viewpoints and opinions you present through creative means. In other words, suitability is your answer to the question: Is this genre likely to support my creative vision? Suitability also has another meaning in referring to cultural perceptions and social mores, whereby topics of exploration are regarded as appropriate for certain genres but not for others. Content and genre in this latter sense are matched based on your individual ethics and on societal beliefs that are historically, culturally, and politically determined – for example, what is suitable for comedy in the twenty-first century in one country might be seen as unsuitable in another or have been unsuitable in the same country at an earlier time. Creative writers’ intentions quite simply reflect both their place and their time. This latter sense of suitability is encountered regularly in casual conversations on what is or is not appropriate for certain contemporary audiences – children, for example – as well as subjects and approaches to those subjects that are seen to disregard civility. This social mores definition of suitability is, of course, also formally incorporated into legal systems of censorship.

Fitness for purpose is a measure you can use to determine whether your choice of genre to support your intentions matches not only how that genre is suitable for your creative vision, likely to be appropriate for the content you have in mind, and supports your themes and subjects, but also whether it meets such criteria as appealing to your chosen

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audience, reaching your goal of recording an event or events previously unrecorded, considering something you have not previously had the opportunity to creatively consider. These are examples of criteria that are part of your intentions. So, while suitability might confirm how a genre supports content, subjects, and themes, and in doing so empowers your creative vision, fitness for purpose is a useful tool for considering a genre's applicability to your other aims.

Your choice of genre, additionally, involves stylistic choices. Such things as your selection of certain words and your structuring of units of language such as sentences and paragraphs. Because creative writing highlights the creative, the imaginative, and the inventive, such stylistic choices are potentially greater or more varied than they are in other forms of writing. In the same diverse way, genre involves choices of tone. Your intentions guide you here as well. In music, tone is often related to timbre, referring to distinctive qualities of sound. In creative writing you might think of tone more as attitude or as the character of a piece of work, that you work to create in the process of composition, and that keeps in play the viewpoint or viewpoints in the piece you are creating. Genre conventions, suitability, and fitness for purpose will shape your stylistic and tonal choices. Ultimately, however, your intentions are your overarching guide to the writing choices you make.

Form

Finally form, used here to refer to your writerly organization of a work of writing and the elements of its construction, is to intention as detail is to observation. That is, the casual

observer of an event might miss any number of details much as the less attentive creative writer might treat the use of form in creative writing merely as an extension of having chosen a genre and/or type of writing. While you can choose a type of creative writing and a genre, your intentions cannot really be fully met without your purposeful attention to form. If your decision to undertake some creative writing, or to continue to do so, is a proposition, and genre is a bringing together of the macro and micro dimensions of that choice, then your decisions regarding form could be called an adaptable consequence.

Because creative writing involves your reasoned action, form involves your reasoned action in singular instances and in connected organizational choices – each compositional choice you make, and each compositional choice related to another compositional choice. Knowing creative writing is a specific kind of writing, with specific characteristics and specific results, this can mean your choices favor certain constructional emphases. For example, descriptive writing over expository writing, or narrative writing over persuasive writing; your use of the personal more prevalent than your attention to the overtly informational. However, these are generalizations. Creative writing is inventive and eclectic, so your use of form can be equally as inventive and eclectic. How you navigate the use of form will depend on your ability to reason out how form choices will impact the delivery of your intentions, and then to apply creative writing skills that capitalize on your reasoning.

From the point of view of literary criticism, some might say that the creative writer's choice of form does not necessarily lead to truths about the finished work, or even about

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what the writer was intending. This is true enough in that when you are writing you are engaging both thoughts and actions that are conscious and those that are unconscious. The unconscious is almost entirely unreachable, though there are those using practices such as psychoanalysis who have long endeavored to reach and understand unconscious mental processes. Literary criticism correctly recognizes the difficulties and complexity of doing this. However, approaching creative writing from a creative writer's point of view, and given that your unconscious is largely unreachable, forms can most productively be regarded as tools chosen by you for a purpose. The primary variations to consider are those that potentially do exist between how you envisage the impact of your choice of form on your chosen reader/audience and how that form might *actually* impact on your chosen reader/audience.

As a creative writer you are so often endeavoring to move between the personal and the public. In other words, it is very unlikely you will have polled your readership and are creating your work based on responses to a survey regarding the impact your decisions will have on that readership. Your reasoning is therefore based on your experience and on speculation, and it is influenced by any education you may have received in creative writing. Questions arise: Do you know all choices of forms at your disposal? Have you applicable technical knowledge of how different writing forms are constructed? Have you considered reported reader/audience responses to particular creative writing forms? These might well have validity and influence your decision making. Is your intention to use a certain form in relatively conventional ways or are you aiming to make one part of your appeal to your reader/audience surprise

at how a certain form is used? Consider the use of footnotes in Vladimir Nabokov's novel *Pale Fire* or Mark Z. Danielewski's novel *House of Leaves* – footnotes are a familiar formal component of academic publications, but relatively unfamiliar in novels, and made even more arresting by much fictionalizing of the references in these novels.

Your choices and ultimately your decisions regarding form return again and again to your intentions, to suitability and fitness for purpose based on those intentions, and to how choices of form represent intention at the compositional coalface. Forms vary in themselves, of course, and you can compare and contrast choices of similar forms in the works of other creative writers. For example, how does one screenwriter use descriptive writing compared to the use made of description by another screenwriter? There are no universal rules about descriptive writing in screenplay writing. However, some critical opinion suggests that too much descriptive writing is in effect an example of 'directing on paper' and that adjectival writing in screenplays should therefore be kept to a minimum in order to better recognize the role of the director in directing the production process. Alternative critical opinion sees descriptive writing in the screenplay as an aspect of style and an opportunity to better shape a vision of the imagined final film. Comparing completed screenplays can provide you with evidence of different screenwriters' sense of form. Forms can of course also vary over your writing of one instance or work of creative writing. You might construct a poem with a consistent rhyme pattern, but feel your intentions are best met by moving between narrative and descriptive forms, interspersed with the lyrical. While writing forms involve structure and function, your employment of them

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is influenced just as much by your imagination and your feelings. Your actions in employing forms will be influenced by personal cognitive forces, how you individually recognize, perceive, and know things. Form in creative writing is therefore both physical organization, often clear by the appearance of your writing on the page or screen, and your personal response to the subjects and themes that you are investigating.

Patterns and Methods of Creating

By defining your intention to be a creative writer you suggest your commitment to the use of your time and environment in certain ways in order to undertake your creative writing. These certain ways are as varied in nature as those of us who choose to be creative writers. Defined by your intention, you perceive, seek out, and create your creative writing habitat or habitats. Of course, not all the mysteries of creative writing are resolved in doing so, and it might be that some of your attraction to being a creative writer comes from trusting in this fact. E.L. Doctorow, author of such works as *The Book of Daniel* (1971), *Ragtime* (1975), *Billy Bathgate* (1989), and *Homer & Langley* (2009) references this. ‘Composition is very mysterious,’ he says, ‘creativity is very mysterious. I think when you’re writing at your best, you don’t work from calculation, you’re not illustrating a preconception. You trust to the act of writing’ (Morris, 1999: 35).

While there are a great number of books that suggest habitual commonalities between creative writers – such things as you requiring somewhere quiet to write, or the

significance of you having an undisturbed length of writing time – your patterns and methods of creating will best be served by your accurate perception of what best suits you personally. Your creative writing habitat or habitats will be ecological, as are all habitats, related not only to the objects within the habitat but also to interactions that occur there, and to patterns of behavior – yours and those of others. You produce consistencies and continuities in behavior during your time as a creative writer, and you introduce, explore, and pursue variations, perhaps in relation to the launching of work on a new project or the need of a new outlook on one already in motion. In general, some activities and objects will remain fixed for long periods of time, because these elements of your writing habitat are felt to provide fundamental support for your methods of composing, or your ways of thinking, or the empowerment of your imagination. Other activities and objects will be introduced or sought out by you cyclically as you determine where you are in considering ideas, making imaginative leaps, physically attempting to write.

For example, you might generally buy books on a relevant subject at a certain point in your cycle of composition; you might begin composing on the screen or on paper, consistently in an ordered way, favoring one physical method or another; you might expect a certain number of words to be your average per day or per week, simply based on your previous results. These things return cyclically as part of your creative writing habitat. Further still, you will introduce new activities and objects as you seek to create a method of composing a specific work that is located in compositional time and place. No work of writing emerges without spatial and temporal context impacting upon it.

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Understanding this guides you toward identifying your patterns and methods of creating that are relatively fixed, those that are cyclical, and those that are new and potentially designed to positively disrupt previous patterns and methods. Intention generates these behaviors and assists in forming and reforming habitats.

Across the patterns of creative writing, you **draft** – that is, create in the first instance or in a way that suggests fluidity and change – you **revise** – that is, return to earlier writing to reconsider, reimagine, recompose, and aim to improve – and you **edit** – that is, prepare work for completion, seek to materially conclude your creative writing in line with your intentions. These patterns of creating, like all aspects of your creative writing habitat, are subject to varying degrees of consistency, continuity, variation, and change. Intention is therefore key to establishing long-term and cyclical behavior that will bring about creative writing. Intention is also key to introducing new behaviors that relate to specific writing projects and that either confirm or disrupt aspects of your writing habitat.

Commitment, planning, reasoning, and perception inform your decision to write creatively – this is the macro. Your intention has several dimensions, connected with your feelings, your intellect, and your imagination. Compositional questions determine your choice of type, genre, and form – this is the micro.

The first signs of your intentions will be expressed by your internal planning. Your patterns and methods of composing, creating, and recreating your habitat, through your actions and your interactions with others and with the society and culture around you, put your intentions into motion. Your desire to write creatively is connected to your

belief that your commitment, reasoned progress, and perception about your creative writing will ultimately bring you satisfaction.

Exploring Intention

- Consider your personal definition of success with creative writing, taking into account what will give you satisfaction. This will inform your intentions.
- Creative writing is an identifiable artistic practice and a distinctive mode of communication. Ask why you chose creative writing over other art forms, other methods of communication.
- When assessing what drives and maintains your writing, examine your commitment, planning, reasoning, and perception.
- Apply knowledge of your intentions to how you consider compositional questions, answering why you choose to employ certain types, genre, and forms. This provides you with a creative writing compositional map.
- Your intentions inform all drafting, revising, and editing—effectively guiding these practices.
- Create and recreate your creative writing habitat with your intentions in mind.

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