

# Writing about not writing

On 5 October 2014 I wrote what follows in a personal email to a friend. I was afraid it was drivel but knew she'd understand and forgive. She said she wants to show it to other people and I should post it online somewhere. So, here:

What can i think about not writing?

I think about writing and not writing what seems like all the time. The immensity of all the writing that is being produced and published ... one can hardly hope for much of a readership, readers have enough. But that's not it, is it, i ask myself, who will write for a handful of readers, even for one reader i guess, one besides the future self. I have these "projects" on the go but i actually forget about them some days these forgetful days. Writing always meant a kind of obsession. I miss so much being in that spell. Isn't that the whole point of it, that living in the other world. Having that reason to live, that feeling this thing needs me to complete it, realise it. Oh but now. This world, this time. I mean the immensity of its enormity. But get away from large statements and ask myself some question i'm not sure how to say. Something about how to see my life as it is now. Whatever I say, I've said it before, but never before at age 65. I've been thinking, write to Jenny, something will get more clear. What if i don't write anything ever again, i mean anything of length. I think, if I live long enough and get through this particular period, and get good writing conditions, i probably will. I know it really doesn't matter. Because it doesn't matter because the indifferent universe. And because i can say, i've done some work, made a body of work, it can do if it must. I don't know that ever before reading does what it does to me now so often: fills me with an awe that goes, i could never do that, rather than, now i wanna do that too. Maybe living here will prove to be good writing conditions eventually, once i get used to it, and feel i can always serenely enough deal with the various poisons in the air. I miss that feeling of the thing i'm working on making me keen to get out of bed in the mornings and back to it. Is it a matter of more discipline, a matter of taking more time for the project to reveal itself, have i become impaired and lazy or am i in a familiar territory of not trusting the process. Is the term negative capability the one i want here? Why aren't i reading Keats again right now anyway, so little time left to read again, plus, why have i not cultivated other things to do, i can do

nothing but read or write. Don't make art or knit or participate in online communities or anything. Which i think would make me a better person and my life lived in a better way. I spend evenings browsing, a bit of typing sometimes like this, watch a movie or a TV show, read a little, liable to fall asleep doing so, try and get plenty sleep.

For the mental health, that's also what i do, make sure i keep on an even keel, get my sleep and exercise, do some pranayama a bit more often.

Think, if i were in one of those writers' retreats i would write, i wouldn't have to think about looking after myself, i could use the hours in any way and go to pieces from time to time if it happens. Why don't i just read *Two Serious Ladies* again now.

Also thoughts about how it's supposed to be all about story story story while it's as if [other] literary pleasures are pushed out of sight.

The world changed immensely, is swiftly changing now, books being created by committees, i belong to a literary culture that i can see sinking fast in the quicksands of the past.

Quite fascinated by all the new stuff going on, reading astonishing stuff daily on that email list, but feel too old and tired and faraway and unable to think i can create in that world.

Does the answer to why write change? It's always, because you can't bear not to. I still can't bear not to in some sense, but i am not writing, in a sense.

Oh and not getting grants or anything, of course it's disappointing, which can't be helped, but how discouraging i really don't know

Forgive if you need to this blahhhhhhh.  
best love always