



The Thinking Room

... about Writing: Writing Styles

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The writing styles of some of my favourite authors like Stephen King, Gabriel García Márquez and J. G. Ballard are very different, and yet all very engaging for different reasons. It is the combination of their unique styles and excellent plotting which makes them so exciting to read.

Ballard's stories are some of the most engaging reading experiences I have ever had, especially once I came to recognise the trademark *Ballardian style* which enables his work to be identified within only a few paragraphs (sometimes in just a couple of sentences).

A writer is on top form when we can identify their unique Voice.

Wikipedia describes a writer's Voice as being *"...the individual writing style of an author, a combination of their common usage of syntax, diction, punctuation, character development, dialogue, etc., within a given body of text (or across several works)"*¹.

So how do we develop our own Voice?

There is a current trend in the entertainment media towards telling stories through short, punchy action sequences. In this internet-ready era our modern audiences simply don't have the patience to absorb slowly developing plot lines. They expect fast-paced stories, with clear lines of action, which they can digest quickly. This applies to written fiction as much as to films.

Aligning our writing to that reader expectation seems like good advice, but there is a problem:

"... if everyone writes using a short sentence style, without adverbs and highly focussed on action, then everything that is written will sound very similar... that one style will not help writers to differentiate their works and readers could quickly tire of the format."

We can avoid this by using language and sentence structures that appropriately match the needs of the piece being written, our target audience and the effect that we want to create. How we use words to create texture in our writing is critically important (see the adverb?). In my opinion, it is not inappropriate to stretch our readers' grasp of language (and maybe have them reaching for a dictionary), if this helps to evoke the right sense of place for our stories.

Reading widely and practicing writing in different genres increases our repertoire of skills, ensuring that our writing can meet the aspirations of our imaginations... as that old saying goes.

Our life experiences and literary background will help to shape how we use syntax, punctuation, dialogue and diction. By not forcing ourselves to adopt styles that feel unnatural to us, our own unique voices can then emerge, and it is wonderful when readers start to notice it!

What style will you use next?

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¹ From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, "Writer's voice", 3 September 2014, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Writer%27s_voice