


A Writing State of Being

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ARTICLE HISTORY

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ABSTRACT

How do you write a fiction text that relates to entrepreneurship without rewarding entrepreneurship, successful innovations, or a commercial market? That was my initial question when I set out to write a short story with entrepreneurship in focus. In this metatext, I reflect on altruistic entrepreneurship and the writing process for writing the short story that emerged in relation to the research questions, in which method writing is included. And exercise. And collecting deposit cans.

KEYWORDS

Artistic research; Method Writing; writing process; meta reflection; literary composition

Introduction

On a cloudy day in May, I had a meeting with Anna Schulze and was asked if I wanted to contribute a short story to the journal *Art, Culture & Entrepreneurship (ACE)*. Instantly, thoughts of texts I had already written came to mind. That short story about a teacher who sees potential in her writing students, attends their release parties and readings, and somehow fades herself out in her encouragement of others' drive and development. Or the teacher, from the same collection of texts, who pre-cultivates vegetables and, in her tending of them, sees similarities between various sprouts and students or participants in writing courses. And the deposit-can manuscript, a poetry project where the narrator searches for deposit cans in everyday life and goes further and further—in more than one sense.

But it wasn't a matter of using an already written text. I was to create something specifically for *ACE*, accompanied by a metatext.

We talked about broken dreams, about how not all entrepreneurial efforts lead to something grand. We discussed the relationship between disabilities and entrepreneurship, how, for example,

ADHD seems to be well represented among entrepreneurs. All of it appealed to me—and I realized it had already occupied my thoughts before. Everything except the economically most successful version, in the blockchain and tech sectors, with the rise and impact of tech billionaires.

After the meeting, I read up on the concept of entrepreneurship, which was used as early as the late Middle Ages, then referring to commanders who led mercenary soldiers. Armies weren't permanent but assembled as needed—warfare was outsourced. Later, the term came to be used in connection with business, and entrepreneurship as we use the term today refers to when an individual with an idea acts on it, usually to reshape the current market through a new product or service. Entrepreneurial behavior is defined as identifying opportunities and turning good ideas into action—something that can be useful and help others.

Regarding the fiction writing, I wanted to maintain my habit of method writing, which I elaborate on below, and incorporate it into the short story. Already during the first conversation with Anna, I had a premonition that my main character would be someone living alone, probably middle-aged. A few evenings later, I heard a horrifying, gut-wrenching scream of anguish just outside my home, without seeing the slightest trace of any incident afterward. I felt compelled to write about it and was triggered by questions like: How do you write something that cuts through the body, something that sounds like a death scream? What do you do with yourself after hearing it and finding nothing that relates to the sound? And—since I imagined a solitary protagonist—what if you have no one to talk to?

If a body had been found, the police would have helped sort it out. If a leash had been left behind, or a torn piece of fabric, the brain would have started piecing things together. But if nothing is visible? How do you even know the sound occurred? Maybe it was a longing within yourself for something to happen?

I combined the two threads. A solitary person, a disturbing sound. I wrote that scene in a notebook on the train one afternoon. It was the starting shot to get into the writing.

Parallel to the fiction writing—which, for me as for many others, evolves organically—I reflected on research questions. How can one write about entrepreneurship without involving business? I wanted to create a character who simply happens to do something entrepreneurial. Someone who does something innovative without actually being an entrepreneur, or consciously wanting to be one. An unaware entrepreneur.

Furthermore, I believe entrepreneurship often builds on other innovations, and I used that in my short story—for example, the step challenge. In an early version, social media also played a significant role, but it was removed in favour of the unconscious nature of the protagonist's entrepreneurship.

Methodological Considerations

What is it that makes a particular text? What constitutes the writing and the process leading to the specific text that ultimately becomes available to readers? I believe it's a combination of the author and the text. Let me explain what I mean.

To decipher what influences reading and the act of reading, there is, among others, literary scholar Anders Palm's well-known model of primary factors in text interpretation. It clarifies the complex relationships between vastly different components such as reader, language, time, ideology, intertexts, author, reality, and encyclopedia (Palm. 2002, p. 197). These are relatively broad and hard-to-define concepts, which Palm himself highlights. But even though each factor encompasses a lot and allows for interpretation, they—and the model itself—illustrate the complexity of the reading situation and what, in a double sense, creates it.

In a reversed way, one can imagine that the same or similar elements influence the writing situation and the author who actually writes a story. Or determine a story, if one thinks of storytelling as a result of many choices. Even if decisions made in individual processes resemble each other across projects, they are still unique to each author and each text. When revising a poem, we might ask whether a specific word can be replaced to better preserve rhythm or rhyme, or for any text type, experiment with how best to portray silence. These choices are not only found within a single text but can also extend into the realm of intertextuality.

In my case, I wanted a connection between the fictional text—the short story—and the metatext I'm writing here. Since I'm inspired by method writing, I thought that's where the connection should lie.

Many associate good writing with life experience, believing there's intrinsic value in 'living first and writing later', to have something *worth* writing about, or to write using specific parts of one's life as both foundation and detail. Poet and author Elisabet Rynell (2013) describes such writing in the essay "*Om en rödhake*" ("About a Robin"). At the Creative Writing Program at Lund University, where this essay is part of the reading list, the bird's name has become synonymous with writing through the lens of personal experience. This doesn't mean—it's worth emphasizing—that only personal experiences are allowed in writing. What Rynell and others suggest is that the text benefits from leaving behind the habitual. Don't write a cliché or a preconceived image, because it risks becoming too general, flat, or lifeless. Instead, write what you know. Use your experiences, your way of seeing the world.

Method Writing

I've heard the term *method writing* in many contexts, but it wasn't until Kristina Sigunsdotter spoke about it during a guest lecture at the Creative Writing Program that I realized I might be a method writer myself—at least according to her interpretation. In that case, the method seemed to involve a writer immersing themselves in a character to live through something, or immersing themselves in something to discover a character. To live in order to grasp something connected to the writing. It might be to deepen one's understanding of the character, to sense or experience something the writer might not have encountered in their own life. It can also be about filtering insights through a different interpretive lens than one's own, to physically and theoretically try to adopt a perspective beyond personal experience.

One question I have, which remains unanswered, is to what extent the writer can influence which experiences and situations lie ahead. How much is the writer 'allowed' to arrange these life experiences?

There appears to be no universally accepted definition of what method writing is or entails. Prior to composing this text, I attempted to locate sources and references, but without success. I also consulted Sigunsdotter, who likewise does not rely on written frameworks, instead drawing upon her own experiential knowledge¹. My understanding is that method writing constitutes an activity performed in close connection with the act of writing, grounded in both the author and the text—or, in certain cases, in the interplay between the author and a specific character².

¹ Email correspondence with Kristina Sigunsdotter, October 2025–November 2025.

² For a (so far unpublished) poetry collection I wrote based on this approach, it was more about discovering potential scenes/images and extracting vocabulary/encyclopedia. There was no specific character present—instead, the character would be shaped by the boundaries being tested. For the novel I refer to, there was already a main character, and during one phase the focus was on identifying their sensory perceptions,

Christine Falkenland is another author who has used the term *method writing* to describe her process. In a feature in *Vi Läser* #3, 2014, she says: “*Writing works like a kind of roleplay for me. I often think about how things might have turned out if I had been born into another life. Many American actors, like Marlon Brando and Robert De Niro, work with method acting. I do method writing. I hypnotize myself and enter my characters*” (Duke, 2014, p. 21).

Here, the connection to the much older concept of *method acting*, active since the first half of the 20th century, becomes clear.

But when asked about her working process, Falkenland’s answer isn’t about exploring situations and states, rather about drawing from what’s already stored: “*I have a lake of memory fragments I fish in: images, feelings, old ideas that have matured.*” And further: “*Then comes the next phase, when I start writing. I usually do that in bed and always by hand. I simply find that associations flow better for me there. It’s a bit easier to disconnect from myself*” (Duke, 2014, p. 21).

Perhaps there is both an abstract and an embodied version of *method writing*? Where Kristina Sigunsdotter and I use the term for the phase in which the writer moves and experiments in the world to explore and gather insights, Christine Falkenland uses it for an inner journey of discovery. My writing practice includes both an embodied and a more reflective variant, but when I use the term *method writing*, I’m referring specifically to the gathering phase—not the actual writing where I imagine and immerse myself in states to sharpen scenes, dialogue, or characters.

Another author who has used the term is Jenny Jägerfeld, who seems to have a flexible relationship with the method and uses it occasionally: “*All writers are inspired to varying degrees by their own lives, that’s just how it is. You take in your feelings and are affected by events or write about environments you’ve been in. But I’ve sometimes allowed myself to do things just to be able to write about them better, just like Penny in my book. A kind of method writing. I noticed that what I wrote sometimes became much better when I had experienced it*”, she says in an interview in *Elle* (Lejon, 2018).

Even though authors seem to interpret and apply the concept of *method writing* in different ways, the connection to acting remains. Christine Falkenland responds like this to the common (and in my opinion, uninformed) question of whether writing in the first person and using revealing characters creates fear that readers will interpret the author as the person in the work: “*No, that doesn’t scare me, because I don’t write about my own specific experiences. However, I do use my own life experience as emotional support. It’s like an actor playing a role and using their self-understanding to bring believable life to a character*” (Duke, 2014, p. 22).

A Writing State of Being

I’m the kind of person who, during an argument, might jot down lines or sequences I think could be used in literature. I’m the kind of person who, when tormented by anxiety or pain, can simultaneously feel a sense of exhilaration because I know that the state itself—and the thoughts surrounding it—are useful for writing. I’m the kind of person who experiments with myself and my surroundings to see what happens *if*. If something is a little more, a little worse, a little longer. Or conversely, much less. If I care less about what others think, I can carry out more of the ideas I get. If I’m less vain, I can collect deposit cans. If I’m even less vain, I can reach into trash bins to grab a can. And so on.

sensations, and physical limits—especially in relation to running under conditions I hadn’t personally experienced.

The can collecting started as a creativity exercise. I lived in Malmö and, being environmentally conscious, was bothered by how many cans were lying around. After a while, I became annoyed that I had been bothered for so long without doing anything about it. When I participated in a study group based on Julia Cameron's (2002) *The Artist's Way*, I took the opportunity to carry out one of the recurring 'artist dates'³ as a deposit can collector. I spent a couple of hours outside and gathered two garbage bags full. That was in 2012, and since then, deposit can collecting has stayed with me.

Over the years, through collecting cans, I've experimented with both my own and others' perceptions, which has led to many interesting experiences. It started simply, with me fairly well-dressed, picking up cans that were easily accessible—park benches, lawns, sidewalks. But then curiosity caught up. What happens if I step into a thicket (in the evening, on the way to work, near a preschool)? Can I take a deposit can lying on someone's property? Is it legally okay to pick up deposit cans lined up on a trash bin at the university where I work? How does a passerby perceive me if I crouch down and pull a deposit can from under an obviously expensive car, or snatch one from a bicycle basket? And is it okay to jump down onto the train tracks to pick up the three cans lying in the gravel? I used to work on trains and am aware of the safety, and know the next departure isn't for another twenty minutes... It's for a good cause. For our shared environment.

I've also brought home deposit cans from walks and runs where the contents made me question what I was really doing and what it was worth. Cigarette butts, snus, and snails are common. Sometimes ants come along, and once a naked slug body was about to slide out of the can I was carrying. Sometimes the contents leak and stain my hands or pants. I've also gotten tears in my clothes and on my skin from gymnastic efforts to retrieve deposit cans from rose and blackberry bushes. What am I willing to risk? The question became even clearer when I lifted my child over a fence: *Can you grab that one?*

I don't strive to answer. On the contrary, it's the questions and crossed boundaries that benefit the writing, that maintain a kind of plasticity in creativity.

Discussion

Early on, I had a desire to make the working method visible in this metacommentary. I therefore kept a writing log, took notes during both meetings and writing sessions, and soon noticed—thanks to the note-taking—that I was being drawn out on walks and runs in connection with the writing: *“One discovery I've made is that I've gone running almost every day I've worked on the short story. Is it method writing that's so strongly tied to my writing practice, or is it the other way around? Maybe it's the protagonist's exercising that has inspired me—that she's brought not only her workplace but also me along?”*

Writing is never just about words on a page—it's about the choices, the experiments, the lived and imagined experiences that shape those words. For me, method writing has been a way to push boundaries, allowing curiosity and the courage to take risks to fuel creativity. Whether it happens through collecting cans, imagining what unfolds just beyond one's doorstep, or exploring entre-

³ Julia Cameron's (2002) *The Artist's Way* consists of 12 chapters, with each chapter corresponding to a week in the transformation toward becoming more creative. On this journey, which moves through emotions and phases, the reader completes a number of exercises, and among them are a couple that recur every week: writing morning pages and, once a week, treating oneself to an “artist date” where the activity should be something one usually avoids doing. For example, something one wants to do but doesn't dare.

preneurship without business, the process is always about discovery. And maybe that's the essence of writing: not certainty, but the willingness to ask questions and follow them wherever they lead.

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Appendix 1 – From the Writing Diary

June 3

Meeting with Anna. I sent an excerpt from the short story and chose to cut the starting scene and only include what was written afterward, since I felt the beginning was unnecessary for the story. During the meeting, we concluded that what I'm writing about is altruistic entrepreneurship. There is an altruistic goal for the protagonist—that's what triggers everything. I still have thoughts about a possible disability and/or syndrome (without diagnosis), as I believe the story is built on underlying structures within the character. Something in the person is stimulated by the altruistic aspect and possibly also by the competition. Walked for 26 minutes, found 2 cans.

August 4

I've written for a couple of hours several days in a row and notice that the thoughts stay with me afterward, which is the most beneficial time in writing—when it blends into everyday life, intertwines with it, and situations light up with sentences, solutions, or details that fit directly into the writing.

A thought about the protagonist standing out with her step count and the company wanting to acknowledge it. Maybe a sum of money she could pass on to the project she started. But that doesn't feel right as an ending or resolution. Better that the project itself doesn't generate much money, but that she notices people coming together and moving. That becomes the real reward. Walked for 55 minutes, found 3 cans.

August 5

Yesterday I went for an evening walk with "my horse," usually my 9-year-old child, and couldn't help but circle around bushes and hidden spots near playgrounds. Sure enough, I found a generous amount of plastic bottles and cans. Most were crushed or half-melted. I brought home four intact ones with readable barcodes and put them in a cloth bag in the garage.

Thought about the ending of the short story. Maybe a year has passed, and after the protagonist has started a project that's gone reasonably well, the company announces a new step challenge because last year's had such a big impact. The twist is that this time, charity is no longer on the agenda—instead, it becomes the kind of individual competition they previously said they wouldn't do. How does the protagonist react? And how does the reader?

Besides the ongoing writing, I'm thinking a lot about translation. Should I try translating it myself, try AI? Or contact a translator? Walked for 61 minutes, found no cans.

August 6

I feel I'm not reaching the ending. Printed it out and read through. Made lots of notes—both rewrites and cuts. Through handwriting, I found a new temporary ending. Ran 9 km, found 1 can.

August 7

Wrote a new version based on the notes. Calling it Join In. Contacted a translation service to ask for tips on translators. Ran 5.5 km, found 2 cans.

August 13

Let the short story rest for a few days, then had test readers. Still not quite right, but each time I read it, I find ways to streamline it, which tells me I'm not done yet. Ran 8.75 km, found 1 can.

August 18

After a collegial discussion, I've decided to remove social media and the protagonist's idea of organizing groups online. Instead, I'll let coworkers approach her. It becomes entrepreneurship on a smaller scale and fills the void the main character has felt—companionship, and maybe even friendship.

August 20

Sent the short story to Anna after some final polishing. Ran 18 km, saw two crushed cans I didn't pick up.