



The Perfect Place to Write

Dilys Rose

A ROOM, FAMILIAR SO AS NOT to be a distraction, or unfamiliar in an understated, undemanding way; a room that avoids drawing attention to the particulars of itself, to the quality of the furnishings or the design of the only chair — though a comfortable chair is essential, unless one is a Woolf or a Hemingway (who wrote on their feet), or a Sitwell or Capote (who wrote recumbent). A swivel chair – also known as a spinny or revolving chair – is my go-to option. Swivelling, while keeping the toes on the floor, boosts the circulation and activates muscle memory of the days when, beehive hairdo or no, I made a beeline for the dancefloor, to *Twist and Shout*.

The room should be warm – writing is a chilly activity, even allowing for interludes immersed in the purple deeps of overheated prose and fretful bouts of swivelling – but not so warm as to cause drowsiness which, no matter the time of day, always threatens, like a dogged but lacklustre character, to make an entrance.

Any noises off should be soft and soothing: muted twittering, a light and leafy rustle, the languid flap of bedsheets stirred by the breeze, the distant strains of Chopin's *Nocturnes* played faultlessly. Cats should either be asleep in another room, or prowling the backyard. On no account should they be fighting or mating.

The room should be small enough to suggest the snug containment of a Galway shawl yet still allow for spells of pent-up pacing. It should



not be so cramped as to draw comparisons with a cell; nor should it be roomy. A roomy room offers a surfeit of enticements: all those angles and perspectives, those distracting bibelots and fascinating potted plants.

A room with a window, for doses of R & R from the task in hand, but not so large a window as to commandeer the eye.

A room with a view — a modest, verging on dull, view rather than any brimming panorama, which should contain an ample portion of nondescript sky: no blazing sunsets nor pyrotechnic thunderstorms, no murmurations of bats or budgerigars, no Red Arrow flypasts. Things which stay still are the best: houses, hills, lawns, ponds. An old, nodding horse or a broad cow swinging a lazy tail will do at a pinch, but roistering bullocks, frolicking lambs and prancing foals are far too diverting. An empty road, or a steady stream of vehicular or pedestrian traffic, beats sporadic, remarkable activity hands down. No ambling stiltwalkers, no gravity-defying traceurs; and heaven forbid any kind of procession or cavalcade is in process.

A room with a view; a room with a chair, a desk. A room with adjustable light. By day, natural light and a backlit screen are ideal, but as darkness descends, nothing beats the jointed arm of the Anglepoise, its beam trained on the keyboard, like a shift of sunlight passed through a magnifying glass to start a fire.