
~ 5 QUESTIONS ~

with

MARTIN CORNWELL

of earth shattering importance

1. If you could take one book to a deserted island, what would it be?

I was going to suggest an epic novel I love (like *Infinite Jest*) or one of the many classics I've never managed to get through. But actually I reckon I'd take Denis Johnson's *Jesus' Son*. It's barely even a novella, but I could read it a thousand times without getting bored.

2. What is your writing space?

Never in public – there are too many distractions and, in London at least, very few cafés quiet enough to write godawful first drafts without worrying that somebody can see it over your shoulder. Rarely on public transport – my handwriting's bad enough without it being made completely illegible by a bumpy bus ride. Usually at strange times of day. All of which is a roundabout way of admitting that I normally write at home, in my pyjamas, in the hour or so before work.

3. If you are in a writing rut, how do you get yourself out of it?

It depends. Sometimes when I'm stumped it's because of a problem with the structure of a story, in which case taking a break can be useful for figuring out where a change of direction is needed.

I've just finished drafting something quite long, for example, so I'm now taking a fortnight or so before going back in for edits.

When it comes to actually producing the words, though, the only way out of a rut is to keep pounding out the paragraphs. As Nick Cave put it, "I don't rely on inspiration. Inspiration's unreliable. I get up and I go to work." This is the dude who wrote *Murder Ballads*, remember, so it's clearly a method that gets results.

4. Pen, pencil, computer, typewriter, lipstick on a mirror – what is your preferred tool of trade?

I write on my laptop because it's the easiest and tidiest way to shift bits around. But I do also carry a notebook in case any oh-so-precious little *pensées* come to me while out and about.

5. If the world was going to end in a week and you had to choose between a small remote island or a metropolis to live out your last days, which would you choose?

The metropolis. Wouldn't want to miss out on all that end-of-the-world debauchery now.

~ About the author ~

Martin Cornwell lives in London. From 2006 to 2010 he co-edited the *No Quarter*, a satirical news website. He now contributes to *Quadrapheme*, an online literary magazine, and writes fiction. His upcoming debut novel is called *The Seers*.

You can read his story, *Man On!*
in **Islands and Cities: A
Collection of Short Stories from
Tasmania and London**

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