

My changing relationship with typos

When I start reading a new book, I like to read it out loud. I know it is a slower way to read, but I need time to learn the authors rhythm, language. I need time to get to know the characters. I like to pay attention. I am inspired by speed readers, and I have also thought to myself “if a writer intended for her readers to skip or skim words why would she bother writing all of them”?

Because I read each word, I usually catch typos if they exist. I used to be both proud and irritated to discover a typo in published writing. I would silently mumble something righteous to myself about professional writers and their editors as if one mistake in hundreds or thousands of words diminished their credibility.

I have at times been so stuck in the way I understood written english words that I have been known to be entirely incapable of understanding a text message from my husband because he missed or misspelled one word. I have been unable to comprehend entire messages until his sister’s response clarified his intentions for me.

To be fair, I also allowed my husband to send me love letters for the first two years of our relationship with the same typo in each one. Until finally the typo appeared in my Birthday card, and I decided enough was enough! I was done being sweaty. Although now that I’m peri-menopausal I can probably own up to this name better – more sweaty, less sweetie.

I really hoped DT running for president was a typo. The other night as I looked up at the stars, I heard an owl “whoo-hoo who who” and I had that sad feeling I get when I hear any bird song go unanswered. No other birds to respond. Loss of habitat. Loss of species. Loss of diversity. Suddenly, DT streamed across my mind and I projected all my anger about this solo owl and environmental degradation on to him. And then before I imploded in front of all the spruce silhouettes, the tops of the pines, and the waxing moon I wondered has DT ever been in a forest? Does he even know about the natural world or anything real at all? I felt so much pity and sadness for all the confusion, loneliness, and loss I felt like I could cry enough hot tears to melt the snow around me faster than mother nature’s warm breath on that spring night.

Anne Lamott says “Perfectionism is the voice of the oppressor, the enemy of the people. It will keep you cramped and insane your whole life”. So, I’ve set an intention to ease up my inner demon-jailer when discovering typos and have even vowed to add one in should I discover a “perfect” email. I say “we don’t need any more oppressors”.