



Creative Wordshops

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Writing Newsletter

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re-story, re-create
and re-imagine your
life and work

this letter is in

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In these days of online, see ongoing opportunities and 'what's on'

Dear seeker of words and images

Looking at your image in a clear stream, you answer the question

by your very presence

It's Dori lettertime. (As from now I'm sending the letter via mail chimp)
Living midst the uncertainties of the age, this month's theme centres on zen
pen - writing being and meditation. Why Zen Pen?

Zen (Chinese *chán* 'quietude') invites us to be present, to live and write simply.

Pen (Latin *penna* 'feather') refers to both practicing the art of writing and the implements we use. It also invites us to play in a safe place - as in playpen.



I saw this cat on a recent dawn walk. It seemed to be meditating - perhaps cats are natural meditators? This one seemed to sit in a quiet space amid a tangle of branches - (a tangle of non-thoughts?)

On my early walk the next morning, I came across a dog in more or less the same spot. Cat no longer in the tree.

I wonder what somatic (being in the body) cats and dogs can teach us about meditation and being? That focused gaze - that look and listen awareness...that presence. They live and move in and through the life force of the five senses. And what happens to our writing when we slow down, look listen, engage in the miracle of the body and write from the stillness - 'the still point of the turning world' (TS Eliot)? When we enter this slow down silence? You might recall T S Eliot's *Macavity the Mystery cat* who 'when he's half asleep is really wide awake.'

Observing this cat and dog led me to Yeats: *We can make our minds so like still water that beings gather about us to see their own images, and so live for a moment with a clearer, perhaps even with a fiercer life because of our silence.* And to Blake: *He ever will perceive a lie who looks at truth with not through the eye.*

As I imagined the two teacher creatures encountering each other, this poem emerged:

Dog and Cat seen on a Dawn Walk

the sun sets the edges
of the husky's fur on fire
as he contemplates,
still as a novice monk,
a few feet away
the saffron robed cat.

beneath the mountain path
she has placed her presence
at the centre of a tree.
her paws arranged in lotus.
a cat's cradle of boughs
encircles her silence.

she becomes a cameo
set in an oval frame,
quiet as a nun amid
a rosary of dune berries.
branches spider out, trapping thought
in a random cat family tree.

bowing to a feline of reincarnated
sages, dog yawns a sort of *Aum*,
the universe sound of creation.
then he pads on past guru cat,
the caress of awareness
still glows beneath his fur.

Some years ago I engaged with Gondwana staff in Namibia around story-telling and hospitality - a significant element of their branding. Here, in the foyer at one of their lodges, is an image superimposed on a map of Namibia:



How do we inscribe these words, neon lit, on the map of our reality?

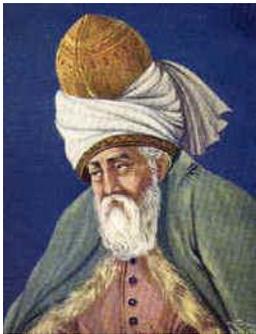
In Garth Stein's novel, *The Art of Racing in the Rain*, Enzo, the dog narrator, reminds us 'In racing, they say that your car goes where your eyes go. The driver who cannot tear his eyes away from the wall as he spins out of control will meet that wall... Simply another way of saying that which you manifest is before you.' So yes, energy in our texts also follows attention.

In the zoom age I'm offering wordshops/mini retreats. The one coming up on the radar (Sunday morning 24th May) explores this connection between writing, being and meditation. Both these states of grace slow us down so we can live in the moment. They increase our awareness and wake us up. We look with new eyes and hear with new ears. We write and meditate on the many changes and transformations as we journey along the river of our lives. We consider how creativity steadies the boat and how writing helps us dip the oars into dark water so we may navigate the river safely.

These wordshops/mini retreats are for those who wish to:

- ✚ learn and practice the craft of writing
- ✚ breathe life into words and let words breathe life into them
- ✚ be present in their words and lives
- ✚ increase awareness
- ✚ explore creativity and imagination
- ✚ find their voice
- ✚ find support and fine company
- ✚ connect to readers

Rumi too talks into this troubled time:



The breezes at dawn have secrets to tell you
Don't go back to sleep.
You must ask for what you really want.
Don't go back to sleep.
People are going back and forth
across the doorsill where the two worlds meet,
The door is round and open
Don't go back to sleep.

Cat and dog seem to invite us to move through that doorway, that liminal space. And as we step back into this current reality, we bring the gifts of meditation, being and writing. *Muchas gracias* cat and dog for being our teachers.

May we be present at the point of a pen and at our fingertips as they caress the keyboard.

Dorian