



Creative Wordshops

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storyteller facilitator speaker writing-coach poet

Writing Letter

Feb 2026

re-story, re-create, re-imagine you

for this letter, a weekly story and ongoing opportunities - dorianhaarhoffblog.co.za

Dear writer, storyteller, reader, lover of words, images, silences...

Thank you to subscribers of the monthly letter and/or the fortnightly Sat story.

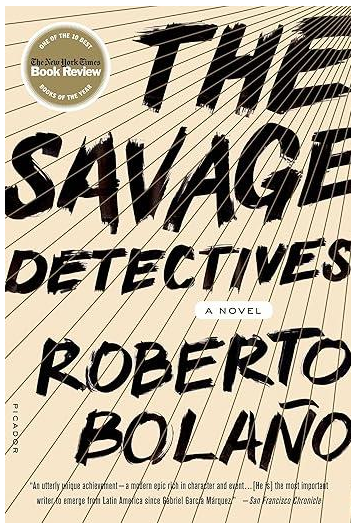
While these are gifts, for those who wish, voluntary donations are welcome.

Dr R D Haarhoff Standard Bank Current account 0828 59 248

In Praise of Portable Books: Aldus Manutius

A home without books is like a body without a soul. (Cicero)

In the novel, *Buried Treasure* (Sven Axelrad), Nova, a homeless young girl is apprenticed to Mateus, the Master of Cemeteries. Mateus is dyslexic, so the name tag around his black dog's neck reads 'God.' God does most of the grave digging.



Nova sleeps close to the Philosophical Dept (their soccer team is called Kierkegoal) at the University in the town of Vivo. Her pillow is dog-eared copy of a 577 pager (Chilean novelist) seen in the image. About the quixotic travels of two poets. Nova absorbs the story during the night while asleep through a kind of literary osmosis. She's able to tell the stories in the morning.

Here's another story embedded in another novel. In Venice there is a plaque, carved in stone, written in formal Italian. This marks the home of Aldus Manutius (1449-1515) a giant in publishing history. A Renaissance

humanist thinker who studied ancient Greek and Latin.

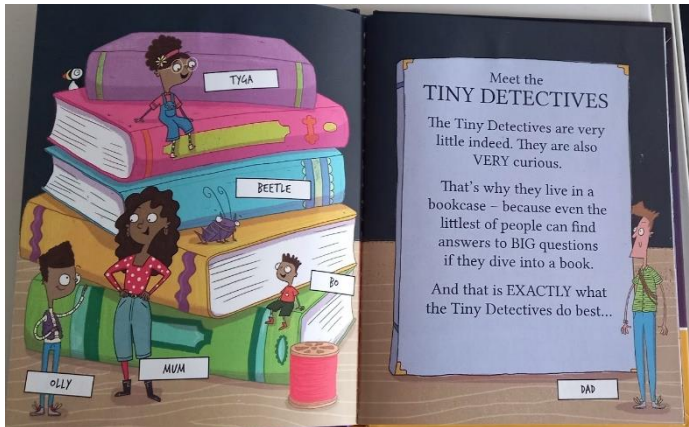
Before Aldus, books were sealed in private collections or monasteries, inaccessible even to scholars.



In 1490, in Venice, a centre of creative energy, Aldus opened his publishing house, the Aldine Press with the emblem of a dolphin wrapped around an anchor. This inspired by the Latin motto *festina lente*, (hasten slowly.) He published over 130 titles, including works by Aristotle and Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Desiderius Erasmus lived as his houseguest while preparing editions, praising his host's desire to *build a library that would*

have no boundary but the world itself.

Aldus was the first to print portable easy to carry books - the ancestor of paperbacks and e-readers. The bookseller offered loose pages in a package which the buyer could have bound. Aldus also introduced curved italic type to replace the cumbersome square Gothic print, helped standardize punctuation, defining the rules of use for full stop, comma and semicolon. To recreate the familiar feel of handwriting, he invented the "italic font." Aldus also introduced page numbers. Sandro Berra, MD of the Tipoteca Italiana Museum of Typography, calls him the Steve Jobs of his era... ahead of his time, risking everything on untested whims.



The preface to one Aldus' volumes carries this sentiment: *I hope that, if there should be people of such spirit that they are against the sharing of literature as a common good, they may either burst of envy, become worn out in wretchedness, or hang themselves.* By reviving the classics and

publishing modern works with rigor and beauty, Aldus wished that *it could be possible to defeat weapons with ideas and to sweep away barbarism with books.*

Aldus has inspired a biography *Aldus and His Dream Book*. and novels - *The Rule of Four* (in style of *The Da Vinci Code*) and *Mr. Penumbra's 24-Hour Bookstore* (featuring a secret society of bibliophiles and code-breakers.)

So this poem emerges:

In Praise of Paperbacks

as a child I cherished
a soft-cover flippable book
with figures drawn
in sequential poses.

thumbing the thin edge
I zipflipped through pages,
as animated characters danced
like movie stills set in motion.

today I hold 90,000 words
slipped from pocket to hand.
my absorbing eye sets setting,
characters, themes, scenes in flow.

they speedword their way
across space time, unstacking
a babushka book of words
revealing multi worlds within.

A belated 'by plus 500 years' thank you Aldus
Dorian

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Writing Retreat Radar – Summer 2025

detailed flyers on request

1. Mentoring: ongoing one-on-one attention

You help me to sound like myself (numerous clients)

Like a pair of sandals we walk this road together.

2. Bloem Storytelling Jamboree for coaches and leaders 11-17 Feb

Info: Igno van Niekerk 083 376 1330 & Werner Schmidt 064 141 4341)

3 Creating your Tomorrow A Words Breath & Being Retreat

Sat 21 March 2026 10.00 - 16.30 R860

wine farm Bot River Genevieve MCC <https://share.google/d6aCIpVlGeWj5zlaD>

In this mini retreat we explore our connection to words and presence. These
states of grace increase our awareness and wake us up.

The day includes breathwork with Fiona Hardie

4. Garden of Words & Images: a Writing Retreat for Poets & Writers 2026

Fri 27 (17.30) - Sun 29 March (16.30)

@ Temenos McGregor -www.temenos.org.za +27 23 625 1871

bookings via Dorian 082 873 6802

Dorian Haarhoff once again offers a 10th Temenos Retreat. The emphasis is on the Garden of the Beloved as a metaphor for our writing. How do we seed the writing? Place it where? Water it? Cultivate, graft and prune so it comes to full bloom? And so provide shade and sustenance for the reader?

5. Magic Carpet Writers (Somerset West)

last Wed of the month writeaway -next 28 Jan
a fun-loving supportive thinking/being group of aspirant writers

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