



Creative Wordshops

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Writing Letter

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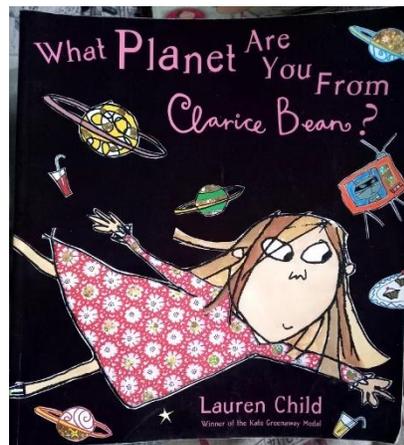
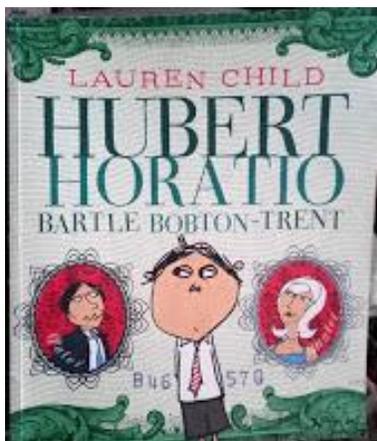


re-story, re-
 create and re-
 imagine your
 life and work

dorianhaarhoffblog.co.za for this letter, ongoing opportunities + 'what's on.'

In Child Mode

There are children playing in the street who could solve some of my top problems in physics because they have modes of sensory perception that I have lost long ago. (Robert Oppenheimer)

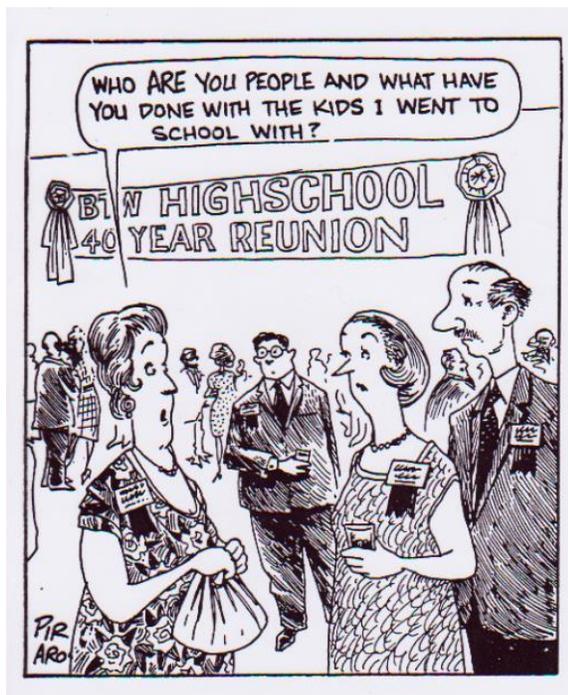


This month these two books arrived in my life via a charity (in Oz an opportunity or op) shop. Bringing a zany joy, a gust of air, an energy an innovativeness. Lauren Child's life story too is rich and strange. For her

books see <https://www.thriftbooks.com/a/lauren-child/234795/0>

This letter is not so much about writing for children, rather bringing this child voice into our adult texts. Many writers testify to how tapping into childhood memory revitalises our writing. "A writer who has had a childhood has enough to write about for the rest of their lives".(Flannery O'Connor)
 "Children have more real voice. They talk poetically more easily.... Children

have the gift of whole-heartedness, complete intentionality" (Peter Elbow.)
"A child is "a natural existentialist" (Sam Keen)



Here's one of my favourite cartoons. Apart from energy and detail, and the sense of "being there" as children, we were astonished by, absorbed in and sensually in our world. We lived in present tense. Entered a trance over a spider, a wheel chair woman, the wart on an uncle's nose. Crying and laughing within one minute.

Children are naturals at metaphor. My son, Adam, at six, looked into a glass of coke. "This is night and the bubbles are stars." When children play the space

under the kitchen table becomes a hospital or a car. This displacement is the origin of metaphor.

Many parents hold stories of the way children coin words. Damian, my son, at seven, blurting out "the headmonster carries a grief case." At a course a woman told us how her granddaughter referred to her "hagbag."

Virginia Woolf observes, "Dickens owes his astonishing power to make characters alive (as) he saw them as a child sees them". Her observation about Dickens seems true of exciting texts I've read. From Dylan Thomas's "A Child's Christmas in Wales" to Ezekiel Mphahlele's *Down Second Avenue*.

Mphahlele tells of growing up in the little village of Muapaneng with a grandmother who "sat under a small lemon tree next to the hut, as big as fate, as forbidding as a mountain, stern as a mimosa tree".

If we milked a goat in the veld or a goat kicked over a pail of milk grandmother found out that the evening's supply was short. Knowing that a beating was sure to follow, I poured out some milk into a second

pail, pissed into it so that it soured and thickened. I then invented the story that two or three goats had been too long in milk and that their kids had grown up.

Mphahlele does not write about childhood. He writes within childhood - not telling, but reliving. He is specific in his details and as an American writer, Charles Johnson, says "Specificity is generosity".

Here is Dylan Thomas - the first verse from *Fern Hill*

Now as I was young and easy under the apple boughs
About the lilting house and happy as the grass was green,
 The night above the dingle starry,
 Time let me hail and climb
 Golden in the heydays of his eyes,
And honoured among wagons I was prince of the apple towns
And once below a time I lordly had the trees and leaves
 Trail with daisies and barley
 Down the rivers of the windfall light.

*The creation of something new is not accomplished by the intellect
but by the play instinct acting from inner necessity. The creative
mind plays with the objects it loves. (Carl Jung)*

 Here is one of my recollections:

Keeping Track

the old coke cooler
with its flatpan tray
stood outside the window
where Granny Harriet
with thirty three grandchildren,
slept her senile sleep.

raised on bricks like a tokolosh bed,
it sagged, rusted in chicken wire
and trussed with trickle holes.
woodrot spat out screws and splinters.

this ruin, taller than a ten year old,
was my robber bank, bars for badman,
shoot-out rock, crow's nest
for island sighting,
but most of all
my pitstop and grandstand finish
for the tricycle track.

legs over handlebars
I pumped round trees -
citrus, fig and vine
circled in a brick blur -
past the corrugated fence
with a green flake paint ad,
sandpit S bend,
grape-shaped bridge
and down the straight,
frantic at last lap,
flashing by the check flag
and crowd roar from the cooler,
spinning a trinity of wheels.

then laurelled and champagne-sprayed
I fizzed into the breakfast room
where *Granny*, woken from slumber
looked up at me and quizzed,
ferreting the fridge of her memory
'now who are you again?'

Let's honour the then 88 year old Clint Eastwood's "Don't let the old man in" and keep the child within alive. I leave you with Lorca's "give me back the soul I had as a boy (girl) matured in fairy tales."

Dorian

On the retreat radar: ZenPen: Writing Being and Meditation

Sedgefield

30 July - 1 Aug

West Coat Fossil Park	10-12 Sept
Buddhist Retreat Ixopo	23-26 Sept
Khula Dharnma (Haga Haga)	15-17 Oct

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. (Yeats)

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

Pen (Latin *penna* 'feather') refers to the art of writing and to the implements

In these retreats, surrounded by and part of nature, we explore our connection to writing and meditation. Both these states of grace slow us down so we can inhabit the moment. We write and meditate on the many changes and transformations as we journey along the river of our lives.

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