

Upon writing

I recently discovered, with regards my compulsion to write, the actual cause of it, the diagnosis! Hypergraphia – beautiful. In these days of ueber-diagnosis of just about everything, its nice to know us writers are no different. According to Google's greatest source, Wiki, this disease is defined as, ' ... a behavioral condition characterized by the intense desire to write or draw. Forms of hypergraphia can vary in writing style and content. It is a symptom associated with temporal lobe changes in epilepsy, which is the cause of the Geschwind syndrome, a mental disorder.' Nice to know, again, as this news will bring great consolation to many of my family and friends who always thought I was a little 'left of centre'. Little do they realise just how far off that particular Richter I really am.

'Intense desire' may well be a euphemism for compulsion. And in this I don't think I am that far outside a wide circle of most serious writers. To young writers who questioned Gide as to whether they should continue he answered, 'What? You can stop yourself writing and you hesitate?' Orhan Pamuk's compulsion takes another form, although no less forceful his version is to ' escape crowds, crowds, the stuff of ordinary, everyday life and ...' shut himself up in a room. According to Pamuk, a writer is someone who 'spends years patiently trying to discover the second person inside' themselves to discover the world that makes them who they are. Nietzsche of course screams at you to become who you are. In the case of the writer – that 'who you are' is just that, the writer, the one who can sit for 'days, months, years slowly adding new words to the empty page.' The writer must write.

Of course, not everyone is compelled to write and there are obviously as many reasons to do so as there are unique individuals who practice. The sheer joy of it, to create, to enter a social milieu where they have a sense of belonging, to make money, to have fame, perhaps out of boredom. I think Murakami, who had spent years creating and running bars in Japan, finally woke up one morning as said to himself, "O, I think I'll write a book.'! Of course he does!

On the other hand, Lydia Davis, whose writing I adore, beautiful gems I return time and again, suggests writing's a choice, at least what we leave out or put in. She reckons we should not cave in to the pressures of publishers, or agents – do what you want to do and don't worry about if it's not right or doesn't fit the market. She says, work hard, aim high and get to know words. Solid, practical advice. Still, if she was stranded on an island and there were no more people in the world, would she still continue to write? As long as there was a pencil and paper, I 'suppose' so she laconically answers. Of course, she would, she suffers the same disease as I do. How could someone who writes like this NOT continue to write?

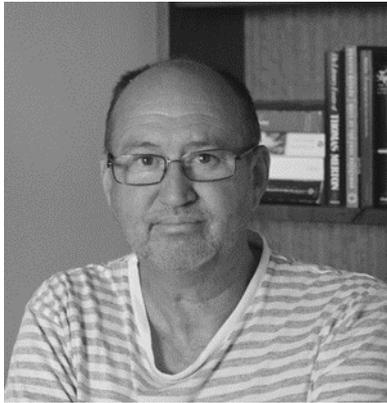
First a poet writes a story about a mouse, in moonlight in the snow, how the mouse tries to hide in his shadow, how the mouse climbs up his sleeve and he shales it down into the snow before he knows what it is that is clinging to his sleeve. His cat is nearby and her shadow is on the snow, and she is after the mouse. A woman I then reading this story in the bath. Half her hair is dry and half of it is floating in the bathwater. She likes the story.

Collected Stories, 2009

Finally let's listen to that most mystical of writerly creatures, Ukranian born Brazilian author, Clarice Lispector; how can someone with a name like that NOT be a writer?! If you really want to know why we write, us poor defeated beings, you must attend very carefully to her last,

and in my opinion, most exquisite novel, *A breath of life*, completed ironically, on her death bed. The novel is a paean to the writerly life, a dialogue between the writer and her creation, her masterpiece of a character Angela Pralini. In one minute she declaims, 'I want to write and cant do it', in the next she confesses, 'I don't write because I want to, no. I write because I must. ...' with that sumptuously ironic twist then '...Otherwise what would I do with myself?' O the irony, boredom and compulsion – what a horrid predicament. Neve the less, what truly gets me in this work is the magical truth that Lispector cannot avoid, 'I like words.', 'When I write I'm not thinking about the reader or myself: then I am – but only from me – I am the words strictly speaking.' And again, 'I want to write with words so completely stuck together that there are no gaps between them and me.'

Like many who have been diagnosed with one thing or another, I feel utterly grateful to have finally found out what is wrong with me. Perhaps now I can cure it. Some how I think not. In the words of the inimitable Samuel Beckett, 'I can't go on, I'll go on.'



Christopher is a Western Australian writer. He has co-authored several poetry books, including *Sandfire* (2012) published by Sunline Press, with other WA poets. He has poems and short stories published in many journals and online including *Westerly*, *Southerly*, *Regime*, *Page Seventeen*, *Wet Ink*, *Creatrix*, *Swamp*, *Axon*, *Island*, *Cordite*, *Tamba*. Along with many other awards he received First Prize for the Tom Collins Poetry Award (2009 and 2018) and the Todhunter Literary Award (2012) for a short story. He is published in *Best Australian Poems 2013*. He completed his doctorate in creative writing (2012) at Edith Cowan University. His poetry book, *Letters to Mark*, was published by Regime Books in 2014 and his latest collection, *Argot*, by Pomonal in 2016.

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