



The Beacon

Your guiding light for writing and publishing

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Ross Laird on Creativity—A Website to Inspire You

By Joyce Gram, Writer and Editor

Every once in a while in your virtual travels, you come across a website that stops you cold—and then enralls you with its clarity, originality, intelligence. This was my experience with Ross Laird’s website, two sites actually. Laird is a Vancouver writer, scholar and teacher who specializes in “the creative process as it infuses writing, craft, art, and personal development.” I heard him speak at this year’s symposium for writers presented by The Writers’ Union of Canada, and was so taken by his energy and insight that I immediately searched out his sites and, two months later, am roaming them still.

For *Beacon* readers, two of Laird’s articles are especially refreshing. “[Starting to Write](#)” begins, “Stop whatever else you are doing. Close your email application and Facebook, turn off the background music, silence your cell phone. Put it all away. Do it now. I’ll wait.” How could you not read on! Laird urges writers to enfold the process of finding and following their creative voice in silence. Then listen: “The creative animal [the path of creative energy within each of us] is primordial, eternal, wise beyond our knowing. It has been waiting for us, all this time. Listen to what it has to say.” And finally, write: “Allow the creative animal to write for you one good word, or sentence, or paragraph. Don’t mess up the writing.”

Laird’s article “[Tips on Tightening](#)” brought me up short. Nearly everyone who has attended a critique group has heard that the best approach to writing, in the initial stages, is to get it all down, put your thoughts on the page, worry about the editing later. Even I have said this to others; but never—not once in my writing life—have I done it myself. For me writing is a painstaking process: I cannot move on until what I have done is solid if not good. Now I discover that a renowned teacher of writing and author of books, one shortlisted for the Governor General’s Award, is “not a fan” of the spontaneous approach. “Good writing, in my view,” says Laird, “builds sentence upon sentence. Each new contribution adds to the structure and the framework of clarity.... Why go farther down your creative track when the foundation is not yet established?” Am I vindicated? I feel so.

Laird’s example of self-editing in this article, a sentence of twenty-five

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Ross Laird on Creativity	1-2
From the editor’s desk	1
Useful info for writers	2
Forthcoming events/courses	2
Ostrich round-up	2



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From the editor’s desk

Professional editor, Joyce Gram, again is front and centre. I asked her to write the lead for the summer issue after she was enchanted by Ross Laird’s presentation at The Writers’ Union of Canada Annual Symposium in Vancouver this spring. Laird is a true Renaissance man and one of my favourite writers/educators. He “tells it like it is.” If you get a chance to hear him, grab it and fasten your seatbelt.

Several readers have commented on the increase in images in these e-newsletters over the past year . Two reasons: they’re good for my creativity and travel writing. Photography has become an abiding passion in my partial retirement (lol!). Pix are also essential today to get articles accepted for travel markets. So, when there is some editorial space, I show off a little! Hope you like the image overleaf: These animals have brains the size of walnuts and lay eggs the size of melons.

Wishing you a wonderful summer, whether you rest and read, or you write like crazy. Whatever your fancy, I hope you are refreshed and energized in September.

Julie H. Ferguson

Ross Laird ... / continued from page 1

words, is the best lesson you will find anywhere. Phrase by phrase, he shows you how to achieve clarity and strength, image and resonance, how to embody emotion, and most importantly how to move yourself, the writer, along. "The sentence itself leads me on, as its writer, to the next stage.... I cannot write the next sentence without first the polished catalyst of the first."

Take a look at Laird's websites, and his books. They are worth your time.

Ross A. Laird: <http://www.rosslaird.com/>

"Starting to Write": <http://www.rosslaird.info/taxonomy/term/10> and scroll down.

"Tips on Tightening": <http://www.rosslaird.info/node/338>

A longer, recommended version of "Tips on Tightening": <http://www.rosslaird.info/files/tightening.pdf>

Ross Laird is a keynote speaker for [The Writers' Union of Canada](#). His slideshow for "Writers in a New Landscape" can be found here: <http://slides.rosslaird.com/writers.pdf.html>

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[Ostrich Round-up, Little Karoo, South Africa](#)

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Events/courses for Writers

June 12: *Write on the Beach* for new and emerging writers, 10:45am – 5:00pm. Five workshops and a panel; Fed members, \$50 and non-members, \$60, with lunch incl. (Students and under 25s - half price.) Details [here](#). Reg [here](#).

Jun 24-25: Inaugural **Chuckanut Writers' Conference**, near Bellingham. Deets at <http://www.whatcomcommunityed.com/chuckanutwritersconference/>

July 8-10: *Get Going with E-books, E-readers, E-publishing!* on Sunday at **Write on Bowen**, a boutique writers' conference on Bowen Island. Details at www.biac.ca/writersfestival/. Annabel Lyon is the keynote speaker.

Aug 14: *Summer Dreams Literary Arts Festival* at Lumberman's Arch in Stanley Park, Vancouver. For the full schedule of events and details, watch this [spot](#).

Fall 2011: *E-publishing: Do it Yourself!* for writers seeking to publish their books in electronic formats. Discover just how easy it is! With Debra Purdy Kong and Julie H. Ferguson. Shadbolt Centre for the Arts (Studio 103), 6450 Deer Lake Ave., Burnaby. Details TBA in September issue of *The Beacon* and on the BLS biz page at www.facebook.com/beaconliteraryservices.

USEFUL INFO FOR WRITERS

Port Moody Writers' Group offers summer sessions. Deets here: <http://beaconlit.blogspot.com/2011/04/port-moodys-summer-writers-groups.html>

Surrey International Writers' Conference, Oct 21-23, 2011. Registration opens June 1, 2011, at www.siwca.ca.

Audio Creation Exchange now operational for authors who want to convert their manuscripts into audio-books, either using pro-readers or do-it-yourself. www.acx.com/

Digital Rights Management for authors self-publishing in electronic formats. You must understand the implications of this. See my post on *The Beacon Blog* here: <http://beaconlit.blogspot.com/2011/05/digital-rights-management-summary.html>.

The third edition of *Book Magic: Turning Writers into Published Authors* will launch this summer in e-format and this fall in print. Huge revision and much on the topic of e-pubbing!

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