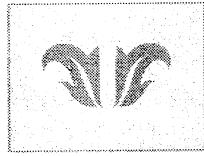


# WRITING THE FIRE!



*Yoga and the Art of  
Making Your  
Words Come Alive*

GAIL SHER

BELL TOWER  NEW YORK

Grateful acknowledgment is made for permission to reprint from:  
Sam Hamill: "Zazen on Ching-t'ing Mountain" by Li Po, translated  
by Sam Hamill, from *Crossing the Yellow River: Three Hundred Poems from  
the Chinese* (Rochester, N.Y.: BOA Editions, 2000). Reprinted by  
permission of the translator.

David Rice: Stanzas from "The First Petal" by Gail Sher and  
David Rice. Copyright © by Gail Sher and David Rice.  
Reprinted by permission.

Copyright © 2006 by Gail Sher

All rights reserved.

Published in the United States by Bell Tower, an imprint of the  
Crown Publishing Group, a division of Random House, Inc., New York.  
[www.crownpublishing.com](http://www.crownpublishing.com)

Bell Tower and colophon are registered trademarks of  
Random House, Inc.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data  
Sher, Gail

Writing the fire! : yoga and the art of making  
your words come alive / Gail Sher.

Includes bibliographical references.

I. Authorship. 2. Authorship—Psychological aspects.  
3. Yoga. I. Title.

PNI45.S466 2006

808'.02—dc22 2005024903

ISBN-13: 978-0-307-20991-7

ISBN-10: 0-307-20991-1

Printed in the United States of America

I 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

First Edition

# MAY WE ALL BOW TO SLOWNESS



While individuals vary, the natural pace of human beings is slow. In an atmosphere of slowness, kindness and thoughtfulness flourish. Writers need to be kind and thoughtful. Because they need to be authentic. (Kind and thoughtful is the way we naturally are.)

Hurry (pressure) makes one slightly insane. It *will* impact your writing because it impacts your central nervous system.

*Being* peace is the best way to demonstrate it. Being slow is a beginning. You cannot be violent to yourself (rush) and expect your writing ultimately to meet your standards.

Being slow is a teacher. It will remind you of your standards while helping you to implement them.

Being slow is a friend.

# BEFORE YOU PRACTICE



Create a writing temple.

The doing of an activity supports its continued doing. Make it easy on yourself. Create a space for your writing to happen.

Clean, quiet, neat. Surround yourself with what nourishes you. Your main tool is your concentration.

Which you want to build. Posture helps. To support your concentration, choose a chair that encourages a straight spine.<sup>4</sup>

Writers don't need much.

TAKE FROM YOUR POSE  
PRECISELY WHAT  
YOU CAN USE AND  
NO MORE. DISCOVER  
WHAT THAT IS.



Writing is a process. It happens over time. Increment by precious increment.

Please enjoy the process. (There's no hurry. Once you are engaged in it, you're already "there.")

Thus, the task, each day, will be dependent on that day's circumstances. Skill for a writer in part implies that when she arrives at her desk, she will, with greater and greater certainty, know what "today's task" is.

And when she's completed it, she stops. "Enough is enough," as my seventy-five-year-old grandmother once said.

Knowing when to stop, when to simply "lay it aside for now" is a tremendous liberator. It is good in the beginning. It is good in the middle (especially if you've chosen the wrong path). And it's excellent at the end (so as not to overstay, overstate/exaggerate/go on and on).