> " Be very patient. Impatience doesn't help the writing or the writer. "
>
> —Yiyun Li

Social site welcomes literary writers

AWHILE BACK, another writer told me about a community-based website for writers called Fictionaut (www.fictionaut.com) and suggested that I might want to join. At the time, I politely declined the invitation.

But Fictionaut began popping up on my screen anyway. Another website I admired—www.lunaparkreview. com, which focuses on literary journals—repeatedly brought me over to Fictionaut through cross-postings. Then, while searching for model author Q&As, I discovered an excellent interview series on Fictionaut's blog. When the writer behind that "Fictionaut Five" series, Meg Pokrass, issued an invitation (invitations are required, but they're free and anyone can request one at www.fictionaut.com/ request-invite), I took a closer look.

What I found impressed me: an engaged place, filled with energetic writers, both emerging and established. The week that I accepted that second invitation, Mary Gaitskill was listed as another new member.

While some people seem to post unpublished pieces or works-in-progress for feedback, other writers appear to use the site as a forum for showcasing published work. I was humbled and gratified by the responses that my own fiction received, and impressed by the quantity and quality of work that others were sharing.

Finally, despite its name, I'm seeing plenty of poetry posted there, too. And lest it all seem a little overwhelming, a "Groups" feature helps you locate others with whom you may share a bond—a favored genre, common city of residence or admired magazine. Somewhere on the Fictionaut site, there is very likely a place for you.

—*Erika Dreifus*

When to get butt *out* of chair

With the new year come our best intentions for making lifestyle changes, and fitness is usually high on the list.

Writing is a sedentary occupation, and we have a tendency to ignore our body and sit still for hours while we work hunched over the computer. The result: poor posture, unwanted pounds creeping on every year, declining aerobic fitness, and reduced strength fitness, until even the easiest chores become major efforts.

If you're concerned about these issues, here are a few tips to help you fight the battle of the bulge.

First, establish the best time in your hectic schedule to work out, ideally at a fitness club. Some of us work out best in the morning, others before lunch or in mid-afternoon, still others later in the evening. Experiment to see which time leaves you feeling invigorated, versus feeling exhausted.

Plan periodic breaks into your writing day—at least once every hour get up, stretch, and walk around. Stretch in your chair every 15 minutes, when you feel your shoulders hunching. In particular, stretch your chest muscles by pulling your arms back over your head and behind you. Bend forward and touch the floor to stretch out your lower back, and do side bends in your seat, with your arms over your head.

Your posture will suffer badly if you lean forward over your computer all day, so when sitting, keep your lower back arched, shoulders slightly back, and head straight versus craning forward at the neck.

Do strength-training exercises, concentrating on your legs, back, abdominals, shoulders and arms. A personal trainer can get you started with a good basic program, and make sure you explain that you are a writer and what your concerns are.

Two to three light weight-training sessions each week will do nicely, although you'll still gain strength with one weekly workout. You only need to do one set each of five to 10 exercises—you're not a bodybuilder, so high volume isn't needed.
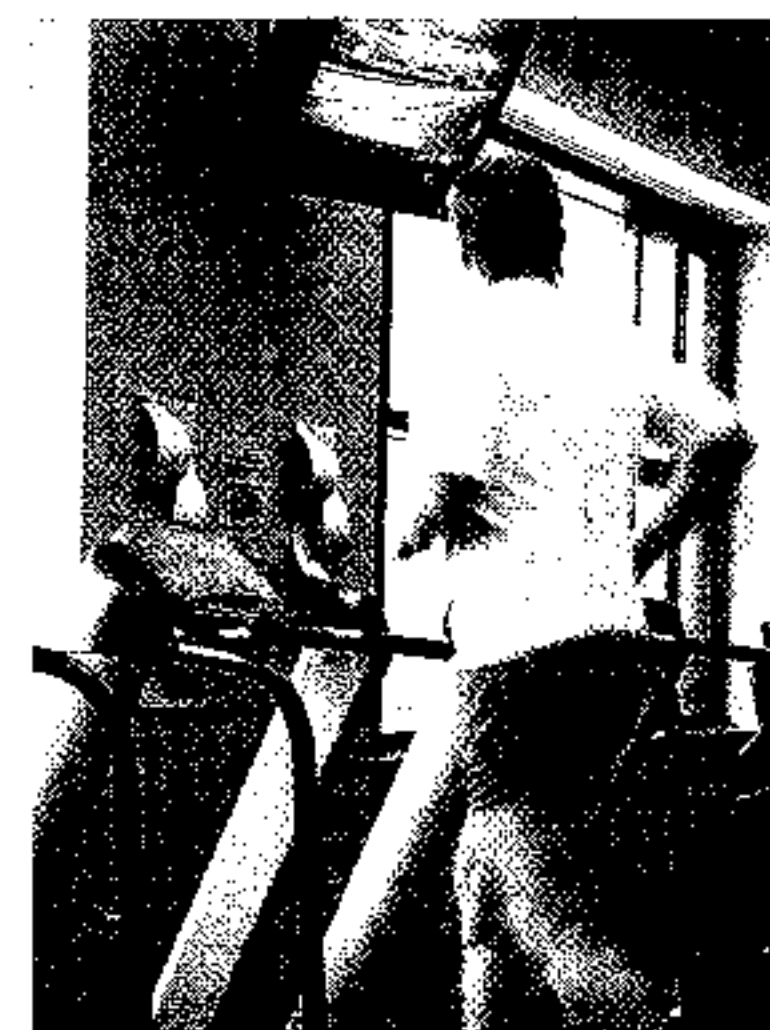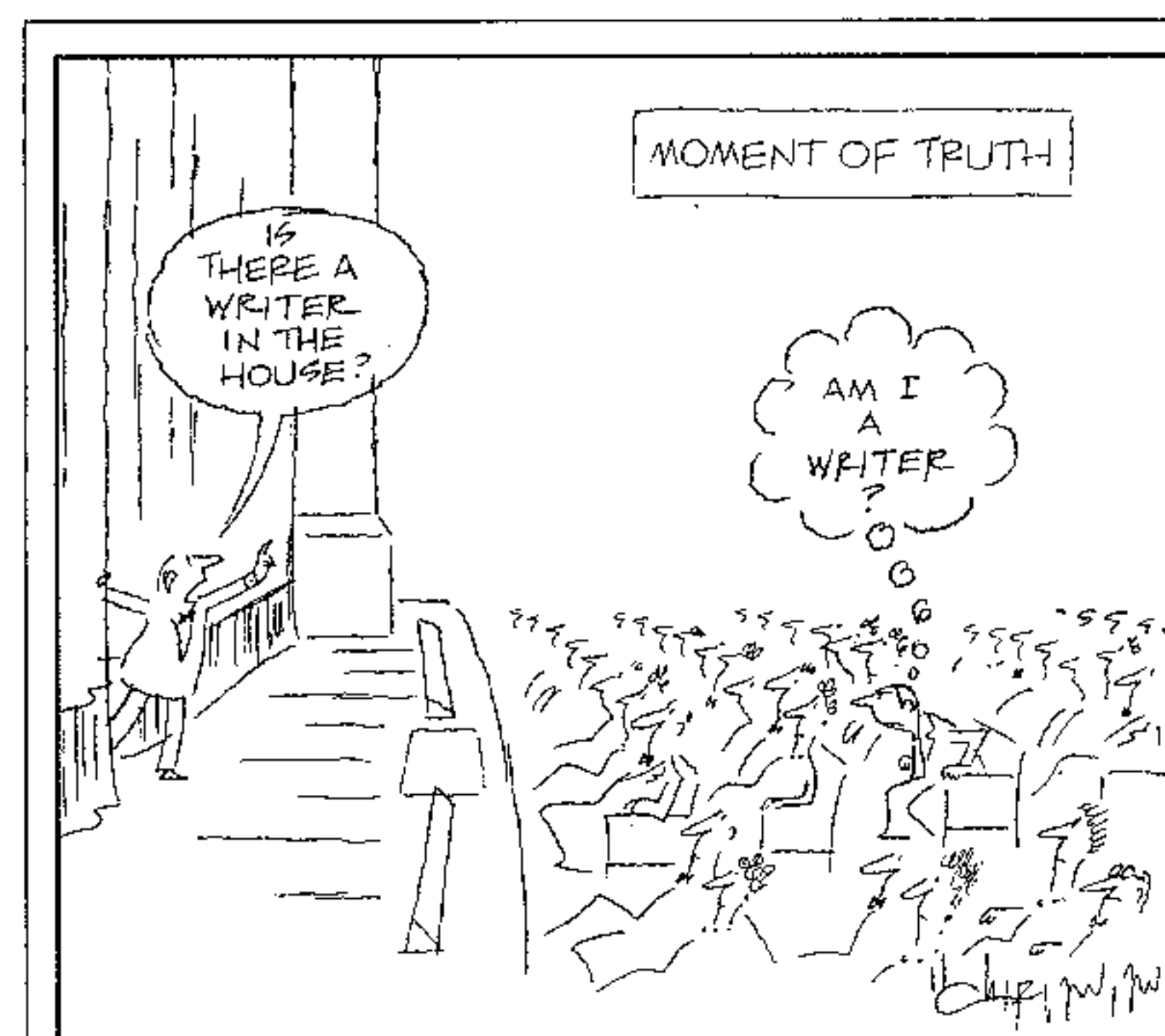

Staying in your seat will help your writing, but getting up and exercising will improve your overall health.

Your cardiovascular sessions should last from 15 to 45 minutes, almost every day, on a variety of equipment, and you'll enjoy aerobic improvements with a minimum of three sessions.

Some days you can just go out for a 30-minute walk, practice yoga, or engage in manual work like chopping and stacking wood—all excellent substitutes for a workout at the gym.

—*Roy Stevenson*

MOMENT OF TRUTH

IS THERE A WRITER IN THE HOUSE?

AM I A WRITER?

Vahan Shirvanian