



## Creative Wordshops

Dorian Haarhoff

082 873 6802

dorianhaa@gmail.com

[www.dorianhaarhoff.com](http://www.dorianhaarhoff.com)

storyteller facilitator speaker writing-coach poet

## Writing Newsletter

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

this letter is in

[dorianhaarhoffblog.co.za](http://dorianhaarhoffblog.co.za) (courtesy Dominic Haarhoff)

In these days of online, see ongoing opportunities and 'what's on'

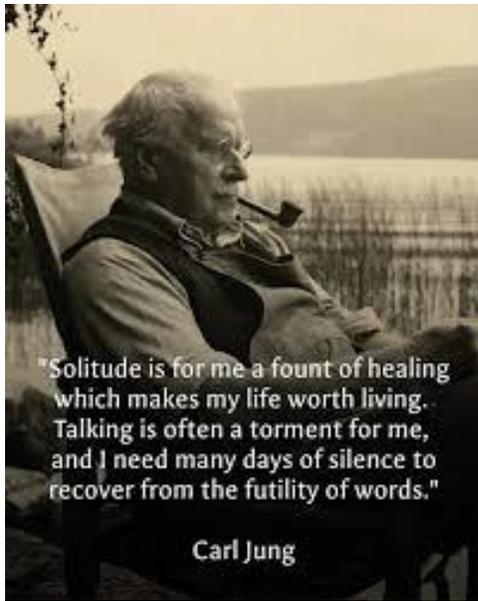
lettertime. (via mail chimp)

Dear seeker of words and images

*Whoever is innerly silent touches the roots of speech (Rilke)*

A recent dream offered this month's theme. Two teams engage in a debate. The first sprouts forth, articulating wisdom and insight, adding irrefutable argument and reference. Brilliantly structured and delivered. Now is the turn of the other team. This team chooses to respond in silence for the length allowed - some 40 minutes. Despite provocation, jeering, hurled questions, they hold the silence.

In waking, in lucid dreaming I add for the silent team, four images they project onto a screen. The Buddha holding up a flower in his silent flower sermon. The Rilke quote prefacing this letter. Rumi. 'Where the lips are silent, the heart knows a thousand ways to speak.' And Jung on solitude.



Silence shows many faces. Simon and Garfunkel sing of some of them:

Hello darkness, my old friend  
I've come to talk with you again  
Because a vision softly creeping  
Left its seeds while I was sleeping  
And the vision that was planted in my brain  
Still remains  
Within the sound of silence

So we enter a space where grace notes greet these sounds. Enlightened silence and dark silence.

Walking the pilgrim path in Norway five years ago, a Lutheran priest wore a string of beads so I stung a wooden set of different hues. I named the key beads - Alpha and Omega (gold), the dark night of the soul (black) creativity (green) and imagination (blue). Then clustered eight turquoise beads around these to represent eight kinds of silence and then wrote about each. The silence around the divine (awe and meditation) the dark silences (anger and despair) the silence of reading and writing around creativity, dream and memory visualization of the imagination.



Marcel Marceau, mime artist, embodied this galaxy of silences. Charlie Chaplain influenced him. Mine was the "art of silence... Do not the most moving moments of our lives find us without words?" Bip the Clown was one of his many stage persona across sixty years.

There is a story of the Rabbi who prays in the synagogue in surpassing eloquence, his articulation clear as a mountain stream, his words echoing the incantations of the Psalms. That evening he asks G-d 'was my prayer well received?' The Divine responds, 'your prayer was well received.' The Rabbi asks 'was it not in fact the best prayer that reached your ears this day?' G-d says 'no.' The surprised Rabbi then asks 'No? who prayed more eloquently than I?' G-d mentions the name of Kefi. The Rabbi mutters 'Kefi? He's the janitor of the synagogue. What does he know? What did he say?' The Divine replies 'Kefi stood up. He held out his hands in silence and then spoke. "I am a simple man. You know that I love you and in order that I do not offend you, I will recite the alphabet and you arrange the words according to what pleases you."'

And let us not forget the three bickering monks. The master sends them off to fetch a bowl of water from the spring and sit in silence for three days contemplating the same bowl. At sunset on day one, monk 1 breaks the silence. 'That dratted wasp keeps buzzing round the bowl.' At the end of day two, monk 2 responds, 'That was a hornet.' Towards the end of day three monk 3 speaks 'I can't stand your bickering. I am the only one who has honoured the silence.'

I have noticed, in retreats when we move between the silence of the meditation hall and speech in the teaching studio, how the quality of the writing enters 'the deep-delved earth, tasting of flora and the country green' (Keats). Then we write out of such as space.

At a recent retreat in the dawn we had donned saffron robes when we sat in silence for half an hour. After that I asked retreatants to wander into the garden and stand before something natural. Like Wordsworth to 'see into the life of things' and with William Blake to 'see a world in a grain of sand.' To observe with all three eyes and then write out of such silence. One woman returned to share her words: 'The flower is meditating in its saffron robes, its face raised to the light.'

Here is a poem I wrote at a recent retreat:

### **Tree Wrap - Emoyeni**

here at this retreat  
a tree rises and rests  
between talk studio and  
thatched meditation hut,  
the beams draped in quietude.  
its limbs shade the green leaf wall  
where we move through an archway  
between two modes of being.

as the trunk ascends  
above ground  
it splits into two, branching  
into bough then twig.  
in both lungs bronchi  
breathe in and out the sky.  
the leaves bow,  
windbrush and whisper  
while the roots tunnel  
under round rocks and earth.

both nerve the studio heart-to-heart  
while offering silence to the hut.  
the tree reaches across  
to wrap speech and silence  
in its curved roots and arms.

We are surrounded by the great silence before conception and after we depart. When we allow silence to become part of our daily rhythm we touch the essence of who we are.

Metaphors too invoke silence for they take us to the edge where words touch the unsayable, the unspoken. The clouds of unknowing. Silent as a hair follicle embedded in layers of skin emerging on the surface to touch the wind.

And with Yeats: '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.'

And Rumi:

Give more of your life to this listening.  
As brightness is to time,  
so you are to the one  
who talks to the deep ear in your chest.  
I should sell my tongue  
and buy a thousand ears  
when that one steps near  
and begins to speak.

Dorian