



Creative Wordshops

Dorian Haarhoff

082 873 6802

dorianhaa@gmail.com

www.dorianhaarhoff.com

storyteller facilitator speaker writing-coach poet

Writing Newsletter

Oct 2020

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

this letter is in dorianhaarhoffblog.co.za (courtesy Dominic Haarhoff)

In these days of online, see [ongoing opportunities](#) and ['what's on'](#)

Dear seeker of words and images

There are four things our ancestors need from us: acknowledgment, validation, understanding, and forgiveness. (Steven Farmer, Healing Ancestral Karma)

Ancestral Karma

Let's begin with numbers 2 4 8 16 32 64 128 256 512 1024

These numbers = ancestral multiplication. We are at the bottom, the vortex, the focal point of an expanding V. Two parents, four grandparents, eight great-grand etc. etc. In 10 generations over 1000 people are alive in our cells, directly. Singing the chorus of our bodies. We are a choral work.

In Present Moment Wonderful Moment, Thich Nhat Hanh reminds us 'If you look into the palm of your hand, you will see your parents and all generations of your ancestors. All of them are alive in this moment. You are the continuation of each of these people.'



One day we too will be ancestors. If we extend the other way, passing on genes and DNA to those who come after us, we're into diminishing fractions - $\frac{1}{2}$ $\frac{1}{4}$ $\frac{1}{8}$ $\frac{1}{16}$ $\frac{1}{32}$ - half of us in our children, $\frac{1}{4}$ in our grandchildren, etc etc.

Most of us concede that genetic influence, physical attributes, disposition, unresolved issues run down-hill, given that the past influences the present. This is so yet if we move beyond linear time, there are those ever-present moments that TS. Eliot writes of in his oft-quoted meditation:

Time present and time past
 Are both perhaps present in time future,
 And time future contained in time past.

In the parallel words of Farmer: 'When we heal ourselves, we heal the past, the present, and the future.' Some years ago I played with this idea in the poem:

If Ancestors were Apples

when one apple ripens
in the bowl
on the kitchen table,
apple ancestors,
granny, star-king,
ripen in reverse.

they lose their bruising.
reseed their rotten core
from bitter black.
the pink lady
unwrinkles her skin.

they sweeten again
crisp, fiberwhite,
golden delicious,
to juice the Eden tree.



What if we still have issues with immediate ancestors - parents, grandparents? Unresolved anger? Is what Farmer writes idealised? 'Ancestors are benevolent beings who love us. You are their legacy, and they want the best for their progeny. Their own evolution in the Otherworld depends upon the completion of unfinished business or

making amends for unkind acts or deeds that they may have committed during their lifetime.'

Here is part of Mary Oliver's response in a poem about her father who abused her sexually as a child:

Poem for My Father's Ghost

Now is my father
Walking the wind,
Sniffing the deep Pacific
That begins at the end of the world.
Vanished from us utterly,
Now is my father circling the deepest forest -
Then turning in to the last red campfire burning
In the final hills,
Where chieftains, warriors and heroes
Rise and make him welcome,
Recognizing, under the shambles of his body,
A brother who has walked his thousand miles.

Let's pretend... what if (among this poet's favourite words) the myriads of hidden silent eyes came visiting? Once more in a playful mode:

Tour Guide

through the bus windows
I see them huddle heads,
pointing at me, jabbering
these ancients.
sixty two of them
five generations.
me, at the bottom
of their vortex,

they have come to sight see
me. *he has your eyes.*

they clamber down the steps
what will he show us?
I hold the placard high
'Ancestors Tour
Welcome to Doriland.'
where will we go?
there are no suitcases to lug.
they travel light
as a swan feather.
we hug, shake hands,
double kiss like a helix.
I name tag them.

we head for the movie house
to watch three score plus years.
my father and mother point out
the river picnic. *there we are.*
they sigh, shake they heads,
pass comments, groan, applaud
No, no, the other road
you've fallen into that hole before
just like he did.
grandmother nudges grandfather
who nods away a snore
stuck in his teeth.
he has your walk,
the way you settle your shoulders-
one double great to another.

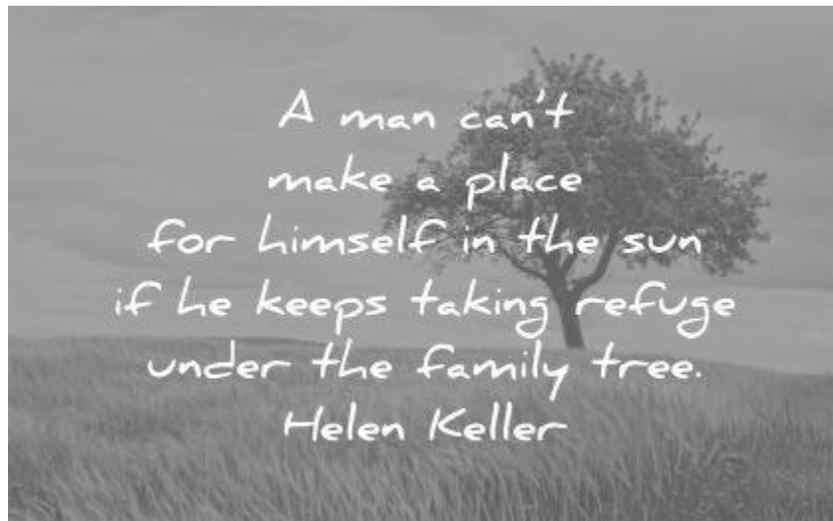
they are curious about

what happens next -
the great shaker of story
for the movie affects them
as the archetype's play out.
me pushing against patterns
bright as blood cells.
bold as DNA strands.

after the movie
we spill out into the streets
and they walk through my life,
window shop, finger fabrics
I cook a meal, I eat alone
while they watch.
he still gulps like you
with no famine to drive him -
triple great to spouse.
I show them my study,
the family file of cuttings,
the collage I created to hold
the energy for the year.
they interrogate
the five Ws of me.
the geography and markets
the loves and laughter.

on their way back to the bus stop
the women insist on cruising
through the dark part of the town
where streets lights are stoned.
a brandy bottle rolls down the alley.
grandfather gropes then remembers
he no longer needs a shot.

as they board the bus
for ancestor land
they have other askings in their eyes.
*will he break the cage that holds us?
swing open the door wide?*
as they wave, their hands
like swan necks,
form question marks.
*will his spiral shrink inwards
or spin out like a sparkle
a swan wing wheel
to become the milky way?*



We tell and write our stories and place them next to those of our family, immediate, extended and chosen. For family includes not only blood but our spiritual tradition, culture and the line of those who share our passions. Once more, Mary Oliver in *Wild Geese* (the ending)

the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting

over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.

Such a family leads me to Rilke in his *Book of Hours*

I am circling around God,
around the ancient tower,
and I have been circling for a thousand years,
and I still don't know
if I am a falcon, or a storm, or a great song.")

May we change the script and create such patterns of belonging.

Dorian