



Creative Wordshops

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Writing Letter

Dec 2021



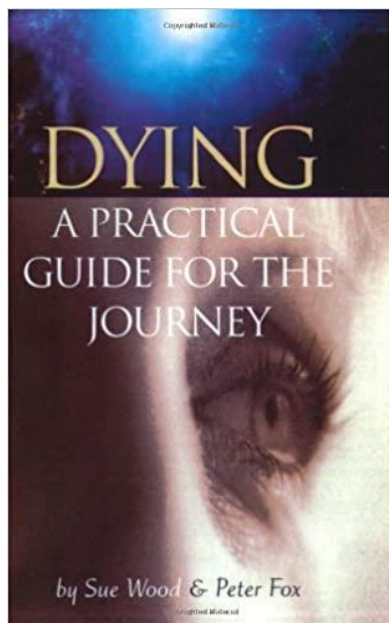
re-story, re-
create and re-
imagine your
life and work

dorianhaarhoffblog.co.za for this letter, ongoing opportunities & 'what's on.'

Hospice-tality

*"I've told my children that when I die, to release balloons in the sky to celebrate that I graduated. For me, death is a graduation.
(Elisabeth Kübler-Ross)*

Imagine a roadside inn in the Middle Ages. People dying here on their journey while the innkeeper plays host. This letter's focus is on this Hospice journey, this graduation, this crossing over, or as a friend calls it, this translation.



For some 25 years I have connected to Hospices - facilitating storyshops for volunteers who in turn elicit stories from the dying to leave as gifts, presenting Oom Schalk story evenings with Henk Serfontein and his concertina and MC-ing 'Voices for Hospice' as fundraisers. I've also mentored friend Peter Fox's book (co-authored). He, a former spiritual director at a Hospice. And I trawl what I call Ho Spice shops in search of workshop prompts (lit matches). Chinese stress balls, mirrors, enlightenment cards, keyrings, marbles, foreign coins, maps, balloons with happy birthday on them.

(Why no happy death day on the other side?) among the treasures.



I've also known Helderberg Hospice care, watching over the death journey of loved one. Maureen. At her funeral in 2016, our mutual friend, Barbara Kennedy, also living in Pringle Bay, accompanied a praise poem on her cello. We have also offered Hospice soirees.

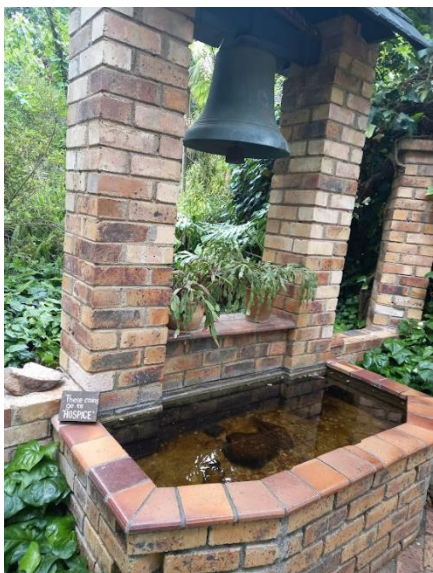
The word 'hospice' derives from the Latin *hospis*, (host and guest). The root word for hospitality, hospital, hotel, hostel in English and other Romance languages.

The first Hospices might have originated

in Malta around 1065, caring for the ill and dying en route to /from the Holy Land. In the 14th century, the order of the Knights Hospitaller of St. John of Jerusalem opened the first hospice in Rhodes. Now there are many holy wayside inns throughout the lands.

A death doula, assists in the dying process, much like a midwife or birth doula does. It is often a community-based role, aiming to help families cope with death through recognizing it as a natural and important transition.

Many psychologists such as Marilyn Mendoza, author of *We Do Not Die Alone*, specialise in bereavement. A Threshold Choir at a bedside offers lyrics, short and repetitive, focusing on words of love, caring, release and going home. I love the thought of music as company for this crossing. In a *Psychology Today* article she writes:



Research into the use of music in hospice and palliative care has found that patients, family, and staff all benefit... Music decrease anxiety, agitation, and pain. Patients slow and deepen their breath.... In 1973, Therese Schroeder-Sheker coined the term *Music Thanatology* to refer to a specific way of playing music for the dying. The musician is trained to use the harp and voice to improvise and adapt the music to coincide with the changing physiology of the dying patient. (The coins in this wishing well at Delheim go to Hospice.)

I once read of a volunteer in a mortuary who sang to the corpses. Hymns and lyrics. Once an opportunity to practise this art for an unknown someone, arrived in my life:

The Same Rainbow's End

once on an overnight no-moon train
coastal Cape to city of Gold,
we slid early morning
into a smalltown siding.
as I dropped the shutter, an ambulance
on the platform reversed past the widow.
I jumped the steps and followed
to where it halted a dozen coaches down.

I sole watcher, witnessed two men
load a body bag into the back.
a woman in gloves, a detective glint
in her eye, emerged from a compartment.
she brisk-clipped the words *diabetic attack...*
midfifties... got on midnight at Kimberley.

as a paramedic raised the tail gate
I stepped forth. I'd read days before
of a mortician who sang to cold slab corpses
hymns and serenade songs - *abide with me,*
you are my sunshine, moon river.

I spoke. *I'm a priest... will say a word.*
well, a poet is a sort of one. ask Lawrence DH
whom folk dubbed 'priest of love.'

to quizzical heads I sang to one
who embarked from my birth town
and same age, died in transit,
bound on the same rail to

who knows where, a journey song.
I nodded to bemused medics
then walked back to the compartment
still whistling beneath my breath.

*two drifters, off to see the world
there's such a lot of world to see
we're after the same rainbow's end,
waiting, round the bend
my Huckleberry friend,
Moon River, and me.*

And talking of harps, to accompany the journey, at a recent 'Voices for Hospice' (Helderberg) in Somerset West, harpist, Kobie du Plessis, played her much loved instrument. To contribute to the music, I, as MC, also offered a ballad written for the occasion:

The Songs of the Hospice Helderbirds

As daylight fills this Bright Street church
musicants tune their keys and strings.
Hospice singers spice up their songs
for the music festival now begins.

The birds from trees descend to rest
on the staff of wire lines and space.
Between two poles that form the score
they become the notes of sound and grace.

Throbbing bodies pipe organ notes.
Their wings and feet sign crotchet and quaver
Tail feathers shape clefs - treble and bass.
Their melodies ecstatic set us aqiver.

Feather light from the Hospice garden,
sugar birds *frit frit* through scented air
The reed finch lauds its lemon splendour
A turtle dove *coor-coor-coors* the hours of prayer.

Here's a three beat Piet-My-Vrou -
some call this shy one Be-Here-Now.
It pitches his tone so wind chime pure
through throat and beak its praise resounds.

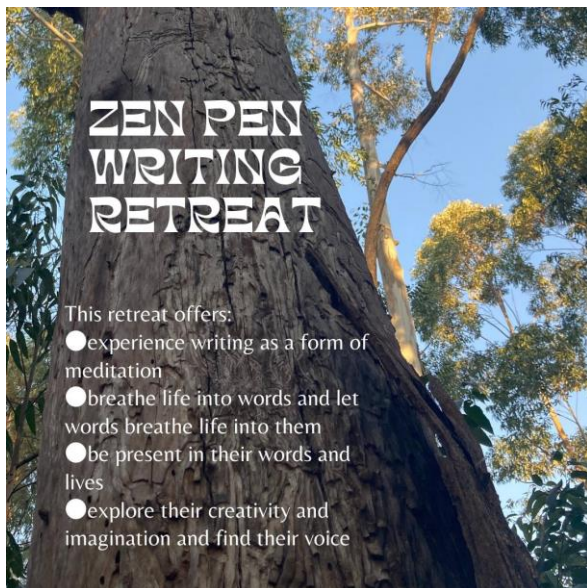
This trilling measures the beat of hearts
as it plays with octaves this spring day.
Thrilling the twilight with evensong
these Hallelujahs take our breath away.

And so, as we contemplate endings and beginnings, here is Elisabeth Kübler-Ross who begins and ends this letter:

Watching a peaceful death of a human being reminds us of a falling star; one of a million lights in a vast sky that flares up for a brief moment only to disappear into the endless night.

-Dorian dorianhaarhoffblog.co.za

On the end 2021/ begin 2022 retreat radar detailed flyers on request



ZenPen: Writing Being and Meditation

Khula Dharmma (Haga Haga)
3-5 Dec

Zen (Chinese *chán* 'quietude') invites us to be present, to live and write simply.

Pen (Latin *penna* 'feather') the art of writing and to the implements

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. (Yeats)

In this retreat, surrounded by and part of nature, we explore our connection to writing and meditation.



Hundreds of Ways

Writing your Spiritual Journey

Let the beauty we love be what we do. There are hundreds of ways to kneel and kiss the ground (Rumi)

Temenos McGregor

1-3 April 2022 (Fri 18.00 - Sun 17.00)

Booking and payment www.temenos.org.za

023 625 1871

The word 'spirit' touches every aspect of our lives. In this retreat, like Dante, we invoke the image of the journey.

In the middle of my life I found myself in a dark wood. The way was wholly lost and gone...My will and desire were revolved, as a wheel that is equally turned, by the Love which moves the sun and stars.

(Dante- beginning and end of Divine Comedy)

Time to write, walk, circle the garden, sit amidst blue glass ...and be.... as we move between silence and speech.

Writing and meditation bring us alive and expand the present moment. On this retreat in a sacred space (Temenos) discover the writer inside you. We explore our innate creativity and imagination as we connect to mindfulness and bodyfulness.

The retreat offers you a safe place. We focus on how to be present in your writing and engage the reader as a creative partner. And source your bliss.



The retreat **cost** includes:

Temenos accommo 2 nights + free 3rd night

2 brunches and 3 suppers in Tibaldi's

the retreat experience

a set of notes plus a gift related to writing

teas coffees (drinks own account)

a story evening*

R3975 pp

icon in the Little Way chapel

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