



Creative Wordshops

Dorian Haarhoff

082 873 6802

dorianhaa@gmail.com

www.dorianhaarhoff.com

storyteller facilitator speaker writing-coach poet

Writing Letter

Feb 2022

re-story, re-create,
re-imagine yourself, your
work, your relations

for this letter, a weekly story and ongoing opportunities -
dorianhaarhoffblog.co.za

Two Chairs for the New Year

The only true aristocracy is that of consciousness." D.H. Lawrence

Every 1 Jan I create a collage to set intention for the coming year. This letter reflects on the 2022 collage and how the assembly of images culled from magazines knows more about me than I do. Like a Jungian mandala, the images arise out of the unconscious sea, land on my beach and speak, offering hidden insights and the words that accompany them. This becomes a visual writer's map. (see 13 Feb opportunity under radar)

In Travelling with Pomegranates, Sue Monk Kidd tells how her novel collage for *The Secret Life of Bees* gifted her the plot. She'd culled 20 images, randomly glueing them together. Then one moonlit night:

My eyes wander back and forth between the picture of the three African American women and the uproariously pink house. I scan the cloud of bees and the black Madonna in chains.... And boom, it falls out of the night, landing in one unbroken piece in my head. My two runaways will escape to the home of three black sisters, who live in a pink house, keep bees, and revere a Black Madonna.

There are many ways of invoking collage energy. Here is mine, writing via allusion, invoking memory. I choose the 2022 theme from the title of David Whyte's *The Three Marriages: Reimagining Work, Self and Relationship*. I cull images that wish to speak and randomly glue them on an A2 cardboard sheet, number them, breathe and poise my pen. Here are stream of

consciousness conversations arising from 4 of the 24 images. This year I will place each image in the empty chair and listen. This one called for a poem:



Two Chairs for the New Year

in a sculpture on a solid base
an artist has cast a prime man
poised on a straight chair,
slat-backed wood. unmasked,
bronze body erect. naked
he sits alert hands-on-knees.

across the measure
of social distance,

crossing empty space,
the sculptor faces him
with a clone chair
full of nothingness.

such conversations can take place
in the presence of an observer,
a third, who chairs the meeting
in the atmosphere of, say,
a therapist's 'help you' room
with inviting art on the wall.

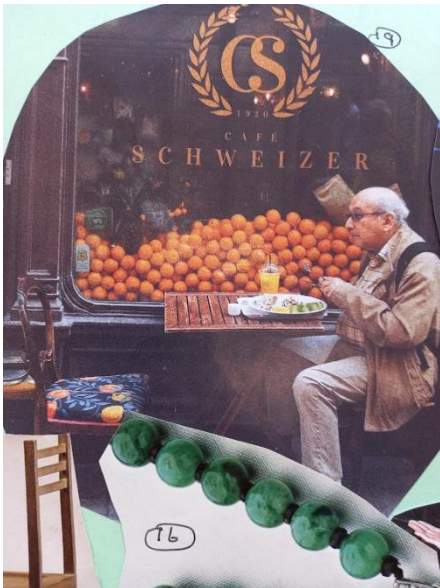
you sit in one chair
and talk to your opposite,
your choice of occupant.
or you slide across the divide
playing musical chairs
without removing one.

who is this other who waits
with you, face to face,
playing a live game?
the Child inside, dead tyrant,
Divine, shadow, split-off Self?
your patient or immanent Death?

today on a stoep, facing
the wind and wave ocean,
I place in the vacant chair
the new year becoming.
as we lean towards each other
we raise a champagne flute. cheers.

gut to abdo-man
the spider thread stretches
across 365 in-betweens.
the electron waves and spins
around the nucleus through
the vacuum in our atom.

here's to us, twin sitters,
meeting heartthrob to heartbeat
in such shared-space non-space
we roll twelve moon cycles
through eye mouth body breath.
our old man river song begins.



This second image led to my calling, *vocare* - Café Schweizer (Swiss) evokes the Swiss Foundation that has supported story work I have done in Namibia for over 25 years. CS = Carl Schlettwein Foundation. The late philanthropist Carl's motto was "Pass it on." The figure represents this lovely man, the oranges the people I reach through story and writing playwork. The adjacent image is of two children rising up in an air balloon. The Foundation only supports Namibian enterprises. The café is in Stockholm, a city I visited as part of a 1988 Namibian delegation to meet SWAPO in exile. So the thread unfolds.

I misread the café name as Schweitzer - the theologian, musicologist, organist, medical missionary, 1952 Nobel Peace prize winner whom I then researched,

finding parallels between his theology and mine (the Pauline idea of Christ consciousness) and healing. (People often refer to my work as a metaphoric ministry.)

Then the missing 't' led me to the trickster archetype found in these two images which I'd positioned (unintentionally) next to each other.



I often tell 'mentorites', "First describe. Trust the description to lead you into insights." So I follow this route - these characters from a tale come alive, leap out of a book. The elfin winged boy calls up my friend, Igno van Niekerk, photographer, writer. In 2011 I met him at a mutual gathering at Shangri la Modimolle, which generous Bruce Copley sponsored for folk who had worked alongside him in his Aha learning edutainments.

Igno projected images, one of a desolate girl alone in a school playground. He had photoshopped her a pair of wings. Igno and I have shared many stories and wordshops since. And the coyote-like furry creature gazing at the leaning Pisa book tower represents the ever-present trickster. Books for 2022 on the fishing line... reading and writing? My ZenPenYen poetry out first quarter.

The clown invoked a 1952 movie, *The Greatest Show on Earth*, (Cecil B Demile, with James Stewart as Buttons.) As an impressionable 8 year old, the story moved in and through me. A circus clown who never removed his painted face. In a circus train crash, in order to save a life, he blew his cover. Buttons was a medic who had taken his suffering wife's life (mercy killing) then gone into hiding. Gregory, an FBI agent on his tracks, helps him administers a direct blood transplant. Then the reluctant arrest. My early introduction to loss,

compassionate action, irony, ambiguity, paradox understatement, letting the audience add the two and two. I'll be aware of these in the coming months.

Writer, Flannery O'Connor, believes, "anyone who has had a childhood has enough to write about for the rest of their lives" And anyone who has created a collage has enough to write about the rest of the year.

I am enough of an artist to draw freely upon my imagination. Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world (Einstein)

Go to it.

Dorian dorianhaarhoffblog.co.za

Writing retreat radar – first quarter 2022 detailed flyers on request

Waking up to Beginnings: a Zoom Collage & Writing Storyshop

Sun 13 Feb 15.00 -18.00 SA time R330



*I said to the man who stood at the gates of the year
"Give me a light that I might step safely into the
unknown.*

A collage is a lamp that sheds light along our path.
Collages open us to the patterns, themes, seasons and
rhythms of our lives. They offer insights and surprises
as they evoke, as traveling companions, our creativity
and imagination.

In this wordshop we search for images to accompany us through the coming year. Through this ritual of beginnings, we set intention, possibility and evoke courage. This work draws from the well of the unconscious to create energy and synergy.

Bring writing materials, old magazines, scissors, an A2 sheet of cardboard.



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/ 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.



icon at Temenos 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** (investment?) includes:
- + Temenos accommo 2 nights + free 3rd night
- + brunches /suppers (drinks own account)
- + the writing retreat
- + a set of notes plus a gift related to writing
- + a story evening

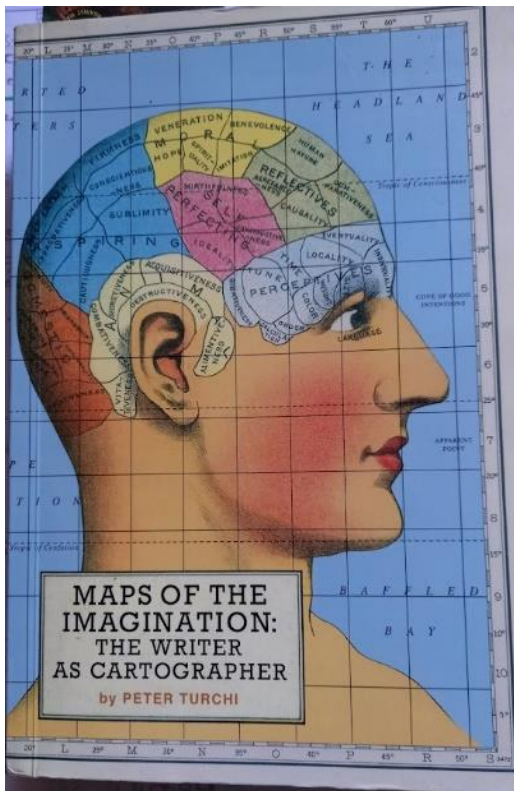
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Other assignments:

26, 30 Jan ,1 Feb: writing module Executive MBA UCT Business School

25 Feb to 18 March: Namibia (Windhoek, Swakopmund Walvis Bay) to story-train counsellors, therapists, social workers, teachers who work with children at risk. (courtesy Carl Schlettwein Foundation, Basel)

Magic Carpet Writers (Somerset West) meet in the room or on zoom



Our ongoing monthly writeaway...

Need to be part of a fun-loving supportive thinking/being group of aspirant writers?

Writing exercises, conversation, energy, soup and wine. Beginners are welcome... make writing friends

Our first half of 2022 theme? see book title

We begin Wed 2 Feb @ 18.31ish
then Wed 26 Feb...

and then last Wed of every month.

(R810 for 6 sessions)

And in between, **one-on-one mentoring**. You wearing one sandal, I the other.