



## Creative Wordshops

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# Writing Letter

## March 2022

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

for this letter, a weekly story and ongoing opportunities -  
[dorianhaarhoffblog.co.za](http://dorianhaarhoffblog.co.za)

Stop press: *ZenPenYen* poetry collection out in April

Orders R150 plus postage R40- e book will be available plus voiced text

*The metaphor is perhaps one of man's most fruitful potentialities. Its efficacy verges on magic, and it seems a tool for creation which God forgot inside one of His creatures when He made him. (Jose Ortega y Gasset)*

### A shepherd, an owl and a Buddha

Here is a dialogue between the Buddha and a shepherd from *Zorba the Greek*, (Nikos Kazantzakis):

The Shepherd: My meal is ready, I have milked my ewes. The door of my hut is bolted, my fire is alight. And you, sky, can rain as much as you please.

Buddha: I no longer need food or milk. The winds are my shelter, my fire is out. And you, sky, can rain as much as you please.

The Shepherd: I have oxen, I have cows. I have my father's meadows and a bull who covers my cows. And you, sky, can rain as much as you please.

Buddha: I have neither oxen, nor cows, I have no meadows. I have nothing. I fear nothing. And you, sky, can rain as much as you please.

The Shepherd: I have a docile and faithful shepherdess. For years she has been my wife; I am happy when I play with her at night. And you, sky, you can rain as much as you please.



Buddha: I have a free and docile soul. For years I have trained it and I have taught it to play with me. And you, sky, can rain as much as you please.

While establishing difference, Buddha and Shepherd unite in the same refrain. They become characters in the same story.



In my 2022 collage for the coming year, I included this image of an owl and buddha. This piece of spontaneous writing emerged, echoing and extending Zorba's dialogue.

"Owl and Buddha wrap themselves in the same tree. Owl in his tawny feathers, perched high up in his watch tower has the vantage of advantage. His night eyes wide open detect the vole, the rabbit the rat. Vigilant, focused, he swoops, ingests them whole then spits out what does not nourish.

Spying the Buddha down at the roots, he asks about his philosophy. Buddha responds. 'You see night eyes open. I see day and night eyes shut. You in your feathers, I feather light in my robe. You hoot, I chant.'

'Poised in awareness, I too see the rabbit thoughts scuttling across the forest floor, pounce, ingest them whole then spit out sinews and gristle - that which does not nourish. I sit in silence where the visible and invisible meet on the thin earth line, open to the rustle of light, the rush of wind. Opening to the dark ferreting of the roots in underearth. The sap rises and falls through us both as breath does. You carry symbols of paranormal wisdom, regal silence, and intelligence. Owl in Buddha, buddha in Owl.' "

Some cultures believe owls to be magicians or heralds of death. Teaching in the 70s, we prescribed Margaret Craven's novel. *I Heard the Owl Call My Name* (1967). A young priest, Mark Brian, who does not know he is dying, is sent to a First Nations parish in coastal British Columbia. While teaching creative writing at Univ Victoria on Vancouver Island in the 90s, I encountered this rich owl symbolism in conversation with a First Nation's student. Yet until owl and buddha occupied the same collage tree in 2022, I never connected them. This is the joy of imaging and writing as hidden connections are made manifest.

Both owl and Buddha spend time in solitude - this state of grace too is a writer's companion. The Spanish philosopher, José Ortega y Gasset, (quoted in the preface to this letter) in *An Interpretation of Universal History* writes:

The greatest of the prophets, Isaiah... spoke of himself as the voice of one "crying in the wilderness." Because the mission of the intellectual is to be the one who, from the desert, our basic solitude—and man is only man amid his truth, only himself when alone—cries aloud to others and invites them to reach into their own solitude.

Owl and Buddha become mirror metaphors for each other. Metaphor is by definition the sudden merging of the unexpected, of two un-alikes, an insight into the world of 'thou art that.' Aristotle reminds us that "the greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor. It is a sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies an eye for resemblance." This is what we cultivate through eye and ear for "The price of metaphor is eternal vigilance." (Arturo Rosenblueth and Norbert Wiener, two pioneers of cybernetics.)

So how can we be owl-buddha vigilant and cultivate our writer eye for resemblance?

Dorian dorianhaarhoffblog.co.za

## Writing Retreat Radar – March to May 2022

detailed flyers on request



### 1. 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](http://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*

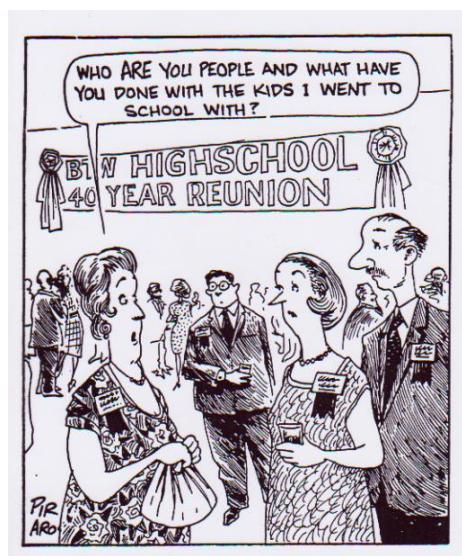
*equally turned, by the Love which moves the sun and stars. (Dante- beginning and end of Divine Comedy)*

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

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

**R3975 pp**



## **2. The Library Inside: Leaving a Legacy, Leaving a Gift - Writing & Storyshop**

Sat 26 Feb 15.00 -19.00 N\$ 350\* (inc 20% for charity) Kultuursentrum Whk

Contact: Susan Alexander  
[susanalexander@afol.com.na](mailto:susanalexander@afol.com.na) 081 272 0459

Stories are gifts we leave behind us. This storyshop is about rediscovering and sharing our stories about our lives, loves, lyrics and losses. About the adventure of mind, body and spirit. Moments when we were fully alive.

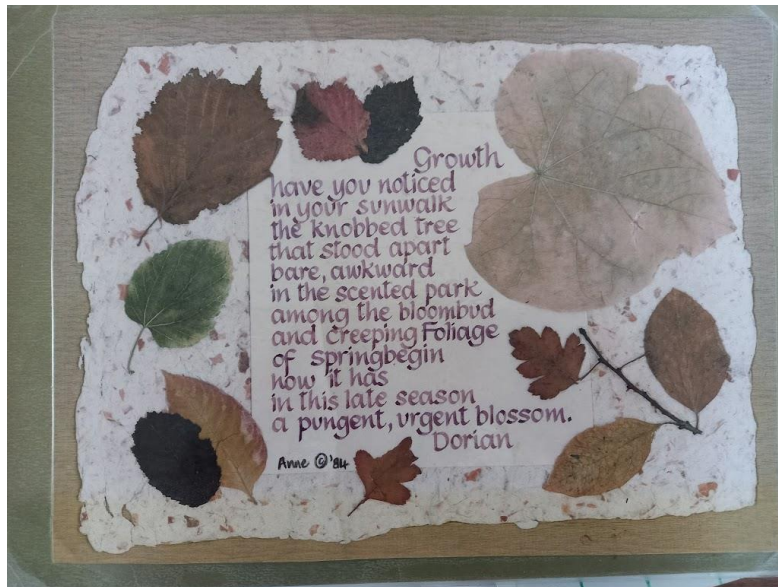
## **3. Story Training**

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

## **4. on Zoom: The Open Sesame Collage Cave - a trilogy:**

Sun 27 March Sun 24 April Sun 22 May all @ 3.30-5.30 pm  
R250 each or R725 for the three.





## 5. The Library Inside: Leaving a Legacy, Leaving a Gift - Writing & Storyshop Sat 7

May 10,00 -15.00 - Sun 8

May10.00-13.00 R950 (inc 15% for SCN\*)

\*Soul Carers Network offers emotional and physical support for people who are dying (Death doulas)

Venue Mowbray Cape

Contact: Carol Scrooby

083 293 5415

*The communication of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living. (T. S. Eliot)*

A wise elder once told me, "The graveyard's an interesting place. Full of untold stories. Make sure that by the time you die, you have shared yours." Every death is a double death for when we die, the library inside our head and the stories in our heart die too.

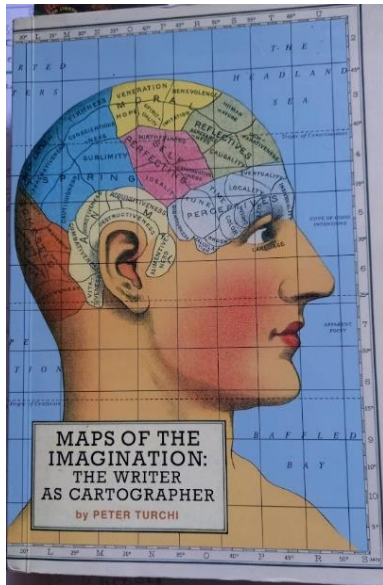
Unless we have shared them. When we share the stories of those who have died, they seem to come alive in the telling, especially if they have shared their own stories too.

This storyshop is for those who wish to:

- ✚ Help someone to share their story
- ✚ Tell their own stories
- ✚ Process 5 different faces of grief
- ✚ Practice the skill of writing/story-telling
- ✚ Be at home with words and find their voice

Beginners are welcome. I create a space that is safe and supportive.

## 6. Magic Carpet Writers (Somerset West)



## 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

Next 2 sessions Weds 26 Feb & 30 March  
6,30-9.30

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