



## Creative Wordshops

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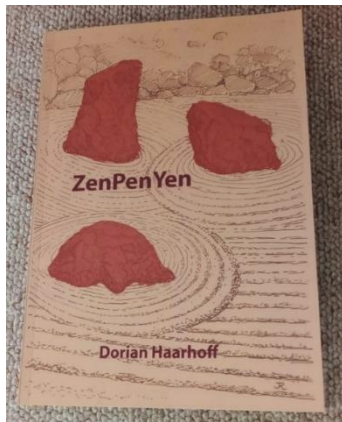
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storyteller facilitator speaker writing-coach poet

## Writing Letter Aug 2022

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

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



Stop press: *ZenPenYen* poetry collection

Orders R150 plus postage R60 - e book available on  
Amazon plus print version. Voiced text on its way

I invite you to see the zoom version of the launch,  
courtesy of Igno van Niekerk, friend, writer and  
photographer

<https://adilo.bigcommand.com/watch/h1EulWxu>

### Shells, Stones, Spirals and Symbols

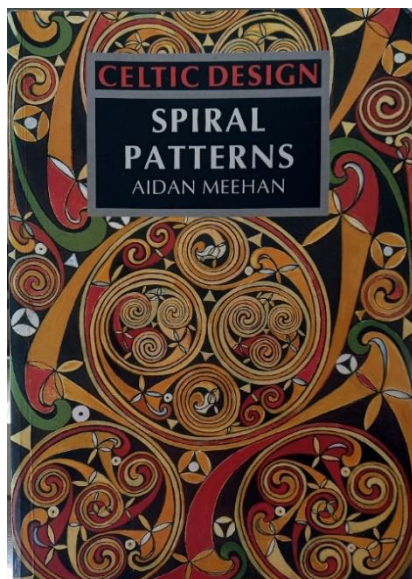
*I live my life in ever widening circles,  
each superseding all the previous ones.*

*Perhaps I never shall succeed  
in reaching the final circle, but attempt I will. (Rilke)*



A flotilla of Nautilus shells sail along a  
bookshelf in our lounge. On the coffee  
table, an island of shells rises in the  
shape of the spiral - in a spiral signed  
bowl. Here's a whorl, a 360° revolution  
or turn in the spiral growth of a mollusc  
shell.

These shells and a book from a recent holistic fair offer the theme for this month.



"We can read the geometry of the circle, as a symbol of the repeating cycle or length of time. A line that curves around on itself so that its beginning and its end coincide at the onset of a new cycle, whether it be a day, a week, a month, year or lifespan." (Aidan Meehan)

I created the Saturday morning weekly story (3 July) about the triskele, one of the oldest Irish Celtic\_Pagan symbols of three interlocked spirals. It links to the sun, moon, earth, to the triadic gods, to the three domains of land, sea, and sky. The triple spiral also represents the cycles of birth, death, rebirth as well as the Triple Goddess, maiden, mother, and wise woman. For the Celtic Christians, the symbol was used to represent the Holy Trinity. It also represents the three worlds; the celestial, physical, and spiritual. Here's the story:

Three young boys are walking past a mound near valley of stones. On one stone there are spiral designs. One boy kicks it. Another says, "Yeah, interesting. I wonder who did that?" They move on but the third boy is entranced. He looks at the spirals mesmerised. His eyes spin as slowly he is drawn right into the stone.

Suddenly he finds himself emerging from the same stone at a well. A world opens up. He's in an ancient village where people create designs on pottery and rocks. No one seems surprised to see him. They greet him as an old friend. They explain the spiral, the movement of the sun and the moon. The equinoxes, the solstice, the division of night and day. The four seasons. The circle of sun and moon.

He lives and breathes in that community, absorbing its rhythms and cycles. When of age he marries a Celtic priestess. They live out their days. He becomes a potter placing spiral designs. And then the time

comes when as an elder he finds himself at the same well, and focusses on the stone that brought him here.

Once more his eyes spin, drawing him into the spiral back into this world. And there he is, a young boy looking at this stone. His friends call him to come and play. The boy forgets but one day he suddenly finds the urge to create Celtic art. This becomes his passion, his livelihood, his lifeblood not only in pottery, also working on stone.

His experience down that cosmic rabbit hole is to understand that he has been blood and body part of his ancestral community. Now his task is to carry on that work, that calling and reintroduce it to an age in desperate need of its rhythms, its rituals its references.

The psychologist, Clare Graves, developed a theory based on an existential spiral staircase. Spiral Dynamics which offers a model and language to describe the development of people, organisations and society is based partly on his work. Ken Wilber's transpersonal psychology and integral theory popularised Spiral Dynamics. We talk of downward spirals where negative thoughts, emotions, and actions loop back into themselves, causing increasing grief.

The Irish poet, Yeats, saw civilization as an interpenetrating spirals or gyres lasting some 2000 years and then spinning back the other way. These two intersecting conical spirals symbolised his philosophy that all things could be described in terms of cycles and patterns.



So what has this to do with writing? Rather than seeing writing as a linear process, how about considering it as a spiral? We come round with modifications as we revisit earlier lines and then spiral back to where we are. So spiral away in your spiral journal

Looking back at a previous collection, I was surprised to find how often I engaged spiral imagery in poetry. Here are 3 examples from *Poemagranates* (2012) - (two poems and a fragment):

## **Eating from the Bowl**

the monks walked their rough sandals  
door to door in the morning,  
unwrapping their begging bowls  
from the belly of their robes.

from each hut the aroma  
floated its incense.  
they received their portion  
of roti, masala, nan, tikka,  
rice the saffron of their cloth,  
a scattering of pecan nuts, mint,  
yoghurt, three cherries on a stalk.

when they shared beneath a tree,  
robes spreads like a table cloth,  
did they mish-mash this food  
into an all-together taste?  
or divide it into sour, salt,  
bitter, sweet and spice?

or did their fingers circle in a spiral  
from centre to circumference  
rim to hub, tasting inwards,  
savouring in each grain and shade  
the four corners of their world?

## **Monk Fun**

no wonder the monks  
had such fun  
keeping learning alive,  
finding light in letters  
and the nib curl  
to create the alphabet.

growing gospel words  
in the scriptorium  
above the spiral staircase  
above the vinelands.

from strokes, s bends angles,  
following in Zen-like plumb line  
they shaped these 26 signs and spaces  
to build the monastery of knowing  
and not knowing, unknowing,  
spiralling through paradise  
filling the word to the overflowing.

Tour Guide (about the ancestors arriving to check up on me -the last  
verse)

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?*

I begin and end this letter with Rilke's spiral:

I circle around God, the ancient tower,  
and have been circling for a thousand years,  
and still I do not know: am I a falcon,  
a storm, or a continuing great song?

Dorian

# Writing Retreat Radar July / August 2022

detailed flyers on request

## 1. The Library Inside: Leaving a Legacy, Leaving a Gift - a Storyshop

Sun 7 August 10,00 -15.30 R550 Venue: Pringle Bay

*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. Come and share your stories.

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



## 2. From One Picture to Many Words: 2 Zoom Collage Wordshops

31 July & 28 Aug - 15.30 -17.30 SA time R250 each

A picture can release a thousand words. In these zoom wordshops we absorb, describe and respond to magazine images/photos then watch how the words rise off the page. They fly like birds.

## 3. Magaliesberg, Emoyeni Buddhist Retreat Centre -book @ [emoyeni.org.za](http://emoyeni.org.za)

### 3a. Healing the Family Tree: *An Ancestor and Us* writing retreat

Fri 26- Sun 28 Aug

## *The songs of our ancestors are also the songs of our children*



Our stories are gifts we give each other and gifts we leave behind us. For one day we too will be ancestors. In this retreat we write our stories and place them next to those of our family, immediate, extended and chosen. The idea of family can include not only blood but our spiritual tradition, culture and the line of those who share our passions.

### **3b. Between First In-breath and Last Out-breath: The Art of Story-telling**      Sun 28 Tues 30 Aug



*Ever since I heard my first love story I have been looking for you (Rumi)*

Who is the who that Rumi alludes to? There is something deeply fictional about us human beings. We are the stories we tell about ourselves. Rediscover the lost art of story-telling. Experience the joy, presence, mindfulness and transformation that arrive when we engage with a tale, learn how to craft it and inhabit it.

*All you need do is change the name and it's about YOU, this story' (Horace)*



### **4. 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 2<sup>nd</sup> half of 2022 theme? **From Acorn to Oak Leaves:**

We share and respond to a line/s of a poem or prose passage that resonates for us (the acorn) This acts as our prompt for the evening. We open this out to a memory, story, description, angle it to a current writing project, poem whatever (the oak leaves)

Cost R135 per session

Next session Wed 27 July  
6,00-9.00

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

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