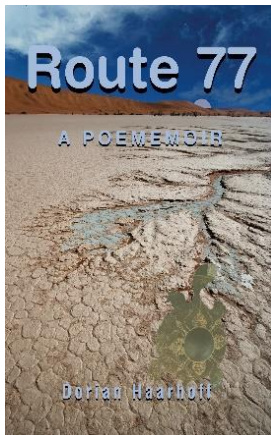


Writing Letter

May 2023

re-story, re-create, re-
imagine you

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



Launch: *Route 77, A Poememoir* by Dorian Haarhoff

Route 77 is an autobiography and poetic travelogue; it is wisdom; it is esoteric; it is funny. Spirituality gets Dorian's attention, as does nature, philosophy, psychology, animals, dreams. It offers a paradox of mysticism and the concrete, where eclectic material jumps around like beans in a sizzling pan (he includes a Greek recipe.) Dorian dubs this original format as *a kind of Babushka with seven dolls. Imagine each doll decorated with eleven symbols and images. Holograms.*



Hearthspace Publications, Australia www.hearthspacepublications.com
pat@hearthspacebooks.com Tel: +61 450260348 434 pages R395

Pat Grayson invites you to a launch

1. Pringle Bay Sat 6 May @ Menucha 16.00-17.30
2. Somerset West Fri 12 May @ The Playhouse 15.00- 16.30
3. Zoom Sun 21 May 12.00-13.00 SA time
wine and snacks (not on Zoom alas)

RSVP Dorian 27 82 873 6802

The Anatomy of a Story

This letter arrives fresh from a ZenPen retreat at Temenos in McGregor with its Garden of the Beloved. Participants created a 7 bead bracelet, each bead representing a stage in the writing process. Each begins with the letter R. (adapted from Henriette Klauser, a writing teacher's 5 R's.) I thought to go for 7.

People often ask where I get stories so I'm sharing my approach - the way a story builds in the hope that this might clarify your story process. Creating then Crafting. Here is the story that arrived via these seven beads:

The Shell Bracelet

Three sisters went adventuring to a remote coastline. They loved swimming, although the older two, the twins, would only do surface diving. The other one, the younger, (her sisters dubbed her Dolphin) wanted to see how long she could hold her breath so often would dive deeper. She'd been ill with pneumonia and had heard that holding her breath could increase her lung capacity.

On the third day Dolphin was about to disappear beneath the waves when her sisters called out *The sea is rough today be careful... you've been ill... and don't be long.* They spread a blanket for their picnic and unpacked their basket.

The next second Dolphin was gone. Holding her breath, struggling, she dived further down than she ever had before into the murk and turbulence. The tide tugged at her. She flapped her flippers and disappeared under a rock ledge, and then kicked herself up to the surface. Gulping air, she found herself between rocks which rose up forming two cave-like walls. A shaft of sunlight shone down on a hut. And there on a curved stretch of beach, she scrambled ashore.

In front of her was a whalebone hut. At the entrance sat a boy wrapped in a loin cloth, busy carving a shell. They spoke via gestures and grunts. He indicated she was to follow so they scrambled up a dune and came to a scatter of whale bone huts. A crone showed her a hut which was to be hers.

Dolphin stayed there for a moon cycle. The crone fed her herbs - eucalyptus and peppermint and seaweed. Dolphin learned to catch, scale and gut fish. She learned to carve patterns on shells and created a shell bracelet, shaded in rose, silver and pearl.

Then the day came when she heard the call to leave. She bade farewell to her friends, found her flippers on the tide line and dived down, down under the rocky ledge holding, holding her breath in stronger lungs, then popping up on the other side.

As she surfaced the twin sisters called out *worried about you ...you're late. We've been waiting for you. Your tea's gone cold. We've kept a lettuce, tomato and cucumber sandwich for you.* As she ate one sister observed *You're not coughing any more.* The other sister looked at her wrist. *Hey where did you get that bracelet? With dolphins on it.* Dolphin wondered, should she keep this in her own heart? All she said was , *Well, if you dive deeper, you never know what you're going to find.*

The next day the sea shimmered, an aqua blue lake-like calm. Dolphin dived again but this time she could not find the undersea rock portal. And as she surfaced, she caressed the shells and vowed to keep that bubble of mystery wrapped around her wrist.

So how did I get here?



Bead one. Reaching Inside. Into the not-knowing before we write. The alignment. Needing a Saturday story for the weekly send out, I choose this random magazine picture of underwater woman which I reduce to three. Two sisters and a younger sister who lives outside the realm of the other two. Three a Fairy Tale motif. So I make

the older pair twins. Place? At a remote beach.(sea edge = the unconscious?)

Bead two. Rapid Write. I pour out the words, not knowing where I'm going. Like E. L. Doctorow, the novelist, who says writing is like traveling across America at night. Your lights show you 20 feet. Then you have the next 20 and by the time you wake, you're in San Francisco.

So she dives while they paddle in shallows then wait on the beach, perhaps with their picnic baskets. Originally I had the water as clear. So let's make it cloudy and turbulent. (atmosphere and uncertainty)

She dives down, down deeper than she has been before and swims through a rock portal up the other side, onto a beach. There is a whalebone hut with the boy. Now she needs to be there for some time. I'm tapping into another motif beyond the concept of 'tiktok' time where we live a lifetime in a moment. (Blake's 'world in a grain of sand')

Bead three. Retreat. Gifts arrive as I leave the story to breathe. Time out, lagoon swim, chef, read while brain plays unconsciously with the narrative.

Bead four. Revisioning. Seeing with new eyes. Revising. I add a crone as I think the story needs an archetypal figure. Make the descriptions more sensuous e.g. add shades (an ambiguous word) to the shell. More immediate dialogue as it brings reader and character closer (writer getting out of the way).

Bead five. Research. I look up how long we can hold our breath underwater. And also what herbs help our lungs heal. I also introduce something to be overcome. The early take is too smooth and so I bring in the younger sister's pneumonia.



Bead six. Rewrite Sometimes up to seven times. The name of the younger sister arrives. Her sisters call her Dolphin because she always dives deeper than they do and plays in the water. This enlarges the personal story connecting it to Dolphin mythology. A resonance.

Then how long will she live with this community? I make it a moon cycle. I'll leave this to the reader to work out significance. How will time pass? They will teach her to fish.... to create patterns on shells. Nuances arrive. There's a sense in which I've written forwards and now write backwards. Setting up the ending once I've sensed where the story's going.

And her return. Giving the story shape. When Dolphin swims back, she wears her bracelet and little time has passed. Adding detail e.g. the motif carved on the shell. How to end with an echo? Another dive on a clear day and no portal visible. This creates internal resonance, shape and balance.

How much is enough? I check. Have I allowed space for listener/reader to offer their own creativity to the story? Where are the deliberate silences and the beyond consciousness crafting ones? Have I allowed the mystery to breathe? Under-told rather than over-told?

Bead seven. Release to another writer whom I trust for response. More fine tuning. Sharpening words e.g. from 'air of mystery' (cliché) to 'bubble of mystery.' (links to underwater) Imaging, changing e.g. "...the sea was calm, and shimmered in aqua blue..." to "... the sea shimmered, an aqua blue lake.." Then fly story, to whoever might want to read or listen to the tale.

I hope this helps.
Dorian

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Writing Retreat Radar Autumn 2023

detailed flyers on request

1. Emoyeni Retreat Centre

Bookings admin@emoyeni.org.za 082 308 1533 www.emoyeni.org.za

1a. 14-16 April: Zen Pen: A Journaling, Writing, Being & Meditation Retreat

We explore the connection between journaling, creative writing and meditation. We celebrate our daily (journal' comes from Old French, 'day') encounter with ourselves through words and silence.

1b. 16-18 April: New Wine in Old Bottles: a GAGA retreat on ageing without getting old

GAGA (not Lady) = **Gracious Ageing, Grateful Ageing**. How can we open to new ideas and beliefs that keep the inside bright, shiny and rust free? This retreat shows how our long-lived stories grow our inner worlds.

2. Magic Carpet Writers (Somerset West)

Our ongoing monthly writeaway

Next session Wed 26 April 6.30-9.30 p.m. R160 per session

Be part of a fun-loving supportive thinking/being group of aspirant writers.

1st half of 2023 theme: **Encounters with the Wild**

3. Touching the Wild: Sunday Zoom Mini Wordshop

16 April

@ 3.30-5.30 pm SA time R280

Welcome to this zoom writing possibility shared with a few folk somewhere in the world. What does the word 'wild' mean to you - nature, creatures, people, weather? Living on the edge? Uncertainty? I offer prompts (images, quotations, readings). You can also angle the writing to a current writing project.

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