



Creative Wordshops

Dorian Haarhoff

082 873 6802

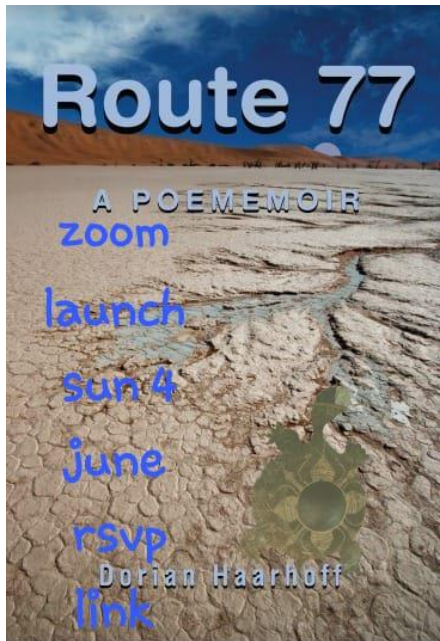
dorianhaa@gmail.com

www.dorianhaarhoff.com

storyteller facilitator speaker writing-coach poet

Writing Letter Nov 2023

re-story, re-create, re-
imagine you
for this letter, a weekly story
and ongoing opportunities -
dorianhaarhoffblog.co.za



Igno van Niekerk and Tina Konstant (story mates)
kindly recorded the zoom launch. Here tis.
https://mega.nz/file/rg9xhDJa#TTfWT8w-HttuLtfFbUGH_in-8_LXl8fIBtzE3dDaJiI

Dear writer, storyteller, reader, lover of words,
images, silences...

Thank you for those who have subscribed to the
monthly letter (R240 per annum) I cherish your
support. You can still do so if you wish. The letter
remains open to all.

*Why do you live on the bank of the river?' 'Because a
poem is a revelation, and it is by the brink of running
water that poetry is revealed to the mind.'*
(The Salmon of Knowledge)

Sure they called it Ireland

I wonder what Ireland conjours for you? The country has been in the news, given the 2023 Rugby World Cup. While I share no blood ties, as it does for many, Ireland inhabits my psyche and imagination. This month John Gnodde, singer and song writer and I offered a late Sunday sundowner in Pringle Bay. John's repertoire included *Rare old Times*, *Molly Malone*, *Carrickfergus*, *Maggie*, *Wild Rover*, *Parting Glass* and *Danny Boy*. (a police officer Charlie McKenna said 'Danny Boy to be sung at my funeral mass. If not I'll get up and walk out.')

I interlaced the lyrics with poetry, myth, (*Finn McCool and the Salmon of Knowledge*) and excerpts from novels. We both sprinkled in the odd classic Irish mirth. I included stanzas from the Irish greats. (Do yourself a favour and look up the poems, whole and entire unto themselves):

I am of Ireland,
 And the Holy Land of Ireland,
 And time runs on,' cried she.
 'Come out of charity,
 Come dance with me in Ireland.'
 (Yeats *I Am Of Ireland*)

IT'S YOUR LUCKY DAY!

Ireland Revisited
 Sunday 8th October 5pm

JOIN DORIAN AND JOHN'S MISGUIDED TOUR OF THE EMERALD ISLE THROUGH SONG, POEM, STORY, MYTH & MIRTH.

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A complimentary glass of Old Brown Sherry on arrival.

Hearty Irish lamb stew served with mash & a complimentary dram of Jameson whisky
R110

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R80

Irish coffee - coffee & a tot of Jameson whisky topped with cream
R60

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 Call us on 028 273 8155 or 071 698 5547 or email hello@thepringle.co.za

At first,
 I was land.
 I lay on my back to be fields.
 And when I turned
 on my side
 I was a hill
 under freezing stars....
 Words fell on me.
 Seeds, raindrops,
 chips of frost.
 From one of them.
 I learned my name.
 (Eavan Boland, *Mother Ireland*)

On the day when
 the weight deadens
 on your shoulders
 and you stumble,
 may the clay dance
 to balance you.
 And when your eyes
 freeze behind
 the grey window
 and the ghost of loss
 gets into you,
 may a flock of colours,
 indigo, red, green
 and azure blue,
 come to awaken in you
 a meadow of delight.
 (John O'Donohue *Beannacht / Blessing*)

Then I knew that she was only announcing
the large, unadulterated cowness of herself,
pouring out the ancient apologia of her kind
to all the green fields and the gray clouds,
to the limestone hills and the inlet of the blue bay,
while she regarded my head and shoulders
above the wall with one wild, shocking eye.
(Billy Collins *Afternoon with Irish Cows*)

John and I also shared memories of visits to the Emerald Isle.



(Billy and I enroute to the Arran Isles)

Way back when, I was part of a Billy Collins poetry seminar in Galway Bay, joining fourteen poets who had travelled with Billy, many like he, Irish shamrock Americans. Outside the seminar, visits to Yeats' tower. Ireland's grand poetic tradition. The River Corrib. Waterfront pubs.

Ah the humour of the Irish. I'm walking ahead in the countryside when our bus stops. "Africa?" I ask as I board. Bus driver, without missing a beat, "The next bus." Then as we leave, I, bound for Dublin by train, the rest of the poets off to Shannon airport, I hurl a misquoted Yeats line into their bus, a parody of the opening line from Yeats' "Lake Isle of Innisfree", a poem my mother so loved that I had it calligraphied and framed. Not "I will arise and go now to Innisfree" but "I will arise and go now to Duty Free." Billy C sent me a parody of the poem, taking off from that one line. I alas, no longer have that parody.

These were some the shared excerpts from Irish novels: (Read them)

I liken Ireland to whiskey in a glass - a cone of amber, a self-contained passage of time, a place apart, reaching out to the world with sometimes an acrid taste, a definite excess of personality, telling her story to all who would listen, hauling them forward by the lapels of their coats until they hear, whether they want to or not. But always, always - the story is the teller and the teller is the story. ...

What I told you tonight - it isn't my story alone. It belongs to every Irish person living and dead. And every Irish person living and dead belongs to it. And to all the story of Ireland; blood and bones, legends, guns and dreams, Catholics, Protestants, England, horses and poets and lovers.The Storyteller's mouth had grown a frill of saliva, a surf on the tide of words. (He grew) larger in his chair as the black cloak swelled to the size of a conjurer's cloak and all the characters in the story sprang from its folds. (Frank Delaney, *Ireland*)

Window panes that rattled under the lash of the wind for two months on end, rain that leaked beneath the doors, her husband out and drinking, electricity cut off and the radio shut down, the boredom, the quiet and incredible loneliness - Margaret Looney would remember when she first discovered love and wonder at how immense it must have been to be lasting so long. (Niall Williams *Four Letters of Love*.)

And we both shared the Irish humour. John some Spike Milligan. Here is one I shared. Once, facilitating a workshop at a Buddhist Retreat Centre a little voice prompted me to tell an Irish pub joke. Incongruous as it seemed, I listened. One of the participants responded, "I needed that story as my battle is with alcohol." If you trust your intuition and read the atmosphere, you can be pretty sure that there is someone who needs the story that rises to your tongue. A few years on, the man dry, invited me to tell stories at their wedding. As priest, groom, and storyteller stood under the canopy, waiting for the bride, the Irish joke got another airing:

Paddy, on a Friday in the pub, orders three pints of Guinness and sips them simultaneously. The publican advises, "Let me pour you one at a time as the others are going flat." Paddy explains "You don't understand. Two of my friends have left Ireland so I keep our friendship alive this way." This becomes a ritual, "Same again?" Three pints. Until one day Paddy responds, "No, only two pints." 'There is a hush in the pub as the publican approaches Paddy, "I'm terribly sorry about your friend." "What do you mean?' "Well, I assume that one of your companions has died." Paddy responds. "Oh they are both perfectly well. It's just that I've given up drinking."

I too have written 'Irish'. Here is part of two tributes to two friends - one a calligrapher with an Irish grandmother, the other an Irish priest and poet:

Tracing your Face

fingers that trace fine the pagan text,
the calligraphy of kells and saints,
entangle you in a kin of fingers.

you span this ancient
mothering and Mary brow
and stride in the stubborn nun.
you're the aged Gaelic face
croning holy at the woman's well.

fed by a grandmother's blood
you flow in the myths of place.
here the quarter Celt in you
increases to a feast of folk.

Irish Charlie

so you're an Irish Charlie
Cahal you say, in Gaelic,
like *kagel* in Afrikaans.
you first heard this
salt of a tongue *taal*,
leaning on the ship's rail
outside Table Bay.
many turns of earth away.

at the hearthstone
where a peat log,
a camelthorn,
a karoo bossie
a cow dung pat burns
and is not consumed,
you ignite my heart, my friend.

your ribs are the grate
that holds the glow coal
and allows the ash to fall
white hot, so in the morning
I'll clear, one day, that ash
and be whiskey warmed once more.

And so in the ninety minutes of *Island Revisited*, in the lilt, our hearts were stolen away.

Dorian

Writing Retreat Radar Summer 2023

detailed flyers on request

1. Magic Carpet Writers (Somerset West)

Our ongoing monthly writeaway

Next session: Wed 25 Oct 6.30-9.30 p.m. R170 per session

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

2. the 3rd Write away in Pringle Bay

20-22 Oct only 1 of 8 places left R880

3. First Words A Writing Wordshop

Sat 11 Nov 10.00 -16.15 only 9 places R480

*I know that there is room in me
for a second huge and timeless life (Rilke)*

We can all learn to write and tell our stories and breathe life into them. This wordshop offers you a safe place to explore your creativity and imagination

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

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