



Creative Wordshops

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Writing Letter

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

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

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

Thank you for those who subscribe to the monthly letter and/or who receive the weekly Sat story. While the letter and story remain as a gift to all, for those who wish, I appreciate any voluntary donation.

Dr R D Haarhoff Standard Bank Current account 0828 59 248

GAGA

*Grow old along with me, the best is yet to be, the last of
life, for which the first was made....(Browning)*

I wish you all a youthful 2026. This month, returning to a theme, GAGA (gracious aging, grateful aging) sharing from a recent storyshop in Sedgfield. We begin by playing the song, *Don't let the old Man in*. Here are 4 verses :

Don't let the old man in
I wanna leave this alone
Can't leave it up to him
He's knocking on my door....

Many moons I have lived
My body's weathered and worn
Ask yourself how would you be
If you didn't know the day you were born.

Try to love your wife
And stay close to your friends
Toast each sundown with wine
Don't let the old man in.

When he rides up on his horse
And you feel that cold bitter wind
Look out your window and smile
Don't let the old man in.

Clint Eastwood's conversation with Toby Keith at a golf tournament inspired Keith's lyric. Keith, impressed by Eastwood's energy at 88, asked him how he kept movie-making. Eastwood replied, "I just get up in the morning. I go out... and I don't let the old man in". This quote became a song, which featured in Eastwood's film, *The Mule*.



I ask people what do you do to not let the old man or the old woman in? Kari's response is well, sometimes we need to let the old woman in, because she has wisdom and insight. Ah, she is the Crone. So the conversation wanders something like then we need a bouncer and a butler to decide which old woman or old man we let in, leaving out the moaning, groaning one, but welcoming in the Sage and the Crone. This links to the mythologist Joseph Campbell's, 'Devils are unacknowledged gods.' If we don't let the old woman or man in, then we will be set upon by the moaning, groaning one.

We link to the leopard in Oom Schalk's (Bosman's) *In the Withaak's Shade*. 'Many strange things happen to a man in a lifetime. I myself have been in a few perilous situations. If you want to suddenly grow old and your hair to grow white, there is nothing like a leopard around your neck trying to find a nice place to bite.'

This leads us to the question, 'What is the leopard in your life? What ages you and whitens your hair?'



These bottles offer another 'lit match' or prompt. This surfaces the idea of the genie and the genius, the Roman idea of the household god.

A *genius*, a personal guardian spirit that accompanies us all our lives, represents our creative and protective essence. What is your genius? What is your calling? Your vocation? What is your gift to the world? And what is the world's gift to you?

For one, it is the way that Roland loves connecting people. For me, no prizes for guessing. Stories. My mantra - the more I know about stories, the less I know. I share this wisdom from Amitav Ghosh's novel *The Gun Merchant*:

People recognized that stories could tap into dimensions that were beyond the ordinary, beyond the human. Even they knew that only through stories was it possible to enter the most inward mysteries of our existence, where nothing that is really important can be proven to exist, like love....Only through stories can invisible or inarticulate or silent beings speak to us....It is only through stories that the universe can speak to us.

In response to how to live in the present, after the storyshop I wrote this poem:

House Guests

imagine three houses

on a slope, semi-detached,
sharing thin walls.

in the middle home
dwells the present me.

the one down slope
houses the me of the past.

the one up on an incline
going up the hill holds
the future residence.

the younger, not-so-sparkle
unbright me, often wandered
out of my front door
into the past, wasted time there,
sometimes with regrets.

and then stepping out
and up into the future hut
with fear and trepidation.
I kept on finding the furniture
Titanic deck chairs. Rearranged.

now I wait in the now home.
when the past comes to visit
the bouncer/butler decides
whether to let them in or
cobble hurl them into the street .

when the future comes
knocking, uninvited,
the muscleman once again,
determines, jaw set, just who
I let in to the present dwelling.



then I select the wine we sip.
a fine vintage, in the lounge
toasting, slumped at ease
in easy chairs before the blaze.
they exit when I say so.

I offer Rilke as guide to your coming year:

I am circling around God,
around the ancient tower,
and I have been circling for a thousand years,
and I still don't know
if I am a falcon, or a storm, or a great song.

Then also the four questions from First Nation spirituality, When someone is depressed, ask 'When last did you dance? When last did you sing? When last did you listen to stories? When last did you spend time in the sweet territory of silence?'

Dorian

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Writing Retreat Radar - Summer 2025

detailed flyers on request

1. Mentoring: ongoing one-on-one attention

You help me to sound like myself (numerous clients)

Like a pair of sandals we walk this road together.

2. Creating your Tomorrow A Words Breath & Being Retreat

Sat 7 Feb 2026 10.00 - 16.30 R860

wine farm Bot River Genevieve MCC <https://share.google/d6aCIpVlGeWj5zlaD>

In this mini retreat we explore our connection to words and presence. These states of grace increase our awareness and wake us up.

The day includes breathwork with Fiona Hardie

4. Magic Carpet Writers (Somerset West)

last Wed of the month writeaway -next 28 Jan
a fun-loving supportive thinking/being group of aspirant writers

5. Bloem Storytelling Jamboree for coaches and leaders

11-17 Feb

Igno van Niekerk for info 083 376 1330

6. Garden of Words & Images: a Writing Retreat for Poets & Writers 2026

Fri 27 (17.30) - Sun 29 March (16.30)

@ Temenos McGregor -www.temenos.org.za +27 23 625 1871

bookings via Dorian 082 873 6802

Dorian Haarhoff once again offers a 10th Temenos Retreat. The emphasis is on the Garden of the Beloved as a metaphor for our writing. How do we seed the writing? Place it where? Water it? Cultivate, graft and prune so it comes to full bloom? And so provide shade and sustenance for the reader?