



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 to subscribers of the monthly letter and/or the fortnightly Sat story.

While these are gifts, for those who wish, voluntary donations are welcome.

Dr R D Haarhoff Standard Bank Current account 0828 59 248

*Throw yourself like seed as you walk, and into your own field,
Don't turn your face for that would be to turn it to death,
And do not let the past weigh down your motion.*

*Leave what's alive in the furrow, what's dead in yourself,
For life does not move in the same way as a group of clouds;*

From your work you will be able one day to gather yourself. (Miguel de Unamuno)

Many Selves

Writing and storytelling can be blessed work in the sense of play. Here are two versions of a story (Tony Grogan illustrations) that speak many tongues.



Traveller Tzu-gung encounters an old man struggling to irrigate his vegetable garden.

Tzu-gung says, "There is a way to irrigate a hundred ditches in one day with little effort. Take a wooden lever, weighted at the back and light in front. In this way you can bring up water so quickly that it just gushes out. This is called a draw-well."

Anger shows in the old man's face, and he says, "I have heard my teacher say that whoever uses machines does all his

work like a machine. He who does his work like a machine grows a heart like a machine, and he who carries the heart of a machine in his breast loses his simplicity. He who has lost his simplicity becomes unsure in the strivings of his soul, which does not agree with honest sense. It is not that I do not know of such things; I am ashamed to use them." (This could be a cautionary AI tale)



The second version: A man visits his ancient grandfather in a rural village. One morning he watches the old man draw up water from the well hand over fist, the bucket attached to a rope.

He approaches him. "Grandfather, I can devise a pulley which I'll suspend over the well. All you have to do is turn your wrist and the bucket of water will rise to the surface."

The old man thinks a while then declines. "I don't think so. For then only my wrist will get exercise. My body will be left out of the work." The young man goes away shaking his head.

What do these stories say to you about your writing and storied life? Here are three responses from workshops:

Was the grandson genuinely interested in relieving the old man's burden? Or did he think that he was releasing his grandfather from physical labour and freeing up his time for other work - upgrading him to 'thought' labour?

I spend so much writing time stuck in a chair. Apart from muscle work, how can we engage with our work? How can our bodies be present at work while we benefit from technical innovation? (AI etc)

What if the grandson had devised a gadget that assisted the old man, while honouring the connection to his body?

Perhaps we need to see ourselves not as a single personality, but as characters in a story - a number of possible selves in conversation. We carry aspects of all the people in the two stories - sage, gardener, grandfather, grandson. As in dream interpretation, we're the watering can, the plant. In the second story, the well, the bucket, the water. The more selves I bring to my life and writing, the more present I am.

Stories engage all of us. Which means being present. What poet D. H. Lawrence said of thought, might well apply to story. "Thought is a man in his wholeness wholly attending." In *A Ritual to Read to Each Other*, poet William Stafford reminds us, "It is important that awake people be awake." Alfred Adler, one of the 'fathers' of psychoanalysis, saw the need to create community as one of our basic drives. The first community is bringing our own selves to our writing workplay. When we do this, we begin to read our lives as a story. We become like the storyteller in Frank Delaney's *Ireland* who grows "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."

As we begin to adopt such a fuller story, we dig the furrow, plant the seed, draw the water and gather ourselves. And the harvest is richer.

Dorian

Writing Retreat Radar – Summer/Autumn 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. 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

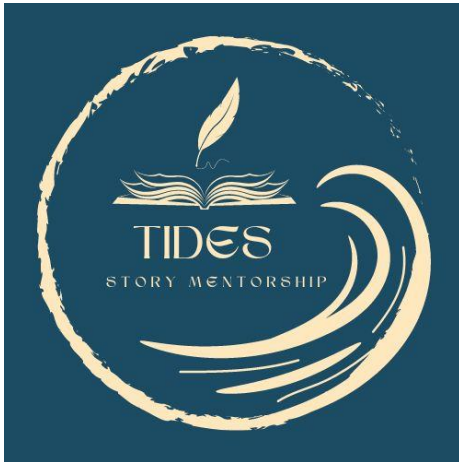
bookings via Dorian 082 873 6802

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?

3. Story Apprenticeship

An Invitation to the Heartbeat of the Tale

Would you like to join **Tides** our **zoom story mentoring course**? We share our passion for stories and open to their subtle teaching.



The course offers story companionship, craft and competency. We engage interactively. The course includes a set of readings, audio recordings of each session with rich WhatsApp conversations between sessions.

Igno van Niekerk and Tina Konstant co-facilitate ,offering their story experience plus technical support.

only **11** places.

Sessions and Dates a twice a month commitment 6 sessions of 2 hours each
Sundays 3.30 - 5.30 pm SA Time **12 & 26 April 10 & 24 May 7 & 21 June**

4. Magic Carpet Writers (Somerset West)

last Wed of the month writeaway -next 25 March
a fun-loving supportive thinking/being group of aspirant writers

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