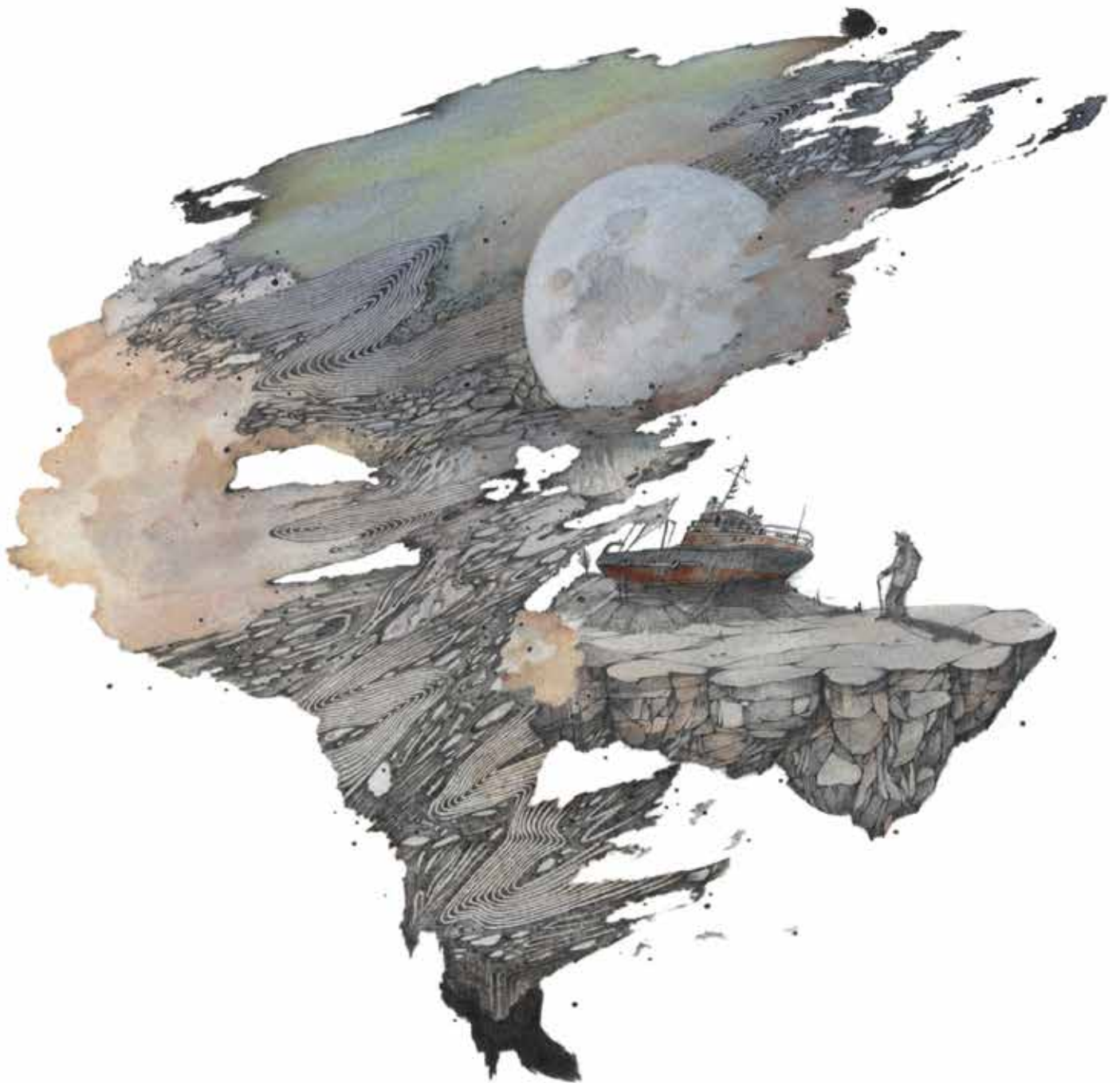


The Victorian Writer

Apr–May 2017

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Pure Speculation



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Editorial

Genre fiction is defined by rules and conventions. But this does not mean it is in any way limited by them. On the contrary, speculative fiction, encompassing sci fi, fantasy and horror, has flourished in these shackles and has morphed into a multi-dimensional universe of sub-genres.

There's hard sci fi, soft sci fi, light sci fi, cli fi, space opera, future fantasy, cyberpunk, near-future, dystopia, first contact, time travel, military sci fi, and military fantasy, romantic sci fi, romantic fantasy, romantic horror, slipstream, steampunk, shared universe, high fantasy, magic realism, urban fantasy, dark fantasy, gothic, splatter-punk, apocalyptic, post-apocalyptic, and more...

Although it is near impossible to do more than scratch the surface of spec fic, don't panic! We shall instead sample some of the amazing work and advice of Australian writers and specialists in this multi-faceted genre.

In this issue, Danielle Binks writes about agents in the spec-fic sphere, Sean Williams explores alien landscapes in Antarctica, Jane Rawson compares future spec with historical spec, Deanne Sheldon-Collins gives us some advice on getting spec fic published, Alison Goodman shares her world-building wisdom, Thalia Kalkipsakis looks to Melbourne for inspiration and there's fiction from Alice Robinson and Briohny Doyle.

We also have new fiction by our members Elaine Spooner and Stefan Lancy. 

Emma Cayley, Editor



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Ask an ALAA Agent

What

the Spec?

ALAA agent Danielle Binks (Jacinta di Mase Management) has advice for speculative-fiction writers looking to secure an agent.

Speculative fiction is literature without limits – a catch-all term broadly encompassing stories that feature fantastical, supernatural, or futuristic elements. And it's popular. Very popular. Among some of the most popular books in the history of publishing have, in fact, fallen under the speculative-fiction term; from 'Harry Potter' to 'Game of Thrones', 'The Lord of the Rings', works of CS Lewis and Ursula K Le Guin, to name a few.

As I write this, six of the top ten 'New York Times' young adult [hardcover] bestsellers are speculative fiction, ranging from sci-fi, to fantasy and paranormal, fairytale-retellings and dystopia, while the general fiction list has Neil Gaiman's 'Norse Mythology' in the number one spot – a book, as the title gives away, that is all about fantasy and mythology.

But not every agent is seeking speculative fiction manuscripts – nor should they be expected to. For one thing, one really needs to be a reader of this all-encompassing loose-term genre to truly appreciate quality writing for it, and to also know what the current publishing landscape is reading like, in order to represent such a manuscript and author.

Of course a good story, is a good story, is a good story, regardless of whether or not you know the difference between a shapeshifter and a werewolf, or the nuances of undead zombies versus vampires. But being able to appreciate a good story well-told is quite different from knowing which publishers will respond to a particular tale, where to pitch, where the tropes you're writing sit in the

current market, what readers are clamouring for more of (or had enough of), and even what's happening in the film and television realms of popular culture, with regards to sci fi and fantasy. And for this reason, emerging writers of speculative fiction really should seek agents who specialise.

For one thing, understanding the current landscape means an agent can tell when an emerging writer is maybe chasing trends in their writing. I certainly know that because of Leigh Bardugo's popular YA Russian-inspired fantasy books, 'The Grisha', I've been receiving a lot of manuscripts purporting to be dark fantasy inspired by Norse, Celtic and classical European mythology... which is fine, but when I know that Leigh Bardugo is the current standard in this fantasy-niche that readers are loving, then anything I receive that purports to be similar to her writing, needs to be at least as good or, more likely, have a story that surpasses her incredible works.

Emerging writers sometimes set an unnecessarily hard task for themselves in trying to reach the same exact genre heights as their favourite writers. I find myself reading manuscripts by people who clearly love and read in the genre – but are perhaps looking a little too inward at what pleases them, and who their favourite authors are, instead of looking critically at the market and peering outward at what's happening next, or could inspire them in the real world.

“What makes the best of speculative fiction is its ability to hold up a funhouse-distorted-mirror to our world, only subverted with the fantastical and abnormal.”

I recently read Margaret Atwood's interview in the 'New York Times', ahead of the television adaptation of her classic dystopian, 'The Handmaid's Tale'. Atwood said she started writing her book in 1984, and was inspired to do so by her time living in West Berlin, when the Berlin Wall still divided the city, and the Soviet empire still held its iron grip. Look to the best of speculative fiction and see that it usually exists with some uneasy tendrils to reality, and offers something that's utterly unique to an already unique market.

Think of the most popular speculative-fiction series by Australian young adult authors Amie Kaufman and Jay Kristoff – 'The Illuminae Files' (Allen and Unwin). Not only did this sci-fi series break the mould in giving the genre an epistolary novel form that draws upon everything from classified documents, to interview recordings, Wikipedia-like entries and other extravagantly detailed material to tell its story, but 'The Illuminae Files' is a work that's examining megacorporations and war, and is asking young readers to think about who they can trust when the unreliable narrator in their story may be the government itself. How's that for uneasy, real-world parallels?

Likewise, as an agent, I took on my first spec-fic author and manuscript in Graham Akhurst (whose novel 'Borderland' is coming out with Hachette in July 2018) because it was a coming-of-age, YA eco-thriller written by a young Indigenous author and drawing on magical realism and sci fi to pick apart questions of Indigenous land rights. The manuscript crossed my desk amidst heated discussions about the Adani coalmine in Queensland's Galilee Basin, while news out of America turned to the Dakota Access Pipeline protests at Standing Rock Indian Reservation. Graham wrote something that was smart and

dark, and would, I believe, resonate in years to come, much in the same way that Atwood's 'Handmaid's Tale' can feel like it was written in the Trump-era, even though it was actually inspired by the Cold War. Atwood didn't set out to write a dystopian – rather, she was inspired from living inside a real one.

I believe what makes the best of speculative fiction is its ability to hold up a funhouse-distorted-mirror to our world, only subverted with the fantastical and abnormal. Which is why I'd rather read a manuscript that draws upon the societal and political, rather than claim it's inspired by pure fandom for what has already come before. If you're writing in this genre, remember that it was invented by a 19-year-old Mary Shelley with the first ever non-religious creation myth in 'Frankenstein'. You're writing in the genre of invention and audacious fantasy. Embrace that.

Speculative fiction has no limits – and the best of it should take us to the very edge of our imaginations and push at our realities – if you're not doing that, then ask yourself, why not? And if an agent you're querying isn't provoking those questions in your work, then maybe they're not the right agent for you either. ⑩

Danielle Binks is a writer, editor, book blogger, youth literature advocate, and literary agent with Jacinta di Mase Management.

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On Spec: Getting it Published

Deanne Sheldon-Collins has some advice for getting your speculative fiction out in the world.

Speculative fiction is a popular genre, yet figuring out where to submit your work can be overwhelming, particularly if you're an early or emerging author.

Definitions of 'speculative fiction' vary, so I'll clarify what I mean when I use the term here: writing that falls into the genres of fantasy, science fiction or horror.

These encompass many subgenres, from alternate history to futuristic dystopia to supernatural mystery. Speculative genres are about possibility, whether rooted in the real world or completely removed from it. They often reflect current anxieties or preoccupations – climate fiction and space travel stories are on the rise, for example.

When I talk about 'spec fic', I am talking about genre fiction that plays with reality.

When looking to get your speculative fiction published in Australia, there are some things you need to know.

Where to submit

There are many different routes to publication: commercial or self-publishing, literary agent or self-representation, print or online.

If you decide to submit your work to commercial publishers, your instinct will probably be to go straight to a big-name publishing house – that way lies fame and glory, right? Actually, you may find that a small press better suits your writing.

Australia has a strong culture of independent publishing, including several small presses dedicated to genre fiction. Some have

recently closed down, but others are still thriving: Twelfth Planet Press, Ticonderoga Publications, Clan Destine Press, Odyssey Books, IFWG Publishing Australia.

These presses tend to be run by small, dedicated teams of spec-fic lovers who care about the projects they take on, are willing to explore new modes of marketing and distribution, and want to represent diverse characters. They often publish emerging writers and do story callouts for themed anthologies. These are the best publishers to approach if your writing doesn't fall neatly into the mainstream, although their publications are for mainstream audiences as well.

Large presses, meanwhile, put out books with wide commercial appeal. Your chances are therefore better if you write swords and sorcery, young adult dystopia, space adventures, urban fantasy, and so on. These are competitive markets, however, so you'll need to convince a big publisher that your work has the potential to stand out and sell well.

Some large presses have their own fantasy and science fiction imprints, such as Orbit (Hachette) and HarperVoyager (HarperCollins). Allen and Unwin, Pan Macmillan and Penguin Random House also publish some speculative fiction, as does the influential small press Text Publishing. These publishers represent many bestselling writers and international titles, but they take on debut authors as well.

Large publishers have wide distribution, higher budgets and international influence, so looking

at their submission guidelines is certainly worthwhile. Some will take unsolicited manuscripts, such as Pan Macmillan on its monthly Manuscript Monday.

What about short fiction?

Publishing short fiction is a good way to put your name out there. An effective flash story can be just as difficult to write as a 100,000-word manuscript, so this isn't to say that short fiction is only for early-level writers – but inclusion in magazines and anthologies can help you build a reputation, make contacts, qualify for awards and exercise your writing muscles.

Short stories and novellas have long played a key role in spec fic. Modern science fiction, for example, was heavily influenced by twentieth-century publications such as 'The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction' and 'Galaxy Science Fiction'. Online publication has overtaken print culture in this regard, but magazines (both print and digital) remain a great way to present your work to spec-fic audiences.

There are plenty of international magazines and sites to which you can submit your work, especially since online publishing has made location less of a factor than it once was. Closer to home are long-running Australian publications such as 'Andromeda Spaceways Magazine', 'Aurealis' and 'AntipodeanSF'. These publications showcase writing from around the world, but they are Australia-based and tend to prioritise local voices.

Specialist magazines are not the only platform for short fiction. Some literary journals and magazines, such as 'The Canary Press' and (as you may have noticed) 'The Victorian Writer', have published genre-themed issues.

Anthologies, too, are an outlet for short fiction. Small presses such as Ticonderoga and Twelfth Planet occasionally open up to submissions for themed collections; you can keep up to date with these callouts by following the publishers' social media.

Be (sub-)genre specific

When you decide where to submit your work, it's crucial to make sure that your writing suits the publication.

Speculative fiction is full of sub-genres and styles – so don't send your steampunk mystery

to a magazine seeking space opera. Don't send your space opera to a site focusing on horror flash fiction. And definitely don't send your elves-versus-vampires post-apocalyptic romance to a literary journal that publishes poetry and realism.

That may sound obvious, but submitting stories and manuscripts to inappropriate places is a common mistake. The best way to ensure you've chosen a suitable publication is to be familiar with the work it produces: read previous books or issues, subscribe if it's a magazine, and look carefully through submission guidelines, which are usually clear about what the publisher will and will not accept.

What now?

Read widely in the spec-fic genres, noting which publishers represent writing similar to yours. To broaden your reading, browse not only bookstores but also award shortlists. The Aurealis Awards and the Ditmar Awards are prominent Australian speculative fiction prizes, and the Australian Shadows Awards celebrate horror.

Read reviews to familiarise yourself with new releases and their publishers; you'll quickly start to notice trends. Look through annual anthologies, such as Ticonderoga's 'Year's Best Australian Fantasy and Horror' collections, which feature recommended reading lists and a year in review.

Research your chosen publishers. Look at their websites, comb through their submission guidelines, read their books, follow their tweets. Ensure your work is ready to make the best impression possible before you send it in.

Keep reading, keep writing, and keep submitting. No matter what your sub-genre, Australian speculative fiction is an exciting landscape to belong to. ⑩

Deanne Sheldon-Collins is a freelance editor and writer, WV staff member and the Reviews Editor of 'Aurealis'. She has a Master of Arts (Writing, Editing, and Publishing) from The University of Queensland. Deanne has reviewed for 'Aurealis' since 2013 and compiles the magazine's annual feature on 'The Year Ahead in Australian Speculative Fiction'.

An Alien Landscape

Sean Williams explores the value of research in science fiction – in Antarctica.

It's not every day you get to step onto the surface of an alien planet.

I got to do that in February, not as an astronaut but as the 2016/17 Australian Antarctic Division's Arts Fellow. My plane touched down on the ice runway at Wilkins aerodrome and there I took my first bold step into the environment on earth that's closest to Mars. All in the name of research.

Authors of every stripe grapple with the maxim 'write what you know'. As a science fiction writer, I've often been called on to imagine worlds far stranger than anything anyone has ever visited before.

How can I possibly do that, since I have no real shot at ever visiting one of them? The answer is: I can't, but I can get close, and here we get stuck on the definition of 'know'. If one researches thoroughly and imagines convincingly, is that the same thing as knowing?



You can extend this problem into every genre. Historical fiction: no one's yet built a time machine, so getting a researcher to Regency England is simply never going to happen. Crime fiction: how many writers have actually murdered someone? (Very few, I hope.) Writers of westerns, romance, even literary fiction eventually hit a wall beyond which direct experience falls short and extrapolation begins.

That's okay, because the world loves a writer and is full of resources to help them surmount that wall.

My trip to Antarctica is just one of them. The novel I pitched to the Division concerns a young Douglas Mawson coming face-to-face with one of HG Wells' martians during a delayed Discovery Expedition, which he's sharing with both Scott and Shackleton (the three never travelled together), during the earliest days of Australia's Federation. This genre of fiction, counterfactual or alternate history, relies on research, but you can only get so much from libraries or documentaries. I needed to get as close to the sources as possible in order get my teeth into them.

Visiting Casey Station in the modern era is very different to travelling south with Shackleton in the early-1900s, but it did give me an insight into the environment down there – and the cold. Being a child of the flat plains of South Australia, I didn't see snow until two years ago, so that experience alone was essential.

Standing on the porch of Casey's residential building and watching icebergs drift by was enough to send me rushing for my pen.

Being down in Antarctica also gave me valuable insights into the culture of the people who work down there, a culture founded over



a century ago and carefully nurtured today. The environment is as lethal as it ever was. The person you argue with over breakfast might be the one who'll save your life next month, so it's probably best you get along.

Another aspect of the culture of my novel is its historical context. To flesh that out I went to Canberra last year as the ACT Eminent Writer in Residence. This gave me access to the library in the Museum of Australian Democracy in Old Parliament House, where I freely ranged through the lives of our first prime ministers, settling on the wonderful Sir George Reid as a foil for my heroes. A sharp-witted public speaker with an eye for detail, he was the architect of Federation and Australia's first High Commissioner to London. He was also widely caricatured for his vast size, walrus moustache and monocle. You couldn't make up someone like him if you tried. A wonderful discovery!

The core character of the novel is Sir Douglas Mawson. I knew that getting a grip on his nature would take much more than just reading books. Fortunately, his great-granddaughter Emma McEwin lives nearby and was happy to assist me in my quest. It's she, in fact, who came up with the title, via a quote from Mawson's diaries, written 9 April, 1912, in which he describes standing on the ice as

being 'in touch with the sternest of nature – one might be a lone soul standing... on Mars.'

'Lone Soul Standing' is still in the research phase, but I now have so much information to process that coming up with ideas isn't the problem. The trick is finding the right ones. Therein lies the art.

I'm in the fortunate position of being able to apply for such fellowships and residencies with a reasonable shot at getting in, but even when those doors aren't open there will be other means available.

No matter which area you're researching, there's bound to be an expert somewhere who will talk at length on their subject, for free. Social media goes a long way towards erasing even just six degrees of separation. Put out the call and you'll be surprised. People love to share. Just don't forget to thank them in the finished book.

Then there are institutional archives. The Antarctic Division (AAD), for instance, possesses a library that contains much more than books. Their collection is full of artefacts from historical expeditions, from photos to snowshoes. Never hesitate to call and ask if you can access such collections. Institutions like the AAD employ people to manage

community outreach, so if you come to them, you're already doing them a favour.

Trove is another valuable source of data for the writer, particularly those working in a historical context. This database of scanned newspapers and other sources is exhaustive and searchable. A few keystrokes saw me reading speeches by Sir George Reid recorded verbatim in the papers of the day and nowhere else.

The general principle is: never be afraid to ask questions. When someone asks you what you're working on, tell them, and tell them what you'd like to know. You might be amazed by what you learn. The week before I travelled to Antarctica I discovered in conversation that the peerless explorer Sir Hubert Wilkins once lived in my very street. I don't think that'll make it into my novel, but you never know.

At some point, one must cease researching and write. It's hard to tell exactly when that moment arrives. One senses it intuitively, I think, and it becomes easier to do that as the writing progresses – one readily knows when the right piece of information is not in one's possession.

Sometimes it's possible to write through that lack of knowledge, sometimes it's not. As the great Ursula Le Guin once said: 'When action grows unprofitable, gather information. When information grows unprofitable, sleep.'

I'm a big fan of sleeping to let facts coalesce into stories. That's the phase 'Lone Soul Standing' is at right now: I've gone forth and I've gathered. Now I must assemble. Some of that takes place at my desk, some on my pillow. Both are acts of dreaming that will be bringing something that never existed into the real world.

That is something at which all writers, of every genre, excel. ①

Sean Williams is an award-winning, #1 'New York Times' bestselling author of over forty novels and one hundred stories, including some set in the 'Star Wars' universe and some written with Garth Nix. He lives in Adelaide with his family and a pet plastic fish. His latest series is 'Twinmaker', beginning with 'Jump', available from Allen and Unwin.



Wilkes by sunset. Image courtesy the author.

Worldly Wise

Alison Goodman has some tips on building a vivid world for your readers – no matter where or when it is.

Our job as storytellers is to deliver delight. That delight can come in many forms such as horror, intrigue, romance, suspense, and of course, that wonderful sense of sinking into another world that feels totally real. But how do you build a believable world? Is it a case of getting all your world-element ducks in a row before you start writing, or is it more of a fly-by-the-seat-of-your pants affair?

I think the method of building a world is, like most things in fiction writing, closely tied to the type of writer you are. If you are a planner, then you will probably feel a lot more secure if you put a large number of the world elements in place before you start writing. If you are a pantsner, the idea of spending that much time on note-taking would probably make you want to turn a phaser on yourself; you'd be far happier leaping in and creating as you go along.

And then there are the planny-pantsners, like me, who like a 'bit o' both' (in the words of Peter Quill at the end of 'Guardians of the Galaxy', arguably the best movie ever made... but that's another article).

The following are my world-building tips. They are geared towards sci fi and fantasy writing but they hold fast for other genres too. Some of them may suit your way of writing. Some of them may not. All of them have been learned the hard way with over twenty-five years of blood, sweat and coffee poured into them.

1. Where to start?

Throw yourself in – there is no right way or right place to start. It doesn't matter if you start building your world around a brilliant character or a brilliant premise, in the end it will all dovetail together

When I first started to build the world in the 'Eon' books, the premise came first: a young woman dangerously defies her society to commune with an energy dragon of good fortune. As soon as I began to develop that idea, certain requirements in the world became clear.

First, I knew that this was an underdog story, and that Eon, my main character, had low status in a hierarchical society. Aha, I thought, this is a strict hierarchical society I'm creating, so what kind? Who is high and who is low? Is there a middle class?

Secondly, Eon is a female trying to sneak in to a male-only vocation. That meant my world had to be extremely patriarchal. How extreme? Extreme enough to make defying it a deadly offence.

Third, Eon has certain powers, one of them: seeing dragons. What kind of dragons? Is this dragon-communing institutionalised or natural? If so, is it secular or linked to a religion?

As you can see, the answer to every question helped me add an element to my world, and directed me to the next logical question. The answers also started to create the limits of the characters and the world. Let's face it, we all start with an impossibly brilliant, glowing idea in our mind and nurture it into limitless possibilities in our imaginations. Unfortunately that version can never make it on to the page. Don't be disappointed. Limits are good – they provide boundaries to your world so that you can move forward from dreaming it to writing a version of it.

Of course, the questions you ask yourself are going to be based on your story idea, but keep in mind that a world is not just one small druidic village or the space station where the action of your story takes place. That village or space station is part of a larger world, and the institutions and structures within that larger world will impact on your story's setting. Explore it so that there is not a sense of 'nothingness' beyond the village or space station limits.

Keep in mind that, even if you are a planner, new ideas will always come up as you write, changes will have to be made, and ducks gently herded back into line. Stay flexible, and make sure you keep your world logical and consistent.

2. How to make sure your world is logical and consistent.

If dogs can fly in your world, then does it follow that they would be just the same kind of dogs that we have in our world, but with wings? Would a winged dog really be as domesticated as our dogs? And how would you pick up their poo? Take the time to logic test your world and go as far as you can along the logic trail. Personally, I like to bounce my world logic off other people and get their input. I have, in the past, fallen into the trap of not testing out my world logic far enough and had to trash half a book because of it. Painful. Learn from my mistake. Test your logic!

Most fantasy writing has some form of magic system in it – this is one of the most important world elements and needs to be logic checked. Creating and writing a magic system is gloriously fun, but it can also be hard and frustrating, especially if you want to move beyond the myths and traditions of 'magic systems' that have their base in our world. Creating original magic means that the hard 'logic' yards have not been answered (or have been shoved under the carpet) by accepted myth and tradition.

Here are my best tips for creating a magic system. Firstly, it will have a history – an origin, first practitioners, accidents, discoveries – so write that history. None of it may make it into your story, but writing it will ground the magic in a logical beginning and development.

‘It doesn't matter if you start building your world around a brilliant character or a brilliant premise, in the end it will all dovetail together.’

Secondly, keep a list of your rules, whether you create them all at once or as you go along (especially if you are creating them as you go along). Check that their logic fits with your world and that they are consistent with each other. Update the list. Keep the list close. Do not lose the list.

The same can be said for the story time-line, whether it is a speculative story or not. Make notes of when and where things happen in each scene, at what time of day and in what season. This is even more important if you are working with concepts of time that are not earthbound. When you come back to the inevitable redraft, you will want to thank me from the bottom of your heart and with gifts (I like dark chocolate and rose gold jewelry).

3. How much research?

For me, the amount of research I do before I start writing depends on the book's genre. For 'Eon' and 'Eona', epic fantasy novels, I worked on getting the dragon and magic system in good working order, and some aspects of the fantasy society, and then I plunged into writing. My latest books, the 'Lady Helen' series, are paranormal adventures set in the Regency. They are historically accurate, so I spent over eight months researching the factual historical world and creating it in my mind with immersive research before I started to write. By immersive research I mean finding experiences that allow me to collect sensory information that I can then fold into the descriptions of my world. For the 'Lady Helen' books, that included learning how to Regency dance, visiting London and walking the same street and parks as Lady Helen, and eating Regency-style food. For the 'Eon' books it included learning how to handle a sword,

investigating the use of space in temples and, again, trying banquet foods that would appear in the novel. (Yeah, the food research is my favourite).

In both series, the research was also ongoing throughout the writing process. I know another author who throws herself into the writing without any research, leaves notes on the manuscript where research is required, then at the end of the draft goes back and fills in the spaces. Basically, it is whatever works. However, try not to get too caught up in research, it can be a monumental time suck if you let it (said the writer who spent half an hour working out the order of nobility so that she knew which noble would walk into a Regency dining room first).

4. How much description is too much?

Like every genre, sci fi and fantasy have their own conventions and tolerances. To my mind, both genres have a comparatively high tolerance for description; the world building is part of the delight. However, that high tolerance doesn't cover the rightfully maligned info-dump: paragraphs of 'pertinent' world detail/history dumped on the reader in one go. No, no no! My rule of thumb: after four sentences of description, the writing is heading into Tediumville. Ten sentences and it is smack in the centre of Skip-over-it-town.

5. The 'secret' to successful world building

This isn't really a secret, but it is, in my view, the best way to write a vivid and seamless world for your reader. Drip-feed the world through your point of view character and the story action. In other words, as your POV character moves through their world making the decisions that propel the plot forward, she (he or it) is also showing the reader what that world looks like, smells like, sounds, tastes and feels like, as well as giving an idea of the world's laws, traditions and societal structures.

Creating a vivid world for the reader is ultimately all about point of view. You are telling a story through one or more POV characters, and it is their experience of their world at a particular time in their life that is the kernel of your story. Their physical senses, opinions, beliefs, history and above all, emotional state, are the conduits through which the word is delivered to the reader.

Trust your reader to build up a picture of the world through that character, and try not to over-explain. That means trusting your own skill.

How do you get to that point, though, of trusting your own skill? That's a tough one, and the only pathway I know is my final tip.

6. Practice.

Keep writing and don't expect to get it right the first time round or even the second time. We all write and rewrite and rewrite again, looking for the best way of expressing the worlds within us. That is part of the process. As you probably already know, creating delight is bloody hard work. 🍷

Alison Goodman is the award-winning author of six novels including 'Lady Helen and the Dark Days Club', the first in a Regency supernatural trilogy, and 'Eon' and 'Eona', a 'New York Times' bestselling fantasy duology. 'Lady Helen and the Dark Days Pact', the second 'Lady Helen' novel, was released in January 2017.

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Alison Goodman's forthcoming workshop, Building Your Novel's Spine – Classic Narrative Structure, will be held at Writers Victoria from 10am–4pm on 1 Jun. Visit writersvictoria.org.au for details.

Writing a Hidden Future

When developing a trilogy set in future Melbourne, Thalia Kalkipsakis looked to the same places that inspire contemporary fiction – the world around her.

One of my favourite movies as a child was a time-travel romance called ‘Somewhere in Time’. It stars the late Christopher Reeve (think Clark Kent without the glasses) and is embarrassingly corny now that I look back, but the reason my sister and I kept renting that worn old video cassette wasn’t the romance, it was the origin of the pocket watch.

Early in the piece, an elderly Jane Seymour hands Reeve an old pocket watch, which he carries when he travels backwards in time and, in turn, gives to a younger Seymour. This creates a causal loop – the watch is never built and never ‘ends’ – one of the paradoxes cited as proof that time travel is impossible and, worse, possibly a plot flaw.

Thirty years later, the risks of causal loops were at the forefront of my mind while I was developing a time-travel trilogy for young adults. It wasn’t just important to me that the story was authentic in terms of character journey, it also had to be solid in terms of social structures and the ‘rules’ of this fictional world.

For a start, I’d read enough scientific journals to know that time travel forwards is possible, at least in a relative sense, so I carried that kernel of truth into the year 2084 when three teenagers discover a skill that lies dormant in all humans. By practising a mediation technique, they learn how to re-locate themselves in time.

The catch: they are only able to jump forwards, not back.

My husband and I lived in Footscray before moving our young family to regional Victoria in 2004, so I already knew the shock of returning to a familiar place only to find buildings sprung

up overnight or children grown tall in the blink of an eye. Without actually naming Melbourne, I set key events in Footscray Park, Swanston ‘Boulevard’, the State Library. Even the experience of ‘time jumping’ was inspired by a common everyday occurrence: sleep.

In effect, I picked up the solid line that is the world around me, and carried the dots into a fictional future.

As a nod to the brain-melting fun of causal loops, I decided that information could indeed travel backwards. Physical objects may be governed by time’s arrow, but truth is eternal.

From this idea sprung a future where everyone is microchipped: infinitely useful as a storytelling device, since characters are able to see events from the past on ‘the grid’. In terms of future-building, a whole social structure blossomed from those microchips – food shortages have led to a ration system; chipped citizens are able to access food, education and technology, while unchipped illegals struggle to survive.

Clearly I was also writing a future affected by climate change, even though I’d never set out to do so. But this new development also provided me with the best antagonist I’ve ever had the privilege to write – neither good nor evil, but intrinsic to our survival: the natural environment.

The first two books in the trilogy deal with storms, a blackout, drought, food security and water shortages, as well as two versions of a bushfire (it’s a time-travel story set in Victoria, after all). By the time I’d begun to develop the final instalment, images of Swanston St flooded by seawater began to play in my

imagination. I kept seeing the Flinders St clock tower above the peaks of waves. The opening scenes even saw characters hiding in massive water-stained drains.

My problem was, none of the scientific predictions see those images as remotely likely. Even when following the 'high end scenario' shown on the Australian Government's Geoscience Australia website, sea levels in the year 2100 might reach 110 centimetres – the banks of the Yarra River will get a bit wider, but few nearby properties are under threat.

“Once our city has been submerged, our fictional future doesn't face complete environmental breakdown, but instead emerges into images of regeneration.”

Contrast this with 'The 100 Metre Line' blog, which shows impacts of sea levels rising 80 metres – the whole Melbourne CBD is under water, Port Phillip Bay extends as far north as Hurstbridge. It's a confronting sight. At least, it would be if it were an accurate prediction.


The reality of sea-level rise is that while low-lying islands face genuine threat, most city encroachment is expected to occur gradually enough for us to respond, but search Google Images with 'sea level rise city', and you'll find artists' impressions of skyscrapers rising above blue seas – images that have sprung from a collective fear of the impacts of climate change. They're not reflections of present-day science, but the present-day zeitgeist.

When I think back to our childhood fascination with the pocket watch, it wasn't about scientific inauthenticity or plot flaws, it was because the watch helped us see the world in new ways. It made us shiver with possibility: what if that were real...

So I allowed the story to guide me. I was, after all, writing fiction so I was free to push beyond the boundaries.

I'm glad I did. Once our city has been submerged, our fictional future doesn't face complete environmental breakdown, but instead emerges into images of regeneration. Even the social structures shift; characters who once wielded power are now forced to work with others in order to survive. From my fears of death and destruction have come signs of hope, resilience and renewal.

The story may not be as scientifically accurate as I'd hoped, but that's okay. I realise now that it wasn't a scientific truth I was exploring, but an emotional one.

I'm looking forward hearing how readers of the first two books respond to the final instalment – one in particular, my sister. 

Thalia Kalkipsakis is currently working on the final instalment of the 'Lifespan of Starlight' trilogy. The first two books are available now.

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Predicting the Past

In her latest novel, Jane Rawson shifts her speculation from future possibilities to historical events.

In fights about realist literature versus speculative fiction – fights that happen mysteriously often online and on the stages of writers' festivals – spec-fic fans like to say that the point of the genre, what makes it so great, is that it helps us imagine the future. Books like '1984' and 'The Handmaid's Tale' are selling out around the world as readers try to figure out where the new US President is taking his country and the world. 'The Hunger Games', 'Brave New World', 'Gold Fame Citrus', 'The Natural Way of Things', 'Clade': they all help us pick apart the way we live now and ponder what kind of future we're building for ourselves.

I've written two books set in the near future. 'Formaldehyde' was written in 2000 and set in that year and in 2022, when my hero is declared dead by the Identity Office after the data on him fail to add up. I wanted to write about what it would mean to have all the aspects of your identity centralised in one place, what could happen if that went wrong, and how we might escape the tyranny of being microscopically tracked.

'A Wrong Turn at the Office of Unmade Lists' is set in Melbourne in 2030 (as well as in an imaginary – even in the context of the imaginary book – San Francisco in 1997). Climate change has made the city hot, stormy and dusty, thronged with begging street kids and plagued with failing water, power and transport infrastructure. The divide between rich and poor is stark. That version of Melbourne feels, to me, like it might get here before 2030; none of the writing about climate change – fiction or non-fiction – seems to have done much to inspire us or our governments to change our ways.

But what about speculative fiction set in the past? No one can use it to predict the future, even inaccurately, so what on earth is the point of it? And why would anyone write speculative fiction about real people and real events?

I don't have a graph to prove it, but I'm pretty sure more speculative fiction is set in the future than the past. What historical speculative fiction there is falls mostly in one of two groups, with a very blurry line between them.

Alternative histories take real-world events and spin them with a 'but what if [very important thing] had happened differently?' plot line. 'What if the Axis powers had won the Second World War?' is a popular way to go. Philip K Dick's 'The Man in the High Castle' is a classic in this vein; in Australia, we have John Birmingham's alternative Second World War-series 'Axis of Time' and John A Scott's study of Australia under fascist power, 'N'.

Historical fantasy is a lot like historical fiction, but with speculative elements: magic often makes an appearance. Historical figures may take centre stage, or they might pop their heads in now and again, or everyone in the story may be entirely made up. One of the most-read examples is Susanna Clarke's 'Jonathan Strange and Mr Norrell'. Set in Britain during the Napoleonic Wars, it is peopled mostly by made-up characters, and is set around the return of magic to the social and political scene. One of the newest is George Saunders' 'Lincoln in the Bardo', a heavily historical novel set on the night Abraham Lincoln's young son is buried, and narrated both by actual contemporary sources and a bevy of tragicomic ghosts.

“We spend most of our lives focused on the tiny sliver of the world that is our reality, ignoring the vast, rich wildness of others’ experiences.”

I’ve just added another book to that pile. My new novel, ‘From the Wreck’, is set in 19th century Port Adelaide. It begins with the wreck of the steamship Admella, an actual event, and follows the life of one of its survivors, George Hills (who was also my great-great-grandfather). In my version of events, another of the survivors was a refugee from another dimension, an octopus-like shape-shifter escaping carnage on her home planet and trying to make a life on earth.

I wrote the first several drafts of this book as realist historical fiction. This was a way of writing that was completely new to me. But having written two fantastical books, I felt like I couldn’t be a real, grown-up writer until I wrote something that felt ‘real’.

For five years I researched the Victorian era and what it would have looked like in a little town like Port Adelaide. I learned a lot: about the Victorian commemoration of death, about seances and spiritual churches, and about hypnotism as a precursor to psychological treatment. All of it got crammed into my 80,000-word realist historical fiction manuscript.

I hated the end result. It managed to be both melodramatic and extremely dull. I made a print-out for my mum, who enjoyed the book even though I loathed it, and then I chucked the whole thing away.

A few months later, I started writing a story about explorers from earth arriving on another planet and terraforming it, a story about what would happen to the original inhabitants of that planet when it became unliveable for them.

I started thinking about how humans have homoformed this planet we live on until it has become unliveable for its original inhabitants.

I wrote about a refugee from the future terraformed planet, a cephalopod-like creature, flung out into a different time, a different dimension, and stranded on earth. I wrote her for a while, I created her voice, her motivations. I tried to figure out how what she said and thought might be translated into written words.

And then, because I wasn’t sure what else to do with her, I set her down in the ocean off South Australia in 1859 and I let her find her way to George.

I started again. I wrote a book about a man called George Hills, shipwrecked in the Admella in 1859. He met an alien disguised as a steamship passenger. His newborn son and the alien formed a symbiotic relationship. George spent his life searching for the woman he’d met on board ship, destroying his health and family, never realising she was a creature of his imagination, still less that she had travelled to earth from another dimension.

It was a historical book featuring real people and an actual wreck, but it was a long way from true.

Are there any benefits to a book like this, for either the writer or the reader?


One of the best things about writing future-set speculative fiction is the lack of research: you make it all up and no one can prove you got it wrong. Even if you do, eventually, get it wrong, you can claim your story is set in a parallel universe that’s a lot, but not exactly, like our own.

One of the best things about writing historical fiction is that it’s serious and respected; publishers like it, it gets onto the shortlists for prizes and is generally enjoyed by a wide range of people who attend book clubs and go to writers’ festivals.

Writing historical speculative fiction has none of these benefits. It requires a great deal of research, you can mess it up, and when you finally finish the book people will shy away in horror as soon as they discover the presence of aliens. Books with spaceships do not get shortlisted for literary prizes.

So why bother?

I know my experience of reading George Saunders' brilliant 'Lincoln in the Bardo' had very little to do with better understanding Lincoln and his era and a lot more to do

Great speculative fiction, whether set in the past or the future, tilts your world a little, opens up cracks in the things you thought you knew, lets the light get in. For a moment, everything seems brighter and clearer. 

Jane Rawson is the author of two novels, 'A Wrong Turn at the Office of Unmade Lists' (2013, Transit Lounge) and 'From the Wreck' (2017, Transit Lounge), as well as a novella, 'Formaldehyde' (2015, Seizure), which won the Seizure Viva La Novella Prize. She is the co-author of 'The Handbook: Surviving and Living with Climate Change' (2015, Transit Lounge). Her short fiction has been published in 'Sleepers', 'Overland', 'Tincture', 'Seizure' and 'Review of Australian Fiction'. She works for the Victorian Government and lives in Melbourne's west.

Nitpicker



RMIT
UNIVERSITY



1. The journey really tested their (mettle/metal).
2. Several hundred souls were cramped aboard the HMS (Good Hope/*Good Hope*) before it sailed.
3. (Less/Fewer) than half survived the voyage.
4. It was neither the vertiginous waves of the mid-ocean storm (or/nor) the broken mast that sealed the ship's fate.
5. It was the fever (that/, which) spread throughout steerage.

Answers on page 33

2045

By Alice Robinson

Em must sleep awhile with the others; unconscious in an instant, like turning out a light. Then all at once they are beyond the city, the wide, tidal salt-flats, and into the glittering bay. Em shocks awake, doused in icy spray. It is dawn, and it seems they are all waking, dropping into a nightmare rather than surfacing from one. Spluttering, Em lunges for Matilda. She calls the child's name even before she can rub saltwater from her eyes. But the little girl is still there, already awake, rigid with fear. The men have set the outboard wheezing, keeping them on course. Who knows what they are using to make the motor run. No lifejackets. Matilda can't swim.

'I won't let anything happen to you,' Em shouts over the noise of the waves and the crying. 'If we have to go in the water, I'll carry you.'

Now that they are out in the bay in the slapping wind, she wishes there had been some way to prepare Matilda. The waves are bigger here, the boat lurching up on the vertical then plummeting down the other side, sickening. They're taking water. All around is the sound of retching. Em wraps her arms around her child. There's a pang. She has missed the best view of Williamstown. Their boat would have chugged right past, and she was sleeping. The hot grief like a plume of smoke behind her nose catches her off guard. Her cheeks burn against frozen fingers. But what was there to see? Even as her stomach rises up her throat and the boat comes crashing down again, hard, in the valley between waves, sending a volt of pain from her tailbone up her spine, Em is cautious in her curiosity. She longs to have snatched for herself one last long look at the suburb she loves, the single location she knows best. Her home. But even as this thought occurs, she knows it is folly. Nothing is as it was. The suburb, like the city, like the nation, like the world, is no longer a map of places to know, but continuously shifting; Williamstown

is not a spot she can visit, but a location inside herself.

The sun is hot on the horizon, a flaming orange disk, tingeing the bitter water pink. Overhead, the sky is already platinum, blindingly bright. Em squints; waves sequined with light. They are soaked. As they crest the next wave, she spots the liner. The sight takes her breath. It's there, as Aiden said it would be, moored a kilometre or two away where the water is deeper still. She glances back at the shore, but with the flooding she can't judge the distance: there's no clear demarcation between what is land, and what is sea.

'There!' she shouts to Matilda over the spray, pointing at the ship.

The child nods through chattering teeth.

'Waves are getting bigger,' Leah shouts in Em's ear. They stare into the water together as the boat comes crashing down. Something splinters.

'What was that?' Matilda screeches.

'Don't panic,' Em shouts. But she is panicking herself. She looks around wildly for something to reassure herself with, something to hold onto, but there's nothing.

'Is the boat sinking?' John wails. Matilda shrieks as they crest another wave and slam down. The pregnant girl is praying, speaking for them all.

'Don't be daft,' Liz barks, tossing a long grey plait over her shoulder, slinging an arm around the smaller of her sons. Em admires her bravado. The certainty with which she lies. 'We're not going to sink.'

'Let's go back, please!' Matilda's features are smeared with tears and snot and salt, cheeks blotched red, two bright discs.

'It's okay,' Em shouts, but her words are sucked away by wind. Out here they are dwarfed by the vast, broiling expanse of water. Their moans are inconsequential, falling silently.

Matilda tries to stand, 'I want to get out!'

Em yanks her down. 'Listen to me.' Mind racing, she tries and fails to think of something sensible to say. Something calming. Matilda's eyes are huge in her bony face. Water rolls down her cheeks. She's still so little. 'We'll get a cat in Tasmania,' Em finds herself saying, hating the note of desperation in her voice. 'You like animals.'

'A cat?' The child shudders, lifting from Em's lap as the boat lands again.

Em fixes her gaze on Matilda. 'Ship's just there. We'll be dry soon. Safe.' The child scrunches up to scream as a wave breaks over, but Em shakes her by the shoulders. 'Remember what I say when I put you to bed? I'm big and I'm tough and I won't ever leave you. Trust me, Birdie! I won't let anything happen.'

Matilda wants to cry, but she draws a shaky breath.

'Brave girl,' Em says, pulling the child closer. There had been no life for them at the camp. But what had she been thinking, bringing

Matilda on a boat? If only she had tried a little harder, done more, thought things through more carefully. She recalls the city ringed by fire, charred ruins. Washed away. The dusty outer suburbs turned drylands, abandoned. Beyond the hundred-odd kilometers of concrete cul-de-sac demarcating the whole of Melbourne, the countryside was dust.

The sun rises higher over the bay, growing more intense. There's little warmth out on the water, but even so Em feels the hole in the ozone spotlighting like sun through a magnifying glass, burning her skin. She is looking back at the city now. The scope of the damage takes her breath. She remembers the way Nonno appeared after he died. It was the same, handsome man lying there, but like a mask, he no longer seemed to be behind his face. Melbourne looks like that: lifeless. The shape of the bay is different, the shorefront suburbs flattened by flood and weather. Em squints into the sun, where the scape is blackened right down to the water, the legacy of bushfire turned inferno; it just keeps flaring up. She thinks she can see all the way to the burnished countryside, golden aura ringing the far northern and western suburbs, not a trace of green. But it's the CBD that really chills her. At a glance, the skyscrapers, feats



of engineering, look as they always did: a pristine, glittering, forest of glass. But as she blinks she becomes attuned to the markers of change she already knew were there. Buildings are missing, gaps like pulled teeth. The Eureka tower slumps, wounded, casting a nasty shadow over smaller buildings that have somehow remained upright. More than one office tower appears intact to the point at which it becomes streaked with soot: fires set by squatters, desperate bodies hailing down. There's a dark welt on the coastline. Another camp. Worse, perhaps, Em reflects, to be so close to the incoming tide. Behind it, the wreck of the old Westgate arcs precariously into the cloudless sky, gnarled pylons and twisted concrete jagged where the explosion ripped the centre out. It was a long time ago now, more than two decades. An act of terrorism people said, though Em had been too young to understand it. Who was there to ask? The trucks and bikes and family cars that fell would still lie there somewhere, sunk below the broken bow of twisted metal, buried in the water.

Zadie catches Em's eye. Alone in the fray, the young woman is a statue, unnaturally poised. Rigid, there's something wrong with her posture. Amid the howls, her silence seems off. Em's gaze travels down from the girl's face to her hands. She registers the emptiness of the woman's lap, recoiling against the thing she knows in that instant to be true. No! Unbidden, an image: the tiny, perfect newborn child dropping down down down like a stone through black water. Em wonders what baby Grace thought, watching her mother's face recede. So recently cocooned in warm saltwater, perhaps she felt a kind of homecoming when she fell. Not likely. Grace didn't fall, but was dropped.

Em stares hard at the crown of Matilda's head, stealing herself, then she reaches out to touch Zadie's knee. She has to take herself in hand not to grimace, feeling revulsion.


'Love. What happened?' Her voice is softer than she means it to be, but Zadie meets her gaze regardless. The tick at the corner of the girl's white lip sets her whole jaw wobbling. She brings her hands to her mouth and bites down hard.

'Don't worry,' Em rushes on, 'it'll all come out in the wash.' She doesn't know why she says

it, one of Carly's favourite phrases, ill-fitting for the occasion and untrue. But Zadie doesn't seem to be listening, and Em has taken some comfort in the familiar words, like touching a soft blanket. Is a mother still a mother without her child? There's no English word for such a thing, that yawning absence. We don't name it, Em thinks, because we don't want it to exist.

Without needing to speak, Leah leans across to take Zadie's other hand, understanding what is needed. Em senses the steadfastness of the slight woman beside her; strength comes off Leah's body like warmth. Zadie's cheeks are wet with salt, tears and spray. She's shivering, convulsing, afraid. Leah gives Em a quick smile and then they're rubbing the girl's skin hard, one to each side, pinkening thin thighs, pale arms, icy cheeks. The boat rises up and bucks down. Coughing, Matilda burrows down into Em's lap. But Em is calm for the first time in hours, maybe days and months, rubbing and rubbing Zadie's skin beside Leah, never breaking eye contact with the girl's anguished face. And with a jolt she understands what they are doing: how they are trying to anchor the girl in the boat, to bring her back the way a midwife rubs down a blue baby to force it to take breath.

'Shh, shh,' Leah soothes, echoing Zadie soothing Grace. But out on the waves, Zadie's wailing doesn't matter. There's no one to hear. Em feels sick, the punch of the loss. Grace.

'It's okay, love, let it out.' Leah's voice is steady as they crash. 'We understand, sweetheart, we do. We don't blame you, hey.' They're holding the girl; just a baby herself. Holding her down. Their hands work across her body, circulating blood. Finally, as the boat rears up, the young mother throws her head back to the sky. The gale muffles the scream but it's still the worst thing Em's heard: Zadie without her baby, coming back alive. 

Alice Robinson is a writer of fiction and non-fiction. Her debut novel, 'Anchor Point', was longlisted for the 2016 Stella Prize, the 2016 Indie Book Awards (debut fiction), and was named one of 25 Best Book Club Reads in the 'Herald Sun'. She has a PhD in Creative Writing focusing on climate change in Australia. '2045' is an extract from her second novel, forthcoming with Affirm Press.

The Fraction Simulator

By Briohny Doyle

Anton got out of the cab a short distance from the party and walked across the park. He liked the aspect, heading west through Sydney Park with the ruined brick works looming on the horizon. On a hot day like today, the pollution from the road and the industrial area beyond shimmered in the humid air and if you squinted you could imagine the ruins were still smoking.

Before Anton was born, though not long before, the park had been landfill. He liked to imagine generations of filth atrophied, just feet below the green. Refuse from a past as indifferent to the designer dogs and joggers as they were to the deep-down fossilised Coke cans and condoms hardened to amber.

Anton took a sip from his grandfather's hipflask. The hand-engraving on its flatter side read 'My darling, have courage! Love always, Joan'. As usual, Anton silently thanked Joan as he buried the flask in his jacket pocket, considering his evening plans with a kind of nervous dread. He crossed the south end of King Street and headed down a narrow street to a fashionably shabby terrace house. Another bloody dinner party.

Anton made an amount of money from shares in a well-known, though not so well-reputed, mining company. For some reason, however, it was not easy to say this at a dinner party. He would get chatting to someone. A friend of a friend, introduced as 'Vanessa', or 'Jane', or 'Abbie', who 'used to work at blah' or 'study blah' or 'travelled to blah' with the host, and then, after a few pleasant observations Vanessa, or Jane, or Abbie would ask him, 'What do you do, Anton?' He could never think of a good answer. He tried laughing, narrowing his eyes and answering with another question like, what does anyone do? Or, what don't I do? He tried saying that he made a policy of not talking about work, or money, or that he worked only to live, never lived to work. He tried saying that he danced, baby, and would they like to? Or, drank, baby, and would they like one? But all this only got Vanessa, or Jane, or Abbie offside. It wouldn't have been so bad if they could take his caginess

as a sign of a dangerous and perhaps powerful position in life. Perhaps if he had a visible scar or a lazy eye they might assume he was a professional poker player or a drug dealer. But he always got the impression that they made the decidedly unsexy and not inaccurate assumption that he was a lazy, maladjusted mummy's boy, living off the parental bequest.

Of course, he wasn't just a trust-fund child and wasn't this kind of reductive? His grandfather's endowment had been modest, comparatively. Just a small portion of hard-earned funds. Anton always stressed this in his mind: the quality and the breadth of the work his grandfather had done, the worker's blood that by inference ran through his veins.

If it hadn't been for the well-known but unscrupulous mining company, the fruits of his grandfather's labour might just as well have been consumed in one really terrific holiday and a pretty fantastic car. It was his brains, Anton's brains, perhaps as much as the dubiously procured and controversially fracked coastal allotments, that had processed that fruit into fuel.

He got over the guilt of the thing. Anyone who knew how to operate a search engine could get rich. It was the unfashionableness that seemed so unfair. He had been skint all through university. He had lived in small terraces packed with bodies. He had eaten Hare Krishna food like all the other students. He had, in other words, done his time. In the last five years though, everyone had started wearing thick glasses. Everyone was the 99 per cent. Getting rich was a crime against cool.

Anton immediately recognised the judgement, his unequivocal lack of cool reflected in the brown eyes of the girl his host graciously seated him beside. Her name was Vanessa. She was fashionably androgynous, declining red meat, sipping a biodynamic pinot. She didn't introduce herself as he sat, awkwardly arranging himself between two already flowing conversations and a ravaged bowl of kale chips. When she started

talking about her trip to the desert, Anton felt as though his hosts had deliberately seated him by her side as a cruel taunt. Here you go rich boy, try your luck with this pretty hippy.

'The thing I noticed most was that this is where information, I mean what we think of as information, stops,' she told the table.

'It sounds amazing,' agreed another bespectacled woman.

'Please, you couldn't go a week without checking your Facebook,' said the second woman's date. The table tittered. Anton tried to find a harmonious groove and rhythm.

'I actually think low connectivity in rural areas is a real problem in this country. People need access to information,' the date added, softening his barb.

'Sure, how else would everyone know a little bit about a lot of things?' The woman with the glasses muttered. She and her date would probably go home and have exuberant sex, thought Anton. They would probably get married and have competitive children.

'No, it's a matter of communication,' said the date.

'Communication' and 'information' mean different things away from our rampaging capitalist cities. You have to change your whole paradigm out there in the desert,' Vanessa persisted. 'You want to know what the weather is doing, you look at the sky. You want to know if your assets are appreciating, you count your cattle. The migratory pattern of birds. Or the changes in cloud coverage. That's real information.'

Her sincerity was cute, if grossly ignorant of modern agricultural practices. Anton could feel people getting uncomfortable. They looked down at their food. The guests were respectfully quiet, but unwilling to engage her further.

'I'm sorry, but rural people should get to have LOL Cats,' someone said.

The table erupted in relieved laughter and the discussion was over. Vanessa took a bitter sip of her wine. There were things that were almost as uncool as money. Being a Luddite, for instance. Or lacking a sense of humour. Anton looked at her out of the corner of his eyes. He arranged a sympathetic smile.

'It sounds really beautiful. How long were you out there for?' he asked.

'Only a few months,' she said. 'I'd love to move out there permanently though.'

'Sounds like a good way to slow your life down,' said Anton.

'Exactly,' said Vanessa, confidence recovered. 'We think we have everything but actually we are missing out. We don't even notice our lives passing we are so involved in what they look like on an internet timeline or a bank statement.'

Anton nodded. She needed to decide what the enemy was, he thought, the internet or money. A one-tier attack would strengthen her argument.

'Where do you live?' he asked.

'Elizabeth Bay,' she blushed.

Anton bit his smile, and nodded. He looked around the dinner table at the smiling faces, the tight-lipped wine sipping, the theatrically engaged nodding.

There were several kinds of thirty-something female artists slash arts administrators, an almost well-known writer who everyone almost envied, a few pale men who worked in design or film, a number of well-paid development workers in hill tribe earrings or with bags made from recycled Cambodian rice sacks. There was also a very pretty, very young girl who Anton had assumed was one of the film dude's girlfriends but turned out to be the owner of a very hip start-up.

Contrary to his previous, perhaps overly paranoid assumption, his hosts had shown kindness in sitting him beside someone with whom he could quietly constitute, if not the one per cent at least somewhere in the range of 3.7 per cent.

The hostess set down a round of small Japanese bowls with a thin brown broth, and some kind of root vegetable sunk low in its depths. Vanessa held the bowl close to her face and inhaled deeply, smiling a broad, sensuous smile.

'Soul food,' she said, and someone to her left nodded agreement.

'So,' she turned to Anton. 'What do you do?'

Anton looked down at his bowl, sighed, and then set his eyes directly on Vanessa's. He would have to improvise.

'Well Vanessa,' or Jane, or Abbie, he thought. 'I guess I do a bit of everything. I'm a promoter and a producer. But really I'm interested in any work that reveals hidden things.'

He used his ceramic spoon to gather some of the broth. He blew on a piece of root vegetable and ate it slowly, letting it disintegrate in his mouth, his bloodstream and digestive organs breaking it down even more, to a molecular level, to

enzymes and antioxidants and fats and sugars. When matter breaks down to its most basic level, one thing is indistinguishable from another, though all particles are perfect and equally vital.

When he looked up, Vanessa was still gazing at him. Puzzling him out. She began to formulate a question but he cut her off.

'My work's hard to talk about. What do you do? You look like a dancer.'

She blushed. 'I used to be,' she said, but didn't add a present to this past. It was the best reaction he could have hoped for. He couldn't feel her hostility and suspicion toward his slightly too high-quality shirt, or his well-rested eyes. He no longer felt uncool.

Perhaps if you found a crack, Anton thought, if you worked along the seam of a person, they would yield, offering up their humanness, their essential need to be accepted and loved, to be listened to and understood, the needs that fuelled them. No-one was very different. Everyone was flesh under fault lines, tremulously colliding with one another, trying to fit together coherently, trying to attain completion. Everyone was expressing their difference in decimals. Clinging to their points for dear life.

Vanessa seemed unsurprised when, after dinner Anton paid for a cab ride to the CBD, even though trains were still running. Together, they ascended to the twelfth floor of his apartment complex. He held her hand in the elevator and was pleased to feel how soft and well-manicured it was.

'Well,' he said, trying to hold back any trace of shame from his voice. 'Here we are.'

But Vanessa navigated his home with effortless cool, finding the liquor cabinet and the glasses, slumping down on a chesterfield and resting her feet, freed from their fair-trade sneakers, on the armrest. Perhaps this was one of the secrets, Anton thought, with not too much bitterness. It was okay to be rich, as long as you were born rich and thought nothing of it. But to pervert your honest lineage by becoming rich – that was the betrayal that made him uncool.

A few hours later, after they had sex, he left the bed and stood, watching a flock of sunset pink galahs scree over the green canopy of the botanical gardens. He thought about what she had said about information, both through her words at the dinner party, and with her body when they fucked.

She was wrong, he thought, to put her trust in some intuitive, spiritual language of things.

The sky could not give reliable information on the weather any more than a lover could be depended on to communicate love. And if they did, how would you know you got the right message? Even the flight of the galahs was impossible to read in full. The birds flocked over the simulation of wilderness below, and then scattered further up above the overpass, where trucks rumbled along the city bypass. Below these nature preserves, these city caesuras, there was landfill, or burial grounds, and below this, what? Mineral deposits. Gas. Hot ore. Money.

On the coast, the protestors were concerned about the water, though also about the surface imprint, the noise and odour, dust and traffic. But imprint is what humans do. It's how they make the world.

He pulled down the blinds and the apartment sank into luxurious darkness. It may as well be desert out there now. The sound of galah screech did not penetrate the double glazed windows. Even aeroplanes flew by in silence, dumping the effluence of travellers on the park, if you believed the rumours.

The bed contained a shadowy, girl shaped lump. She stirred. Made a small sound. It would be right for him to reveal something of himself now. It would be, if not cool, then at least the fair thing to do. He looked at the hipflask, dumped on the bedside table with the contents of his pockets. Have courage!

Vanessa looked up from the pillow as he climbed in beside her.

'Do you have to go to work today?' she asked.

Anton inhaled. Beyond his horizons, the earth's seams dilated and stretched into quarries. ⑩

Briohny Doyle is a Melbourne-based writer and academic. Her work has appeared in 'The Lifted Brow', 'Overland', 'Going Down Swinging' and 'Meanjin' among others. Her debut novel, 'The Island Will Sink', was published in 2016 by The Lifted Brow and her first book of non-fiction, 'Adult Fantasy' (Scribe Publications 2017), will explore the cultural underpinnings of adulthood.

The Book Thief

By Stefan Lancy

The night was dark and hummed softly with static in the air. The faint warm glow emitted by the streetlights pulsed quietly through the rain as it slithered down from the purple grey sky. Their weak lights illuminated dark, cloaked figures as they glided across the footpaths into the promised warmth of closed doorways. A lazy wind draped itself against buildings and street signs with great, melodious sighs as the rain wet its back and slowed its progress. The buildings shifted uncomfortably in their grey steel jackets and windows shuddered at the faint vibrations of the nearby train. Soon, the last of the doorways closed shut and the street assumed a placid, hushed atmosphere as it realised its loneliness.

The rain fell more lightly now. Emerging from a dark alley came a tall, neatly dressed man whose face was obscured by the night and the collar of his trench. His boots made a slight thud each time they hit the ground and his umbrella tapped in time as raindrops dumped themselves upon it. He walked on, ignoring the rain and the curiously sad wind and skirted around the glow of the streetlamps whose lights were already wavering in the deepening dark. He stopped momentarily, bending his head slightly as he reached down to light a cigarette, white fingers glowing in the pale red of the cigarette's light. He breathed in deeply, held it, then blew it out with a sigh as he looked up into the rainy sky; his mind shifting through the imagery before it in a search for something that eluded him. For he could see the colours, the fat drops of rain, the wind as it caressed a tree and the dim grey of the clouds above, but saw no purpose in it all. Why did it rain tonight and not yesterday? Why did the pavement feel so hard and cold against his boots? Such trifling questions as these ricocheted through his mind as he turned away and continued walking.

He continued walking for quite some time down that street, his pace never faltering and his cigarette continuing to burn despite the damp. Occasionally he would glance into well-presented shop windows and feel a certain lust for the products on display; their gleam and gilt so alluring to the eye. Upon walking past one such window he stopped suddenly and tentatively reached out his white hand to the window, ignoring the droplets of rain that danced upon his fingertips. His face was suddenly illuminated by the dull glow of the shop lights; revealing hollowed cheeks and deep, black eyes whose burning gaze looked down a strong roman nose and into the window. A handsome face if somewhat gaunt and thin-lipped staring with dogged desire. A sudden flash of hot pink tongue dashed out of his pursed mouth to lick his lips then beat a hasty retreat. His hand began to quiver as he edged nearer to the window. He threw down his charred cigarette and crushed it beneath his heel till it was but ash. The wind stole it away.

An instant later a piercing, cutting shriek! Shards erupted into the dull night air and temporarily paralysed the street with violent sound. The black-cloaked man, a blur, shot through in and out of the broken window, his hand clutching something fervently as he thumped down upon the pavement and began to run from the still resonating, hair-raising tingle of broken glass. He ran, his trench billowing out from under him and his umbrella flailing in the air. Rudely awoken from its placidity, the street assumed a hostile and vindictive air. The wind unleashed swirling tendrils about the man's feet to trip him whilst the pavement heaved itself upwards in an effort to unbalance him whilst all around the buildings rudely flashed their bright insides at him as countless curtains were drawn back casting successive, strong bolts of light just behind the man, just failing to identify

him. Shocked and startled residents began to murmur as they heard the sudden beat of footsteps and a whoosh of quickening air as he ran past their window and some crossed themselves, fearing the worst. Yet he ran ever faster until the street itself was spent and watched with great resentment as the dark figure turned the corner and escaped from view, into some other neutral, unviolated street. As the night once again grew still and melancholic, its lights receding to their usual dull glow, the man slowed until he came to a complete stop, this time directly below a black, iron streetlamp that looked disdainfully down as this wet, panting night-crawler.

Pausing to rest, the man assumed a silent, still air as he lit another cigarette, its red light this time revealing a tiny smirk. Yet his heart still beat hard and his lungs continued to pump in and out with great gulps of air. He looked slowly from under the umbrella into the dark expanse before him and took in the rain falling almost as if in slow motion and the dark, seething mass of trees across the street that was the park. He picked out the confused maze of muddled, wet branches and the swaying leaves that created a rippling effect. He took a last look around and then glided over to the park and delighted in the crunching noise of his boots grinding the pathway. Treading through the dark mass of trees and unperturbed by the tiny eyes that studied him, he walked through, passing the rose garden, picking the strongest scented rose and passing by the lake, wrapped in a myriad of ripples as raindrops danced upon its star-reflecting surface. He drank it all in greedily with his black shiny eyes and then turned sharply and began to walk a little faster until he reached the other end of the park and came once again upon a dimly lit street.

This street was less dour than the others and its houses shone pearly white in the night. The man stopped outside one of these, looked behind him and then lightly skipped up the steps onto the landing, did one last survey of the streetscape and, pulling a long golden key from his pocket, opened the painted wooden door before him.

Stepping into the foyer, he hastily took off his wet and muddy boots before they made any further noise upon the tiles, put away his umbrella and hung his trench coat. He then leaped up the stairwell, his cold feet enjoying

the warm embrace of the soft carpet, until he reached his room, which was softly lit with the glow of an old lamp. He put the stolen something on his bed, slowly.

Shedding all his clothes he quickly showered, relishing the blistering heat after the cold embrace of the rain and threw on a light robe. He stopped momentarily next to his bedside window and looked out into the city below, above and before him. Its dark and foreboding body was pulsing with tiny coloured lights, some streaked through its veins like cars whilst others weakly flickered like household lamps and street lights. Others too joined in to create a dazed outline of the city and its dark recesses – the effect was akin to a choreographed light display that beckoned to the viewer. Finally, turning away, the man slipped into his bed and reached across to grab the stolen something that lay just out of arm's reach. Picking it up gingerly, carefully, he felt the damp book's cover and smooth pages and stared at it reverently, before opening it in awe. The book thief read on until dawn. ①

Stefan Lancy is a Melbourne based writer. He has previously published articles on the work of Albert Camus through the lens of a criminal lawyer and also on dispute resolution theory. He is a lawyer by training and is currently editing his recently completed manuscript.

This is his first published short story.

Skid

By Ellen Spooner

I dropped my bike and plonked down on a patch of grass on the edge of the muddy campsite, trying to catch my breath. The tent was one of those big ones with two rooms and a kitchen tacked on the front. The flaps were all pulled down because of the shimmery rain, with the Parents shut away inside. Dad was always pissed when I interrupted Parent time. But I knew he'd be more pissed if I got blood on my windcheater, so I poked my head 'round the flap.

Inside, the Parents were all flushed red in the face under the light of the old gas lamp. Mum was there, and Dad, and another five or six large bodies, all sitting on camp chairs in a circle. It smelled like earth and ciggies and close.

'And then she knelt down in front of him...' Dad was telling another one of those jokes, 'A real mouthful!' Everyone laughed.

'—What the hell, Petel!' squawked Mum when she saw me, and they all shut up.

I almost ran back the way I'd come, but before I could take two steps Dad had my arm in a grip that pinched my skin worse than a Chinese burn.

'Shit a brick!' Mum cried. 'Look what you've done to your jeans.' She hiccupped on the last syllable and a big woman sitting cross the circle giggled like she was in grade two. Mum tut-tutted. 'You're dripping blood everywhere.'

I wiped my hand across my forehead and tried to focus on the brown smudge on my fingertips. Dark spots fluffed the edge of the tent and I slumped down onto my knees, all heavy in a moment.

'What happened to you, boy?' Dad croaked through a drooping ciggie, face an inch away from mine.

I felt hands lifting me up onto my feet again, and then the softness of Mum's touch.

'What happened, Sugar?' she asked, all gentle now.

'Stacked my bike.' I could taste blood like sucking on a steel spoon.

Mum found a water bottle among the beer cans on the table. She held my head forward over the dirt floor and poured water on the graze. It stung like I had just fallen over again. I squeezed my eyes closed and didn't make a peep.

'Nothing a swim in the ocean tomorrow won't clear up,' said Mum, fishing a hanky out of her pocket and making me hold it to my scraped-up head.

'Grit your teeth, boy,' said Dad, and slapped my back.

Mum propped me up against her thigh, arm around my waist, and I leant my head on her shoulder. Her glasses were misting over and she took them off to rub them on the hem of her shirt.

'Can I wear your glasses Mum?' I asked her as Dad went on with the dirty joke.

She handed them over and I put them on the end of my nose and a big lady sitting across from Mum smiled. I made a dumb face, all cross-eyed and she laughed.

The Parents were all drinking Carlton Draught and it smelled like chewing a bit of grass, and sour, but kind of nicer.

'You want a beer, boy?' asked Dad.

I nodded and Dad passed me a tinny with drops of sweat all over it.

'Just a sip,' Mum warned. I took a big gulp and the Parents cracked up.

'Go on, get out of here,' Dad said. 'Now, you cheeky bugger.'

I spun 'round and my head went all funny again for a moment, and I almost spewed up spaghetti bolognaise. Mum stood up to open the heavy canvas flap for me. She pecked my forehead and it hurt a bit but I didn't mind. Outside, I turned around for a moment to look back through the crack in the flap. Dad grabbed Mum round the waist and pulled her onto his lap and rubbed his mouth against hers until she pulled away.

'Gettoff me Jeff!' she yelled as I pedalled away into the rain of the campground. The shadows were out and getting black, but I avoided the deep parts as I skidded 'round the corner, fast as I could. ⑩

Ellen Spooner is a Cuban-Australian writer and editor. Since completing an Associate Degree in PWE at RMIT, she's been writing a children's novel. When not word wrangling, she hangs out with her chubby cat or goes boogie boarding (but not at the same time).

Classifieds

NT Writers' Festival

Alice Springs 18-21 May

Storytellers, songwomen and writers from central Australia join writers from across the country under the theme 'Crossings | iwerre-atherre'. In Arrernte, 'iwerre-atherre' means two roads meeting; two-way learning or travelling together. We invite you to make the journey to consider all kinds of crossings – linguistic, cultural and geographic.

ntwriters.com.au

Writing Consultant/Editor

Do you need personalised help with your writing project? Whether it is a work of fiction or non-fiction, are you ready for an objective appraisal? If you've had your manuscript assessed and made changes, it is a good idea to have your writing copyedited or at least proofread before submitting to a publisher. You are welcome to email me an overview of your writing needs to:

denisemtaylor.com.au/contact

or call me for a chat on 0438 113 331.

Milestones

Angela J Dawson has published (via Ingram Spark) her first creative non-fiction book, 'Like Two Mexicans Dancing', a YA romance about her time with the band The Fish John West Reject in 90s Melbourne and Tasmania. Books can be ordered from Fishpond, Booktopia, Amazon etc, plus there is an e-book available.

Bill Bateman has published his debut novel, 'Hard Labour', a medical/crime story. It was published by Odyssey Books and is available on odysseybooks.com.au and on Amazon.

Rumi Komonz and the haiku of 14 other women writers that she compiled, edited and translated were published bilingually in the 'Offset 16' of Victoria University.

Rumi's short story was published in the twelfth edition of 'Port Phillip Writes', a literary publication by that city as one of the prize winners.

Charles Beagley's latest book 'Cult Wars' is a riveting adventure. Following a third world war with ISIS, an SAS unit returns to Australia to find vicious scavengers, insurgents and religious fanatics between them and their families. (Search: Charles Beagley on Amazon Books).

Glenice Whitting's latest novel 'Something Missing' about two countries, two women and the lies that lead to truth has been published by MadeGlobal Publishing. Available at www.madeglobal.com, www.glenicewhitting.com, Amazon.com plus Amazon Kindle books: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01MQKMUIZZ?tag=theancom-20>

Pauline Hosking is delighted that her children's novel 'Cinnamon Stevens – Crime Buster' has been included in the 2017 Victorian Premier's Reading Challenge booklist for students in Years 5 and 6.

Eva White had two stories published in 'Pendulum Papers': 'The Exercise' in May 2016 and 'In The Attic' in January.

Sarah Vincent, our very own Membership Officer at Writers Victoria, published her weight-loss memoir 'Death By Dim Sim' with Penguin Random House in March. The book is available in bookshops as well as at Big W, Kmart and Target. For more information visit www.sarahvincentauthor.com

Competitions and Opportunities

To see ALL the competitions and opportunities we know about, not just the ones we can fit on the page, log in to our special members-only section of writersvictoria.org.au.

Rachel Funari Prize for Fiction

Entries for the 2017 Rachel Funari Prize for Fiction are now open!

Run by 'Lip Magazine' and now in its fifth year, the 2017 Rachel Funari Prize for Fiction is accepting entries of creative, insightful fiction up to 2000 words that engage with the theme 'Rebirth'.

As a feminist magazine, 'Lip' aims to nurture women's writing and provide a platform for feminist voices and stories. As such, the competition is open to all women, female-identifying and non-binary writers. All entries must be original, previously unpublished and unperformed.

Rachel Funari, the namesake of the competition, was the founding editor of 'Lip'. Tragically, Rachel went missing in 2011 while on holiday in Tasmania. This prize is held in her honour because she was determined to better the lives and opportunities for young women.

lipmag.com/about/the-rachel-funari-prize-for-fiction/

Closes 21 Apr

2017 State Library Victoria Fellowships

Applications are now open for artists, performers, filmmakers, writers, composers and any other creative individuals to tap into the State Library's rich collections through its annual Fellowships program.

slv.vic.gov.au/about-us/fellowships

Closes 23 Apr

Dulcie Stone Writers Competition

Are you a writer or do you draw pictures? Do you have a story to tell? New writing competition open to people with intellectual disability.

The theme for 2017 Competition is: Lead Your Life! How do you feel? What do you think? What do you want? The time

has come for you to Lead Your Life!

The inaugural Dulcie Stone Writers Competition will be an annual writing prize open to people with intellectual disability. The Competition is designed to showcase the voices of people with intellectual disability and recognises the lifetime contribution of Dulcie Stone to services for people with intellectual disability and writing.

Works can be of any length up to a maximum of 1000 words or up to 3 x A4 pages of drawings.

For more info, email info@valid.org.au

Closes 27 Apr

Other Terrain

Submissions are open for Swinburne University's online literary journal 'Other Terrain'. Accepting works of fiction and creative non-fiction (3000 words max), poetry (100 lines max) and academic articles (5000 words max).

Email your submissions to otherterrain@gmail.com.

otherterrainjournal.com.au

Closes 1 May

Backstory Journal

Submissions are open for Swinburne University's online history journal 'Backstory Journal'. Accepting works of fiction and creative non-fiction (3000 words max), poetry (100 lines max) and academic articles (5000 words max) Email your submissions to backstoryjournal@gmail.com

backstoryjournal.com.au

Closes 1 May

Workshops and Courses

See more courses and book online at writersvictoria.org.au, phone (03) 9094 7840 or email program@writersvictoria.org.au. All events are held at The Wheeler Centre unless stated otherwise.

Online clinics and webinars

Digital Fantasy Novel Intensive with CS Pacat

The best fantasy novels are the ones that keep you immersed until 3am—but how do you write a great fantasy novel? This workshop will take you through the key stages of writing a page-turning fantasy. Tackle your project through a combination of webinars and submissions of your own work.

Stories of up to 3000 words due midnight Weds 7 Jun, 5 Jul, 2 Aug and 6 Sep.

Webinars: 1 May, 5 Jun, 3 Jul, 7 Aug, 4 Sep, 6 Oct

Member price: \$600/\$620
Non-member price: \$720
Level: Emerging

Online: Pitch Tips with Marie Alafaci

Learn about the acquisition process and how to construct a strong proposal to get the attention of a publisher. Find out how to get a professional proposal together that will help showcase your writing. See how synopses and pitches can also help keep you motivated and on track when you wander into the depths of research, and give you the confidence to treat your fledgling work as the foundation of a great book.

When: Wed 24 May, 6-7pm
Member price: \$30/\$40
Non-member price: \$50
Level: Early and emerging

In-person

The Salon does Spirit of Punk

The Salon joins forces with the Spirit of Punk, a wordslam/reading event that evokes the ethos of punk rock – to have a go and have your voice heard. Come prepared or improvise – any genre, any style – just no longer than a Ramone's song. If you've never read a piece of your work in public, this is your chance.

When: Tue 4 Apr, 6.15-8pm
Price: Free
Level: All

Write and Present Your Pitch with Erina Reddan

It's never been more challenging than now to be noticed in our highly competitive publishing market. Develop the skills to step outside your work and see it from the market's perspective. Learn how to craft (and practice) a written and a verbal pitch so you maximise the opportunity of a publishing deal.

When: Sat 8 Apr, 10am-4pm
Member price: \$135/\$145
Non-member price: \$195
Level: All

Having a Voice Series: Writing Women's History with Iola Mathews

What are the considerations to take into account when writing women's history? What is the focus? How personal should you get? How reliable are memories, interviews, reference books and the

internet? And what is the purpose of writing about the past? Presented in association with the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) for the Australian Heritage Festival.

When: Thu 20 Apr, 6-7.30pm
WV and NTAV Member price: \$30/\$40
Non-member price: \$55
Level: Early and emerging

Having a Voice Series: Writing Women – Historical Fiction with Kate Mildenhall

How do you get ideas for historical fiction? When and where do you start researching? And when do you stop? Discover how to find hidden stories in historical collections. Engage in writing exercises and discussion to find the story you have been searching for, or develop your own project further. Presented in association with the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) for the Australian Heritage Festival.

When: Sat 22 Apr, 10am-4pm
Where: Labassa, 2 Manor Grove, Caulfield North
WV and NTAV Member price: \$135/\$145
Non-member price: \$195
Level: Early and emerging

Writing with Others: Biography

with Robert Hillman

Every community includes its storytellers – those people with a knack for narrative drama. It often happens that the storyteller will act as a facilitator for those who urgently wish to convey their tale, but need a helping hand. How does the storyteller negotiate the process of collaboration? How do the standard devices of fiction assist in telling a non-fiction story? What are the priorities in creating on the page the journey of a human life?

When: Sat 22 Apr, 10am-4pm
Member price: \$145/\$135
Non-member price: \$195
Level: Emerging and established

Writers on Wednesdays: Feminist Writing

with Karen Pickering

If you're a feminist and a writer, you're a feminist writer. Find out what this means in practice, and why it matters. Whether you work predominantly online or offline presents different challenges. Explore and weigh these up in a supportive environment. Raising your voice as a feminist writer may be difficult at times but it's also powerful, important, and satisfying. Presented in association with the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) for the Australian Heritage Festival.

When: Wed 26 Apr, 6-7.30pm
WV and NTAV Member price: \$30/\$40
Non-member price: \$55
Level: All

Geelong: Tracks Young Writers Intensive

Join Express Media for a one-day intensive specifically designed for young writers. Take a fiction or non-fiction masterclass, learn about the editing process and what to expect when you're selected for publication, or take your writing off the page and learn how to perform your work for an audience. Find out about opportunities available to you and join us to hear some of Geelong's best young writers share their work. This event is made possible by the support of the Australia Council for the Arts. Book online at expressmedia.org.au/tracks-geelong

When: Sat Apr 29, 8.30am-5pm
Where: Courthouse Youth Arts, 60 Little Malop Street, Geelong
Express Media member: \$25 (lunch provided)
Level: Ages 13 to 25

Having a Voice Series: Writing Women - Historical Non-Fiction

with Liz Conor and guest

Colonialism is inescapable in Australian historical non-fiction. Rather than a 'shared' history, colonial history is enmeshed, where settler-actors imposed mostly negative impacts on Indigenous Australians. How can we write about these relations without reinscribing those positions, of privilege and disadvantage? Is it ethical, healing or productive for white women to write about racism when they've never experienced it themselves?

Presented in association with the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) for the Australian Heritage Festival.

When: Sun 30 Apr, 10am-4pm
Where: Como House and Garden, South Yarra
WV and NTAV Member: \$135/\$145
Non-member price: \$195
Level: Early and emerging

Literary Fiction

with Romy Ash

Literary fiction can be slippery, but writing is mostly hard work, getting words on the page, process and practicalities. Look at the writing process and the strange transmutation that turns lived experience, memory and imagination into literature. Learn how to give life to your characters and authenticity to your world. Faulkner, when asked how to create a convincing character, said: 'Believing that she exists'.

When: Sun 30 Apr, 10am-4pm
Member price: \$135/\$145
Non-member price: \$195
Level: Early and emerging

Writing Under the Influence

with Kevin Brophy

Read and discuss poems by poets with distinctive and strong styles, concentrating on matters of technique. Write your own works either inspired or provoked by these poems. Explore questions of line length, stanza breaks, imagery, rhythmical effects, integrity and ideology.

When: Weds 3, 10 and 17 May, 5.30-8pm
Member price: \$240/\$270
Non-member price: \$360
Level: All

Q&A Day

The WV team will be on hand to answer your burning questions about writing or publishing.

When: Mon 8 May, 2-4pm
Price: FREE
Level: All

Creating Picture Books in Words and Pictures

with Leigh Hobbs

Participants will learn how to create their own characters in words and pictures. They will be guided through the process of developing an idea or ideas into a picture story book. The aim too will be that via these exercises in writing and drawing, participants will develop a sense of their own voice or style.

When: Sun 14 May, 10am-4pm
Member price: \$135/\$145
Non-member price: \$195
Level: Emerging

Writing YA

with Lili Wilkinson

Adolescence is a time of extreme intensity, so it's no wonder YA is so beloved. This course will delve into exactly what makes a YA novel a YA novel - from character and setting to plot and structure.

When: Tue 30 May, 10am-4pm
Member price: \$135/\$145
Non-member price: \$195
Level: Early and emerging

Writers on Wednesday: Making a Book

with Donna Ward

Follow the creation of a book from the moment the author is signed to the book launch. Discover the people involved: the editor, the proof reader, the book designer, the typesetter, the printer broker, the distributor, the bookseller, the publicist. Learn about the

editing and proofing process, book design, getting it to the printers, sales and marketing campaigns, warehousing, distribution and publicity.

When: Wed 31 May, 6-7.30pm
Member price: \$30/\$40
Non-member price: \$55
Level: All

Member benefits

- › Discounts on courses, manuscript assessments, mentorships and writer's studios
- › 'The Victorian Writer' magazine delivered straight to your door
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- › Representation and advocacy on issues affecting Victorian writers

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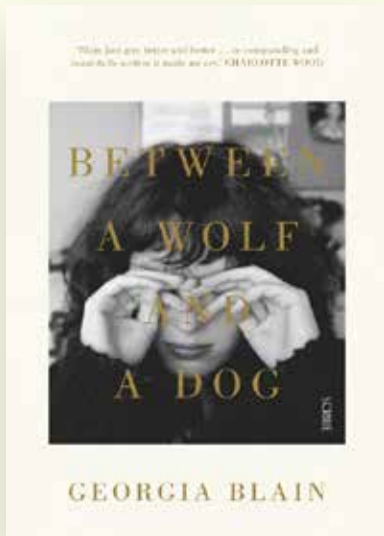
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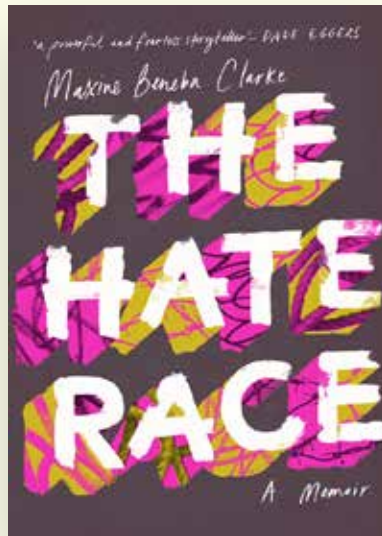
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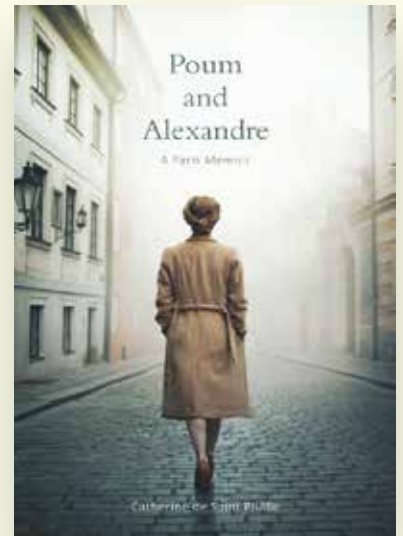
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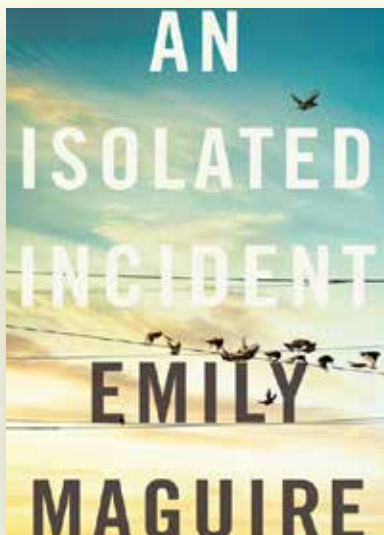
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THE HATE RACE



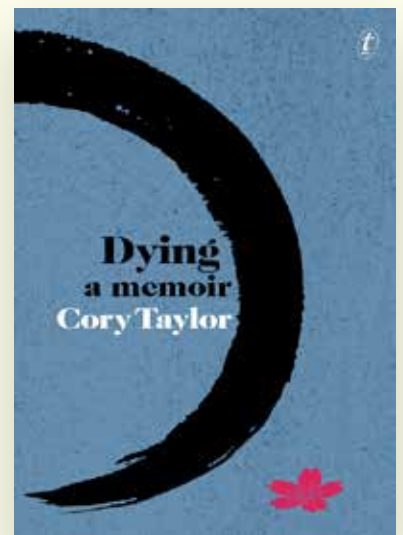
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