

The Victorian Writer

Oct-Nov 2018

| The Emerging Issue



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Editorial

What is an emerging writer? While Writers Victoria defines an emerging writer as someone who has 'done a fair amount of writing ... had some short pieces published or been listed for some awards', other organisations add a long-form published work to the mix. At any rate, there's some confusion here, so in this issue, we try to pin down this enigmatic and elusive creature.

Kate Cantrell unpicks the terminology, Sara Bannister expresses the frustrations of the pre-emerged state and Gabriella Muñoz writes about re-emerging in a new country.

We have advice from the newly emerged: Katherine Collette on the debut novel and Mario Giovannoni on the role of prizes in the development of new work.

For those aspiring to emerge, we have some established voices on giving your work the best chance of publication. Kathryn Heyman and Michelle Johnston talk mentorships, and Marie Alafaci demystifies manuscript assessments.

Also in this issue, we showcase some emerging talent with the finalists of the Grace Marion Wilson Prize: Amanda Hildebrant, Margaret Hickey, Karen McKnight and Claire J Harris. And from our members, there is new work from Eugen Bacon and Damien O'Meara. 📖

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The First Time

Kate Mildenhall interviewed debut author Katherine Collette about her new novel (and subject of 'The First Time' podcast), 'The Helpline'.

KM: Where did the idea for 'The Helpline' come from?

KC: I'm an engineer but for a period of time I worked at a council in a community development-type team. What I did was mainly social research, but the woman that sat next to me looked after senior citizens centres. There were about a dozen of them but most of her time was occupied by one centre and one woman at that centre, a woman I call in 'The Helpline', Celia Brown.

I've always struggled to describe what Celia was like in a way that's sympathetic, but also truthful. Then I heard David Gillespie give an interview on his book about psychopaths. He described them as narcissistic and obsessed with power. He also said they lied a lot. The example he used to demonstrate his point was Donald Trump but when I heard those characteristics, the first person that came to my mind was Celia. I think she had psychopathic tendencies, and was very problematic from the council's point of view, but she was also kind of mesmerising. There's a line in Seinfeld about Kramer: 'He was abhorrent yet I cannot look away.' I only met her once, but I had a kind of out-of-body experience, thinking my life was about to change. And it did, in a way.

I would have loved to make a documentary about her but knowing nothing about film, I wrote a short story instead. The short story evolved to become a novel that is 'The Helpline'. In the end, she's a peripheral character and very different to the woman I met in real life, but one I have a lot of fondness for.

KM: Aside from your hard work, who or what has helped your novel along its way?

KC: The biggest turning point for me was Hardcopy, a manuscript development program run by the ACT Writers Centre.

A bit of context ... In early 2016, I was ready to start submitting 'The Helpline'. It wasn't perfect but it was as good as I could get. I logged on to the Australian Literary Agents Association (ALAA) to find an agent. Jacinta di Mase was then the ALAA's president. I sent her an email describing the book and she responded saying she'd love to read it. I sent it to her, hopeful, but unfortunately she wasn't interested.

Then I sent it to every other agent in Australia. They all said no, too.

I put the manuscript away, thinking it might not be The One. I was working on my second novel, so I focused on that.

But then a couple of months later I got into Hardcopy, which is held across three weekends in Canberra. As part of the third weekend, you have one-on-one meetings with ten different publishers and agents, all of whom have read the first fifty pages of your manuscript.

Jacinta was part of the program, so we were fated to meet again. I was dreading this, wondering what we'd even talk about given she'd already passed on the manuscript, but she changed her mind. I also met my now editor Mandy Brett (Text) at Hardcopy, so the program really did mark a change in fortunes.

KM: You have a job and a family – how and where does writing fit in your life?

KC: I guess I'm prone to obsession. It probably took about five years to write The Helpline and in that time, I would have written on 99% of days. The days I didn't, I was probably in labour with my children.

By and large, the way I fitted most of it in was giving up exercise. I don't know if I'd recommend this to others, but I used to go to the gym before work and rather than exercise, I'd sit in the café

and write. On the days I had the kids, I put them in the crèche and did the same thing. Now I have a novel but am very unfit. I should probably go for a walk or something now the book's come out.

What's the best advice you've received so far?

KC: One of the things Melanie Cheng ('Australia Day') said when we interviewed her for the podcast was, I hope you're taking a moment to enjoy this. At the time I thought maybe the enjoyment would be a retrospective experience, but it's not. You do have to enjoy the moment.

KM: How does being an engineer make you a better writer?

KC: What's great about engineering is that it involves a different part of my brain to writing. Engineering doesn't steal my creativity, and I like the work. It's interesting. It involves a different type of cleverness. It won't make you laugh or cry like writing can, but some of the ideas and concepts people come up with can blow your mind in a completely different way.

It also gives you perspective. If someone calls you up because there's raw sewage spilling across their yard, then that's a real problem. It can make writing issues seem less 'life or death'.

KM: In what way do writing groups, writing classes and the writing community support your writing life?

KC: I have a wonderful writers group, which you, Kate, are a part of. We meet monthly and go on retreats twice a year. The retreat 'rules' are based on those at Varuna, the Writers' House. Basically, it's no talking, no phone calls, nothing but writing until 6pm each night. Then it's laptops down, we start to unwind and I personally eat copious amounts of cheese. You know you've found your people when all of you agree that going away and sitting in a room in monastic silence for twelve hours of the day constitutes a very good time indeed.

KM: What's your approach to social media?

KC: Jane Rawson ('From the Wreck') and Annabel Smith ('Whiskey and Charlie') are my social media idols. We interviewed them for the podcast and my god they were good.

I remember Jane saying to treat Twitter like a party. At a party you never just go up to people and shout about your book. That's good advice.

KM: A number of the authors we've spoken to have brought up the issue of the pressure to create and sustain a public author persona – have you felt this, and if so, how have you dealt with it?

KC: I do understand that. I don't see the public and private selves as different, but the public self does require more energy – I do have to psyche myself up to be myself. Good advice I've been given is to get good at turning on and turning off. Don't give something more energy than it deserves in the lead up and don't worry about it afterwards. The podcast has helped with that too, I think.

KM: What's next for you?

KC: I'm working on book number two. It involves a kind of active-participatory research, which is pushing me to my personal limits, but in a good way. That and gearing up for the second season of 'The First Time'. 🎧

Katherine Collette's novel 'The Helpline' was released with Text Publishing in September 2018. Katherine co-hosts 'The First Time' podcast with writer, Kate Mildenhall ('Skylarking'). It's a podcast about the first time you publish a book, and includes interviews with top Australian writers and industry experts including Claire G Coleman, Toni Jordan, Graeme Simsion, Mark Brandi, Jamie Marina Lau, Emily Brewin, Jane Rawson and Annabel Smith.

thefirsttimepodcast.com

The Emerging Issue

Kate Cantrell unpicks the unstable and always changing nature of the markers: early, emerging and established.

The Southern California Writers' Conference, now in its thirty-second year, retains its original motto: 'A writer is a writer before, as well as after, publication'. In other words, a writer is someone who writes, regardless of endorsement, output and reputation. It's simple. Or is it?

In Australia, we continue to classify our writers as 'early', 'emerging' or 'established', with little agreement on what these terms mean. Dictionary definitions provide some clues but not enough to differentiate the labels in a helpful way. 'Emerging', for example, means 'to come out of something as something', as in 'He emerged from prison a new man'. 'Early' is an adjective that means 'happening before the usual or expected time', as in 'He was released early but later returned'. 'Established', on the other hand, refers to someone (or something) that is widely known and generally accepted. 'In the American penitentiary system, there's an emerging shift in the established practice of early release for situational offenders.' See what I did there?

In the writing world, these terms take on additional significance because their multiple associations and allocated meanings often dictate who can apply for what funding and when. The fact that there's no definitional consistency across the industry means a writer can be new in one context but emerging in another. Or, perhaps more curiously, a writer can be neither new nor emerging but not established either. This conundrum, which feels oddly bureaucratic, is compounded by a lack of consensus regarding suitable criteria for measuring literary success. Since success of any kind is only recognised once

we name it, perhaps we need a new conceptual framework, or at least a more expansive metaphor, for understanding writing success. This need, I would suggest, is heightened by the unstable and always changing nature of the way we conceive the current markers: early, emerging and established.

In the not-so-distant past, the emerging writer was generally regarded as someone who had a handful of publications in national or international magazines or journals but had not yet published a novel or won a major literary prize. Now, the benchmark criterion tends to be a single book rather than a broader body of work. Clearly, this measure raises questions of value, such as whether the long form is more important than other mediums. Or whether the novel, as a cultural artefact, is more valuable than a memoir or an anthology of poems. Moreover, who is authorised to make these judgements? And whose interests are being served? If we're compelled, at least on paper, to subscribe to these labels, can we unsubscribe? How does one move along the evolution line from emerging to emerged?

Reading through the terms and conditions of the ASA Emerging Writers' Mentorship, I see that I qualify as emerging because I haven't yet published a full-length work. As I read on, however, I see that there's an exception: writers who have already published more than ten short stories or poems have emerged to some extent and are therefore ineligible to apply. While I'm not sure where it is I've emerged from – perhaps some kind of sticky literary foetus – it seems

every year there are fewer opportunities for writers working in the slippery liminal space between emerging and established. That is, after all, the definition of liminality: betwixt and between. The Wheeler Centre has identified this lacuna and gone some way to address it with its funding initiative The Next Chapter. The eligibility criteria are broad and inclusive, and nowhere in the promotional material are the terms 'emerging' or 'established' used. On a functional level, and even figuratively, it's refreshing to see a move away from the confusing emerging-established duality, especially since many writers feel deeply uncomfortable with the terms, even as we struggle to articulate why. In fact, my own relationship with the tags has moved from one of casual acceptance to something like suspicion. At twenty-something, I was fresh out of a creative writing degree and hopeful (read naïve) about my prospects of working in The Industry. I was first invited to read a short story (about drowning nonetheless) at the Brisbane Writers' Festival in a fringe session titled, 'New and Upcoming Writers'. As I gained confidence and started publishing short stories, I often read as an 'Emerging Writer' at Avid Reader's literary salons. When I first delved into the art of memoir, I was interviewed by Kate Evans on Radio National's Emerging Writer series. In 2013, with more publications in hand, I was an Emerging Writer-in-Residence both at home and overseas. These opportunities were invaluable, not only for exposure, but because they connected me with my people: writers and editors, agents, booksellers and publishers. I even met my author crush: Jeanette Winterson. (We have a photo together. I'm smiling; she's not).

It wasn't until I began lecturing that I really started to question what it all meant. At a colleague's request, I was writing a lecture on The Emerging Writing Scene in Queensland when I realised I'd been branded and I had no idea what it meant. To complicate matters, the same colleague commented, after listening to my lecture, that by focusing on Brisbane's new and vibrant writing, I had actually undermined Brisbane's literary heritage. I was confused. My colleague was right, of course: Brisbane is still perceived by itself and others as emerging rather than established when it comes to our literary culture. In other words, Brisbane is still a place or origin or transition for writers, while other cities, such as Melbourne, remain the

destination, at least in the cultural imagination. In one episode of Doctor Who, for example, Nyssa defines a Zero Room as 'an isolated space, cut off from the rest of the universe', and one of the Doctor's companions jokes that this is an apt description of Brisbane. A negative interface to the universe.

Obviously, there's something infantilising about calling a city emerging in the same way that there's something aggrandising about calling an artist established. Like all labels, these markers aren't neutral. They're power constructs that we can embrace or struggle against. Perhaps emerging writers can be subversive in a way that established writers can't. Or maybe established writers, with publisher backing and greater access to resources and funding, have more artistic freedom. Perhaps these terms are merely placeholders or clichéd platitudes. Maybe we don't need them at all. However, their persistent and even excessive use would suggest that at least for now they're more than throwaway terms. 🗣️

Kate Cantrell is an award-winning writer, editor, and academic. She teaches creative and professional writing at Queensland University of Technology and the University of Southern Queensland. From 2015 to 2016, she was a visiting lecturer at City, University of London, and a post-doctoral researcher at the University of Oxford.

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Mentored Well

What makes a successful mentorship? Mentor (and author) Kathryn Heyman and mentee (and author) Michelle Johnston share their experiences.

Kathryn Heyman is the critically acclaimed author of 'Storm and Grace' (among other brilliant novels), but she is also a gifted and experienced mentor. Here, she talks to Writers Victoria about the mentoring process.

WV: You've mentored so many writers and published your own novels to great acclaim. How do you as mentor, and you as writer, reckon with each other?

KH: I'd say we get along pretty well – one informs the other. I've written seven books, and quite a few plays, so simply being able to draw on different experiences of working often helps – the writer self knows that sometimes you need to try a different approach. I simply couldn't have the confidence to coax newer writers on if I hadn't been there myself, many times. And sometimes, when my writer-self is stuck, I bring in my own mentoring voice to jolly myself along. Surprisingly, it usually works. Perhaps more surprisingly, these two selves don't bleed into each other. When I'm writing, I'm writing. When I'm with my mentees, that's entirely my focus. I don't seem to have any blurring between those areas of focus, although I think that can be a risk for some mentors.

WV: Why did you become a mentor?

KH: Decades ago, I did an MA in Writing in the UK and the element I loved was working individually with my tutors. But there was never enough of that time. Later, teaching on MA programs myself, I was frustrated by the restrictions – there was little time to work individually with talented students, and the teaching across departments often defaulted to the 'workshop model' where your peers – also unpublished writers – gave various opinions on your budding work. It seemed damaging to me, and far from the ideal of the coaxing, coaching one-to-one that I'd longed for as a student. I'd

been a Royal Literary Fund Fellow after my second or third book and on the back of that I was asked to mentor several writers in the UK. Each of those writers went on to publish and to flourish, and it confirmed for me that one-to-one mentoring was a richer way of working with new writers at that crucial stage. I set up the Australian Writers Mentoring Program in 2010 because I wanted to develop that opportunity for writers in Australia.

WV: When a writer comes to you, how do you work with them to structure a mentorship?

KH: Every month the writer sends up to ten thousand words of their work-in-progress. We meet face-to-face, or via Skype, and we talk over the big issues – structure, character, voice – as well as look at the finer detail of what's happening on the page. Generally, the mentorship happens over a six-month period. At the beginning of the mentorship, we work together to set goals, and we check in on those goals every few sessions.

WV: How can a writer ensure that they get the most out of a mentorship?

KH: Show up for yourself. Be generous and kind to your writer self, while expecting the best from yourself. What does that mean? Showing up means putting the work in – not just the hours, but the deep thinking and willingness to re-think, to re-write, to re-engage. Being generous to your creative self means listening to the foolish crazy ideas, following the threads, not shaming yourself for trying something that doesn't work. Writers need to be ready to take their work seriously to get the most from a mentorship, because it can be demanding.



WV: What have been your proudest moments as a mentor?

KH: I've worked with many writers who have published and who have gone on to develop rich careers – Michelle Johnston published her beautiful book this year, and holding her book in my hand, knowing how hard she'd worked, how courageous she'd been, gave me one of those heart-soaring moments. Last year, I led a residential writing week in the UK with a writer friend, the novelist Mark Haddon. One of my first mentees, Jane Rusbridge, was the guest on that week, speaking about her third novel, and I felt so proud I couldn't introduce her without getting teary. Watching writers I've mentored build whole careers is incredibly pleasing. But it's not always about the publication. I've worked with some writers who have fought so hard to carve out space for their own creative work, that the moment of completion is the moment of pride. When I've seen the work move from half-formed to a completed work of beauty; when I've walked alongside a writer overcoming their own doubts and inner critical voice, when I've witnessed them finally turning up for their own talent – I love that. 📖

The Other Side of the Story

Kathryn recently sat down with her mentee Michelle Johnston, author of 'Dustfall', to get her thoughts on the mentoring process.

KH: Michelle, why did you decide to opt for a mentorship? Had you tried other support services, such as workshops, groups, assessments?

MJ: I opted for a mentorship very early in the process of producing a manuscript. Thank goodness. I had disgorged a first draft from somewhere deep in my innards without knowing what I was doing, and had just enough insight to realise it was not very good. I did not know, however, what to do about it. Trawling the internet for help, I came across your mentorship program, and saw a beacon of hope. I had previously tried a good many things to help in my general writing life. I have a lifetime resume of joining online writing groups and university extension units and night school creative writing classes, and I believe I have the world record for dropping out of them. It's about a hundred percent. This was the first time something gelled so well I stuck it out to the end.

KH: What was your impression of our first meeting?

MJ: I have a story about when I first heard back from you. I'll try and make it brief. At that point I was in a canyon of pain; knowing that now I had started the process, I would never be satisfied until I had written a novel worthy of publication. Whether it would or would not be was a different matter. But I could see this goal was so far off, it was simply dust and haze. So when I got the email that said you had accepted my request and that I had a 'unique' voice, I will remember that moment forever. I do not jest. But this is also because I read this email on my phone while I was fearing for my life. I was in the cockpit of a teensy plane about the size of a thimble and we had just taken off from a grass paddock where we had landed because we were running out of fuel.

This is apropos of nothing except that when one feels their life is in danger, every moment is memorable. This one will stay with me forever.

As for our initial meeting I was taken from the very first moment. I knew we would fit. All those intangible things that humans can determine within the first few seconds. Respect, humour, trust, fun, joy in the written word. Hope.

KH: How did your manuscript develop through the mentorship?

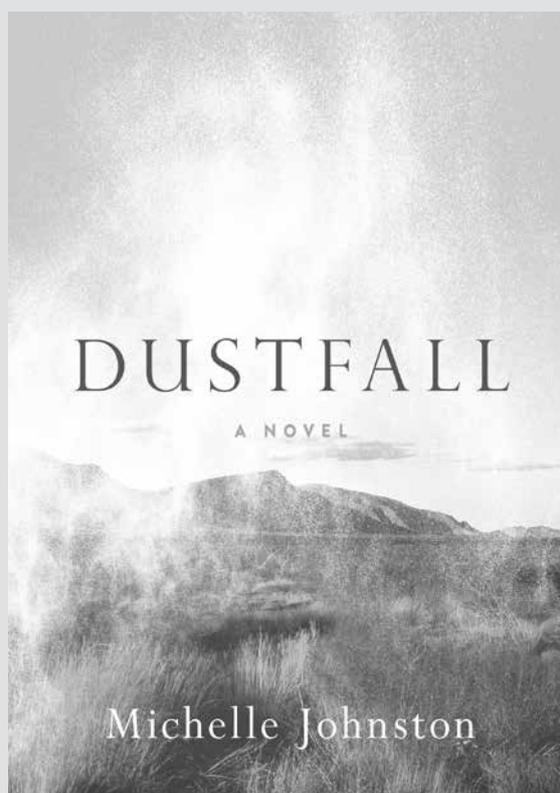
MJ: It didn't so much develop as mutate. Everything was transformed. I began to understand my characters. As I've said before, the sessions felt like psychotherapy for the characters, drawing out their needs and desires, opening up their wounds. I learnt so much from simply hearing you talking about the writing process, often tangentially. 'Did you mean to change point of view there?' (I didn't even know I was doing it). 'Do you not quite understand the classic story arc?', 'You do realise that is this is a cliché, don't you?' Everything you said was a gemstone, and I'd snatch it up, wondering how to set it in the manuscript.

KH: What was the most challenging feedback to deal with?

MJ: Everything, and nothing. Everything at the start, when I glimpsed how far I was about to fall, when I saw I would have to open myself up and let the wash of advice in, when every point you made felt like an arrow into whatever meagre ability I possessed. When I realised you were never going to say, 'this is brilliant'. And then nothing, because once I discovered that all writers go through this in their early, green days, I began to see that if I listened and responded and molded my work with the suggestions you were giving, then my manuscript would become objectively better. After that I began to gobble it up. Give me more, I thought.

KH: Were there moments when you wanted to shove the work in a drawer and walk away? If so, how did you overcome these?

MJ: There never were, to be honest. I knew that you believed I could do it. It was something in the way you spoke encouraging words, as though my being published was always a when, not an if. Working with



you was one of the most extraordinarily educational and gloriously mind-opening experiences I could have had as an early writer. Each challenge was worthwhile and I loved every minute of it.

KH: What advice would you give writers who might be interested in a mentorship?

MJ: Do it. Fullstop. At whatever stage. Do it. 📌

Kathryn Heyman is the author of six novels, her latest, 'Storm and Grace' (2017) and has won numerous awards. She runs the Australian Writers Mentoring Program, is the fiction program director for Faber Academy, the Conjoint Professor in English and Humanities at the University of Newcastle, and holds the 2018 Copyright Agency Author Fellowship.

kathrynheyman.com

Michelle Johnston is a consultant emergency physician who works at an inner-city hospital. She believes there is a beating heart of humanity, art and beauty within the brutal reality of the emergency department. Books are her other oxygen, and writing her sustenance. 'Dustfall' is her debut novel.

For more information about mentorships, visit writersvictoria.org.au

No Friend but the Mountains



Chris McKenzie of PEN Melbourne calls on all writers to read Behrouz Boochani's fiercely urgent new work.

There are voices of dissent, voices that are witness to unpalatable truths, voices that demand to be heard and that will not be silenced, no matter how powerful the authorities who work to suppress them are. Such is the voice of Behrouz Boochani, Kurdish-Iranian writer, filmmaker, academic, who has committed no crime and who is now in his sixth year in exile on Manus Island. PEN International celebrates the publication of Behrouz's book 'No Friend but the Mountains: Writing from Manus Prison'. In its first month of publication in Australia, the book has been reprinted nine times, and has been met with universal critical acclaim. Written in Farsi, on a mobile phone, and translated into English by Omid Tofighian, 'No Friend but the Mountains' is a complex, deeply poetic and philosophical work around ideas of exile, imprisonment and the Australian government's policies around off-shore detention.

I was fortunate to be among an audience at the Melbourne Writers Festival session with Behrouz Boochani (via WhatsApp), Arnold Zable and Omid Tofighian. The audience sat transfixed by a dodgy, fragmented screen image of Behrouz whose voice was clear as he responded in depth to Arnold's perceptive questions. The questions were translated into Farsi for Behrouz by Omid, who in turn translated Behrouz's complex and thoughtful responses. The transmission of this deep thinking – from Arnold in English and Behrouz in Farsi, through Omid – and finally received by the non-Farsi speaking peoples in the audience was deeply moving. It took time. It was slow and deliberate. It was penetrating. Omid noted Behrouz's responses in a notebook before carefully relaying them with respect and warmth to the quiet listeners. This conversation stilled the audience and made space for contemplation. I recount this event in detail as the performative and experiential nature of the three-way dialogue conveyed, by its very nature, an affective context for the conversation itself.

This experience stayed with me while I read 'No Friend but the Mountains'. I heard Behrouz's voice, a voice that has not been silenced by the authorities. Through his intelligent investigations into the psychological violence of the system and observations of a miscellany of characters – sometimes amusingly, the intimate interrogation of everyday ritualistic activities designed to dehumanise the inmates of Manus Prison – all the darkness and light of his years of incarceration are revealed.

I agree with Behrouz that the label 'prison literature' does not do justice to the complex narrative that is 'No Friend but the Mountains'. Recently, writer and critic Geordie Williamson wrote in another context that: 'Those stories we tell about ourselves and the world may be many things, but all of them work to guard beleaguered sanity. This is because they have the effect of forcing an unruly universe ... into some saving order, some semblance of authoritative record.' Behrouz's deep reflections and writing may well be the most authoritative record we will have of the Manus Prison System.

The MWF session time was extended, and then at a certain point, the connection with Behrouz was lost. You could feel the room holding its collective breath, waiting, hoping. But no further contact. And then I felt the power that had been in the room, how good it was to have been in the same room with Behrouz, to hear his voice in real time emanating from the place he calls Manus Prison.

I urge you to read 'No Friend but the Mountains', which should be compulsory reading for anyone working in this arena and highly recommended for readers interested in how good literature can successfully integrate big ideas. 📖

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penmelbourne.org

Objective Value

Marie Alafaci demystifies the manuscript assessment process.

Writing is a solitary endeavour. If you're lucky enough to have supportive friends and family who are familiar with your genre or you're part of a writing group, you may have received some constructive feedback. However, even if everyone loves your style and their comments are encouraging, you may still want a professional opinion. Perhaps you're unsure if the story has a satisfying resolution, or maybe you've hit a creative wall. Perhaps you want to fine-tune the manuscript before submitting the work to a publisher. Whatever your reason for seeking a manuscript assessment, before you proceed, it's a good idea to know what an assessment won't do.

Misconception 1: An assessment will bring your first draft to a publishable standard

I'm not sure where this idea comes from – wishful thinking on the part of inexperienced writers or money-grubbing from unscrupulous operators – but an assessment is just a step towards publication (if this is what you are seeking). An assessment's objective is to identify what work there is still to be done in the manuscript, and this usually involves substantial time and effort on the part of the author.

Issues that an assessor might pick up include plot problems, undeveloped characters and inconsistencies (of voice, style or tense, for example). They may also discuss more complex issues such as rewriting (or removing) scenes and chapters that aren't working or even changing point of view.

Assessors' reports will, of course, include praise when it is warranted but you should expect constructive and robust feedback.

Any criticisms of the work are made to help an author identify what they need to do to improve the work and their craft. If you're seeking effusive praise, perhaps an assessment is not for you. It's rare for an assessor to receive a first draft of a manuscript that is ready for submission.

Misconception 2: An assessment will teach me how to correct errors in my writing

While some assessors are also creative writing teachers, an assessment isn't a writing course. Assessors might comment on which scenes slow down the plot or when the text contains over-writing, but they won't fix these issues for you, nor will they teach you how to overcome them. Their job is to highlight where your writing needs to improve and give you some guidance on how you might go about this, such as reading books which showcase the techniques you are trying to master, joining a writing group or attending workshops on specific writing techniques.

Misconception 3: An assessment will merely provide false praise in return for money

Most assessors know that their job is to read your work and make suggestions as to how it could be improved. They see their role as a great privilege – they get to read the early work of authors at all stages of their writing careers. Being able to recognise what authors are trying to do and know that they can help them achieve their goals is one of the joys of the job. No assessor wants to see their clients misled, or their own reputation trashed. Be wary of an assessor who only offers praise.

Misconception 4: A letter of recommendation from a manuscript assessor will fast-track your work to publication

Letters of recommendation rarely make a jot of difference in the acquisition process. Publishers relish the discovery of new voices, and for a manuscript to be offered a contract, the whole acquisition team needs to agree that it should be published. While the commissioning editor may champion a particular manuscript, the sales and marketing teams, among others, influence the final decision. Publishers are not charities; they need to make an overall profit so that they can publish the next book and the one after that. Acquisition is always a commercial decision, so an external person's opinion is largely irrelevant.

It is true that an assessment may help you to improve your work, perhaps making it more attractive to a publisher, but a letter of recommendation doesn't guarantee publication and assessments are not marketing tools. In fact, some publishers find the inclusion of letters of recommendation irritating and feel there's something presumptuous about an assessor telling them whose work they should

publish. So, it's best not to include them in your submission unless they are specifically mentioned in the publisher's submission guidelines.

There's always something you can learn from an assessment: stylistic idiosyncrasies you didn't realise you had or techniques you hadn't realised you could try. But perhaps the greatest benefit writers gain from an assessment is the permission to treat their work as a professional endeavour and to make connections with others who understand what it means to write. It won't make writing any less solitary, but it can go some way towards minimising that feeling of isolation. 📌

Marie Alafaci is an author, Writers Victoria tutor and manuscript assessor. She was a participant at the inaugural Manuscript Assessors Conference held at Writers Victoria in 2014 and has run a manuscript assessment business, Bedlam Books, for nearly twenty years with her business partner, Emma Hegarty.

For more information about manuscript assessments, visit writersvictoria.org.au

Nitpicker

Your regular editing lesson, brought to you by Penny Johnson, Program Manager of Professional Writing and Editing at RMIT.



1. The writer is one of those delicate creatures that (undergo/undergoes) a transformation.
2. In the early days life is spent cocooned (,/:) weaving ideas into words.
3. This writer of flash fiction wears a beret, under the (allusion/illusion) the more writerly look inspires creativity.
4. This one taps away on the keyboard, producing stories that make her (writers/writer's) group swoon.
5. Whatever the case, (us/we) writers long for that exquisite moment where our soft wings unfurl and harden, and we emerge.

CC image courtesy of John Bugg on Flickr.

Answers on page 41

A Prize Role

Moreno Giovannoni, winner of the inaugural Deborah Cass Prize, reflects on how it helped him develop his debut novel.

Dear Reader,
Listen to me and I will tell you about the role of the Deborah Cass Prize in the development of my book, 'The Fireflies Of Autumn And Other Tales Of San Ginese'.

I won the inaugural Deborah Cass Prize for Writing. The Deborah Cass Prize for Writing is a prize for Australian writers from a migrant background. I remember seeing the announcement on the Writers Victoria website or in their newsletter. Maybe someone emailed me about it.

I thought about submitting. Was I a migrant writer? Or a real writer?

I'd had an essay published in 'The Age', some fiction published in 'Southerly', a literary journal that seemed to like my work. The three pieces they published ended up in my book. I had also had a short story published in 'Island'.

The criteria for entering the Deborah Cass Prize were certainly satisfied. Both my parents were born outside Australia. All you needed was one. I was born outside Australia too. I had the perfect credentials.

The judges were Christos Tsiolkas, Alice Pung and Tony Ayres. I remember hearing Christos Tsiolkas talking on the radio about the question of 'migrant writers' versus 'writer writers'. In the end he decided that because the market and the publishing industry create these categories we all more or less go along with it.

I realised that if I were to first try to clarify all the doubts and ambiguities that existed in my head around writing and publishing, I would never write anything and never show it to a publisher, so I went ahead.

The due date for submissions was 18 October and on that day I was attending one of Antoni Jach's writing Masterclasses. I had already

combined some extracts from a partially completed 40,000-word draft into a coherent 3000 words that could be read as one piece. I skipped the after-class drinks and went home to finish my submission. (Skipping after class drinks wasn't easy to do.) I'm the kind of person who, when given a deadline, waits for the deadline before submitting. So I waited until a few minutes before midnight.

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I received a phone call a couple of months later from one of the Deborah Cass committee members inviting me to Writers Victoria to attend the announcement of the winning entry because I had made the shortlist.

Like many people who enter writing competitions, I told myself I could take it or leave it. As the date of the announcement approached I predictably had grown more nervous. I told myself I was glad to have been shortlisted and that would be enough.

Incidentally, at the 2018 Byron Bay Writers Festival, I attended a session where three Miles Franklin winners discussed the effect that winning the prize had on their lives. They mentioned in passing that it is only human to seek approval and love. Writers in particular, I have been told, are like two-year-old children who crave the kind of love they received from their mother. They spend their writing lives seeking to rediscover that love, which they find only in public acclamation. The panel discussion in Byron Bay included the disappointment of being on a longlist or a shortlist and not winning.

At the event, the finalists were announced counting down from runners up to winner. When the second runner-up was announced I realised my chances of winning were one in two. It was a bit like watching the Brownlow Medal count where you realise at some point that there

are only one or two players who can win it. Then the first runner-up was announced. It wasn't me. Yes, dear reader, I was the last one standing; I was the winner.

The prize consisted of money, a mentor to help me through to completion of the manuscript and guaranteed presentation of the manuscript to a publisher for serious consideration.

The Prize Money

The prize money paid for a return airfare to Italy. I spent two weeks with my uncle in the village in Tuscany where my book is set. I spent most of my time walking from one hamlet to the other along quiet country roads. In the afternoons, after lunch and on most evenings, I wrote several thousand new words and found a way to end the book. The prize was working.

The Mentor

The prize immediately gave the book a small profile. It also immediately placed enormous pressure on me to finish the manuscript. The prize committee was waiting for the manuscript and so was the publisher.

Fortunately I had my mentor, Antoni Jach, to keep me on track. We would meet regularly and whenever I suggested we meet via Skype he insisted on personal, face-to-face, sessions. Skype sessions would have been less confronting to me. Face-to-face meant I was more accountable for the progress I was, or was not, making. I am confident that without Antoni's support and encouragement I would not have finished the book. I have always needed a lot of encouragement to write and to continue writing. For a first-time novelist in particular, winning the prize was a boost to my self-confidence. Boosts were necessary throughout the process.

Over the next several months I added some 35,000 words. The prize was really working now.

The Publisher

When I finally submitted the manuscript to Black Inc, I did so only because in my own mind I had resigned myself to the possibility of being completely humiliated by rejection. Once I had accepted this possibility, resigned myself to it, I felt a burden lift.

A month later, I received a phone call saying that the publisher wanted to publish my book. The prize had achieved its purpose.

The Edit

I was a beginner and didn't really know what I was doing. Chris Feik at Black Inc took care of the structural edit. Having been through this once, I now think I know what a structural edit is (not that I'd be any good at it. We'll see next time). The copy editing was good fun. There is nothing I like more than a discussion about words, sentences and paragraphs (and the advisability of semi-colons over commas).

Promotional Support

By winning the Deborah Cass Prize, I enjoyed the support of the organising committee who have promoted the book through their network. The publisher was interested in the possibility of working with the organising committee's network to promote the book. The judges of the prize in the year I won gave me some wonderful endorsements.

*

My involvement in the entire process, from submitting a part of my manuscript to the Deborah Cass Prize, to enjoying the benefits of the prize and working with the publisher to hammer the book into shape, has been an education, a baptism of fire.

I have also had the opportunity to learn valuable lessons about the writing and publishing process by helping the organisers of the prize with the short-listing process in later years.

I am convinced my book would not exist without the Deborah Cass Prize for Writing. ⑩

Moreno Giovannoni was born in San Ginese but grew up in a house on a hill, on a tobacco farm at Buffalo River in north-east Victoria. Moreno was the recipient of the inaugural Deborah Cass Prize. His debut novel, 'The Fireflies Of Autumn and Other Tales of San Ginese' (published by Black Inc) was shortlisted for the 2018 Readings Prize for New Australian Fiction.

For more information about the Deborah Cass Prize visit writersvictoria.org.au

Tales of a (Pre)- Emerging Writer

Sara Bannister has been writing for years. But, she asks, can she call herself an emerging writer yet?

Renewing a Writer's Victoria membership, I was given three options to describe my writing status: early, emerging or published.

Apart from a few short stories in a student publication, I wouldn't be considered published. But emerging? That sounds like a writer who is starting to be seen and noticed. They'd have at least one short story out there in a worthy anthology, and a few competition wins.

Again, that isn't me right now.

I can honestly say that in my lifetime I've spent tens of thousands of hours writing fiction, including a novel, short stories and a three-act play. I devote at least five minutes every hour of the day thinking about writing, mostly feeling guilty for not doing enough of it.

I'm very fortunate to have had the support of a brilliant author and much-loved writers' mentor, Antoni Jach, who continues to believe in me as a future author. I don't want to prove him, or anyone else who has encouraged me, wrong. That's why I keep my work tucked in a drawer. If I finish a project, I might discover what type of writer I am. It will almost certainly not be what I'm expecting.

Being an emerging writer is an exciting, intense, experimental time of great creativity when everything is possible. You can attend festivals, devour countless books, write multiple drafts, share your work at writing classes, reach out to favourite authors, enjoy those moments when your words delight

or just connect with people. You can dream about the new space that will be created on bookshelves for your work.

But don't let the fear of failing to live up to expectations trap you in the nothing-to-lose world of the early or pre-emerging writer.

I know about this.

I quit a good full-time job in my late twenties to concentrate on writing fiction. I started a novel about a teenage girl doing Year 12 in a run-down, western suburbs school, based on my own experiences, and applied for professional writing and editing courses around Melbourne. I was thrilled when every institution offered me a place. This was an emerging writer's heaven – a state of excitement to be creating stories and sharing them with others.

I chose RMIT's Professional Writing and Editing course because they called me in for an interview and wanted to talk about the novel I was doing. It was about to get so much more interesting – and heartbreaking.

A year later, I started the advanced novel class with Antoni as teacher, and by then my novel was over fifty-thousand words. Through his intervention, the manuscript ended up on the desk of one of Australia's most respected and important publishers of young adult fiction. I hadn't yet handed in my work to be marked. My head was spinning. One day, the publisher called me at home to give feedback. She said that this work showed 'plenty of promise' but was not yet ready for publication. The

publisher was warm, positive and encouraging, never for a moment making me feel that this was a rejection. She went on to say she'd edited part of the manuscript 'so you can see how to improve it'. Before she put the phone down I asked if I could re-write and send it back. The publisher said yes, but I never got that second draft back to her.

This is a perfect example of the fear I'm talking about. The fear of putting my own potential to the test. I thought the publisher was just being polite when she said I could send a revised draft back to her. I didn't believe in myself. I'd forgotten the hours and effort I'd put into writing ever since I could remember – perhaps since the age of eight.

Today, it would be ludicrous to identify myself as an 'early' writer. It's not as though I picked up a pen last week. It doesn't feel right to call myself an emerging writer when I'm still safely wrapped up in a writing cave of my own making, with abandoned drafts in the cupboard.

So, I'm this other category. Pre-emerging? How did I get to be this frustrated writer?

They say every girl needs a spark – and mine was stories and creative writing. Other kids were into dancing, skateboarding, going to the movies, hanging out with friends, playing hula hoops, all of which I loved, too. I had many sparks. Any of them could have lead somewhere, except perhaps the hula hooping.

One of my parents noticed some writing ability in me early on and intervened heavily, buying a typewriter for my tenth birthday. They wanted me to use it, and not be outside mucking around with other kids. The birthday card said: 'To our little literary genius'. It may be one of the worst things anyone has said to me, and it had a terrible impact. I felt pressured to spend weekends and school holidays punching out thousands of words – a heavy burden for a ten-year-old – in a desperate effort to prove I was the talented child they wanted me to be. Without realising it, I wasn't writing for myself but to justify my existence in the household and to feel valued as a person.

From then on, nothing I did was enough. When I got my first job behind the counter at a service station in Taylors Lakes, they reminded me it was a 'waste of your talent'. In reality, I

‘It doesn't feel right to call myself an emerging writer when I'm still safely wrapped up in a writing cave of my own making, with abandoned drafts in the cupboard.’

had been a kid from St Albans who was good at English, happy to read a lot of books when my peers would rather be out doing tricks with yo-yos. If I'd been left alone, I'd have protected that spark. I'd be an author by now, able to click that description on the Writers Victoria website.

Now, this is all just another excuse for not writing. If your excuses start to have better characters, plot twists and emotional resonance than the work you're avoiding, it's time to act. You don't have to be anyone's genius, or brilliant, or a prize-winning writer. What matters is that you allow your writing to emerge – not necessarily into the public domain, though that's a good thing. I mean let it emerge from your own mind. Put words onto paper and finish every project so that it becomes this solid thing, not a bunch of ideas and stories floating off into space, and eventually out of your reach. 📌

Sara Bannister is a Melbourne writer and media advisor whose articles have appeared in the 'Herald Sun', 'The Big Issue', 'Visible Ink' and many others. Sara studied journalism, and professional writing and editing at RMIT. She is finally completing a novel based on her formative years in the western suburbs, which she began many years ago.

Re-invent, Re-emerge, Become

A successful writer in Mexico, Gabriella Muñoz started from scratch when she moved to Australia. Now, she is re-emerging with a new voice.

When I was eighteen, I joined a troupe of amateur actors. My first (and only) performance was a pastorela, a play representing the birth of Jesus. I played the role of the angel who guided Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem and accompanied them during their first days as parents. We rehearsed for a month. I didn't have many lines but needed to position myself at the centre of the stage with my arms spread wide, showing off my shimmering wings. The lighting technicians would illuminate the wings, casting golden light on the nativity scene.

The whole troupe helped craft those wings, which were heavy, but soft and exquisite – I will never again wear something made with so much love. On the day of the performance, I was so nervous that I missed my mark, even though the director had stuck yellow tape on that very spot. Instead, I ended up right behind Mary. To my horror, the audience burst out laughing when it appeared that the holy mother was growing big shiny wings. I had turned the pious scene into laugh-out-loud slapstick.

After the performance, Maestro Héctor Azar, the pastorela's author (and one of Latin America's most celebrated playwrights and directors) congratulated us. I remember blushing when he approached me, fearing a reprimand, but instead he smiled and said something that has stuck with me: 'Nunca olvides la energía y nerviosismo de tus primeras obras de teatro. Cuando no sientas mariposas en el estómago antes de salir al escenario, retírate o reinvéntate'. (Never forget the energy and nervousness you experience during your first plays. When you stop feeling butterflies in your stomach before going on stage, retire or reinvent yourself).

Re-invent yourself. Re-emerge. Become.

Recently, I have been thinking about what Maestro Azar told me over twenty years ago. Although I never graced a stage again, I wrote a children's play. I also penned poems and short stories, and eventually started getting paid to write for glossy magazines. The butterflies used to flutter when the blank page stared at me, defiant; and when people asked what I did for a living and I proudly replied 'I'm a writer'. And at the time, becoming a writer, being a writer, felt organic almost linear, until I lost my voice and confidence and had two options – to become something else or to try to re-invent myself as a wordsmith.

I've always thought that emerging, the process of becoming a writer, is a time of experimentation, of reading in wonder and then trying to tone down your influences, of finding a village. It's when you grow a thick skin to survive rejections. It's when the power of good stories makes you humble because you don't know if you'll ever produce something that will keep someone awake at night, thinking, caring about your characters. (Angela Carter can do it, but can I?) It's a time of self-doubt because you don't know if you'll ever produce a piece of writing that someone other than your family and friends will read and esteem.

Re-emerging, however, is a different beast. Chances are that the attempt to re-emerge comes after trauma, moving to a new country, or family or financial problems. Perhaps it comes after a very successful book – or the exact opposite – or after a much-needed mental break. Rather than fairy-tale creatures, the butterflies then become the words that escape and are near impossible to catch.

In 1992, in an interview with 'The New York Times', Haruki Murakami said: 'If you want to talk about something new, you have to make up a new kind of language.' And the Japanese author is right: re-emerging, in a way, is making up a new type of language, one that morphs and adapts to your circumstances; a language that speaks your new truth, voice and writing style. And finding that new truth and writing style is what re-emerging is all about.

After moving to Australia and becoming a mother, writing became almost foreign to me. I could sometimes approach the blank page with the detached coldness of a surgeon, positioning subjects, verbs and clauses with precision, but the proverbial butterfly feeling, the creative surge wasn't there.

A mix of fear and betrayal pervaded my work: fear of failing to write in a new language and betraying Spanish, the language that had seen me become a writer. Writing became confusing and frustrating, and I often wondered if I would be able to call myself a writer again.

I read work by other bilingual and multilingual writers in my quest to re-emerge with an authentic voice. Joseph Conrad, Eva Hoffman, Vladimir Nabokov, Susana Chavez-Silverman, Kader Abdolah and Ariel Dorfman, became my companions. I also discovered David Malouf, Shaun Taun, Gail Jones and many other Australian writers who taught me about my new circumstances and opened new pathways to experimentation. Little by little, these writers helped me find a new way beyond the translation of one language into another, and towards a new and (hopefully) improved literary style.

Every time I sat down to write, the fear of failure was waiting for me, but, in time, it taught me to experiment, even allowed me to try new genres. I am now comfortable in my bilingual skin and love experimenting with the palette my second language offers. I no longer feel I am betraying Spanish, but fear is still there most of the time and I'm not sure it will ever go away, if it should go away.

Whereas emerging taught me to reach out for help and that rejection is part of the writing process, re-emerging taught me how to shape language in ways I never thought I would explore. It also taught me to embrace fear. Reinvention is fundamental to being a writer but it's the fear of not being able to pen a story again that sometimes feeds the creative surge.

‘Emerging, the process of becoming a writer, is a time of experimentation, of reading in wonder and then trying to tone down your influences, of finding a village.’

Fear challenges you, makes you question your choices and helps you do better, read better, write better.

When American poet Nicole Cooley joined a conversation about emerging writers with Bookslut's Anna Leahy in 2009, she expressed mixed feelings about the term 'emerging' because, as she said, 'with each book – my first and second and the one I'm finishing now – it always feels like I'm starting over as a writer. Re-emerging each time, perhaps?' And perhaps Cooley is right, just like Maestro Azar twenty years ago.

It doesn't matter if you are indeed an emerging writer, or a mid-career writer or an established one, it doesn't even matter if you are trying to re-establish your career after a hiatus or if you had to stop writing because of an unexpected event. Every essay, short story, poem, novel we write will make us question who we are as writers and why we do it. Each project will force us to re-emerge because they each require something different from us. Each piece of work will make us reach out for inspiration, for our village, until we stop the self-doubt, and the fluttering lets us know that it's time to sit down and write again – or to stop, re-emerge and reinvent oneself. Perhaps the key lies not in being a writer but in experiencing a constant state of flux, of becoming, which is how French philosopher Gilles Deleuze describes the postmodern condition. ⑩

Gabriella Muñoz is a Mexican-Australian writer and editor. She has published feature articles and essays on a wide variety of topics. Her literary work focuses on motherhood, exile and the mysteries of blood and origin. Gabriella is the inaugural recipient of the Writers Victoria Digital Writers in Residence program, supported by the Loula Rodopoulos Sub-fund of the Victorian Women's Benevolent Trust.

Market Day

By Amanda Hildebrandt

Winner of the 2018 Grace Marion Wilson Prize for Fiction.

The sex did not bother Jane as much as the poppy seeds pooling in the cracks between the floorboards. She crushed them underfoot on her way to the bathroom, and they released their oil and penetrated the untreated oak, leaving small, sticky reminders of that other business, his business, the pink-haired, pierced impetus behind his sudden interest in baked goods.

Jane felt sorry for the girl, and disappointed in herself for referring to the girl as a girl. They were in it together, as far as she was concerned. Simon, on the other hand, was a hypocrite, although that was less feeling for Jane than fact. Simon, who knew that his wife appealed to other men, who was not jealous but sullen that he no longer wanted her as other men did, who saw kissing Jane like kissing his sister, watching her undress like walking in on an elderly neighbour who had missed a blouse button. Jane, the pragmatist, guessed the source of Simon's discontent, and suggested they see other people, with full disclosure and consent; she left it to Simon to decide whether they should relax the bounds of monogamy alone, or as a couple. Simon, the dramatist, was appalled by either choice; the subject was dropped. Within weeks, Simon had stumbled across a new farmers' market and, despite being cynical about this paddock-to-plate fashion and too easily distracted to cook beyond a three-minute egg, had come home with a prune and poppy seed danish and a revived carnal appetite, courtesy of its candy-haired creator.

Jane understood what the pastry signified. Simon did not have a sweet tooth and, from the day he arrived home with a second danish for her, extolling the virtues of the steeping process that made the prunes syrupy, she suspected they were sharing more than food. He had a symbolic way of confessing, but she recognised his language and could almost forgive him this accidental contradiction: she

cared for him, but never missed his weight on her belly, never brought him to mind when she slid fingers inside herself. However, these poppy seeds, these tiny, gritty globes of evidence he scattered in his wake, were becoming a problem. Each Sunday he would lick the glaze from his lips, and she would restrain herself from wondering out loud why prunes that were so flamboyantly syrupy could not keep a small seed stuck to a flat surface. She ate her danish over the sink when he brought her one; the buttery pastry, the smooth vanilla custard and moist fruit, seduced her too, and made her consider the baker girl an ally, although Simon was hardly the enemy.

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The poppies grew quickly. At first, instead of the usual soft crunch, Jane felt a cool, damp tickling beneath her heel. She turned on the light and shifted her foot to find a crumpled green seedling rooted between the cracks in the floorboards. Other, healthier specimens, were dotted down the hall. She trod more carefully to the bathroom, the infant flowers swaying in her wake. When she walked into the kitchen the following morning, Simon appeared to have been waiting for her there. She made tea and toast and sat down at the table opposite him to eat. He nodded and returned to his oats; he understood her language as well as she did his.

They were soon living in an indoor field: blooms of orange, red, and yellow surrounded them as they sat, slept, ate, dressed, undressed, showered, washed dishes. Filmy petals obscured the television screen and tickled bare legs as they stood at the sink to brush their teeth. Pollen married with the dust motes, swirling in the morning sun. Simon sneezed; Jane bought antihistamines and extra tissues.

As the flowers grew, so did Jane's interest in the girl whose prune and poppy seed pastries

‘The sex did not bother Jane as much as the poppy seeds ... She crushed them underfoot on her way to the bathroom, and they released their oil and penetrated the untreated oak, leaving small, sticky reminders of that other business.’

had turned their home into a hothouse. On a mercy mission one Sunday morning – nasal mist for Simon’s allergies – Jane resolved to detour via the farmers’ market. She usually bought in bulk, or on special, and had until then found no reason to venture past the limits of her loyalty cards. The market was smaller than she imagined, less picturesque: trestle tables covered in frayed hessian, goods and stall owners alike in cluttered confusion. The baker’s stand was piled with teetering hillocks of seeded breads and brownies, and Jane could admit there was a charm to the chaos when paired with the girl, whose pink ponytail, half-crimped, half-frizzed, skewed itself to one side of her face, as if to balance the eyebrow ring on the other. Jane asked for two prune and poppy seed danishes. If the girl recognised her, if she had been to the house or Simon had shown her the wedding picture fused to the plastic window in his wallet, she showed no sign. She told Jane how she made the pastry from scratch, using hand-churned butter from a fellow stallholder. The prunes, the girl explained, were steeped in Earl Grey tea until plump with an exotic bergamot tang. She pointed out the organic tea stand down the alley, and waved to the boy across the walkway, near-hidden by the tumbling mound of prunes, she told Jane, that were harvested from his plum farm and dried within the week. She did not mention the poppy seeds, but something about the girl, the pride in her self-taught skill, the passion for her ingredients, dispensed Jane’s desire to reason out the chain of events that connected one’s oven to the other’s hardwood floors.

That evening, Simon carved a path between the poppies to the kitchen table, to find Jane dishing up fresh angel hair pasta, tossed with small-batch mozzarella and homemade basil

pesto, garnished with flat-leaf parsley and toasted pine nuts. He had spritzed his sinuses with the saline Jane gave him, so his taste buds were primed to appreciate this unexpected gourmet turn. The bag on the counter, its paper clammy from fat and syrup, told him that Jane had been to the farmers’ market and brought him his lover’s pastry; that she found something that she could share with him in lieu of sex: this food, this quiet accord, this drowsy field of flowers they called home.

The sex with the baker girl continued, although Simon stopped frequenting the farmers’ market, and Jane began. Jane was the better cook and she still brought him a prune and poppy seed danish every Sunday: they had established this with their usual wordless ballet, a taut, intimate, duet Simon imagined the less enlightened would envy. Their diet broadened as Jane improvised meals to suit the market produce: sheep’s yoghurt with urban beehive honey and fresh coconut shavings for breakfast, vegetarian sausages with wild mushroom gravy for lunch, organic lemon thyme risotto for dinner. Avocado oil and freeze-dried berries became pantry staples; marinated olives and hummus were paired with a local Gruyere and coarse-ground oatcakes as an afternoon snack.

Neither of them were capable gardeners, but the poppies stood firm against the twin deprivations of water and direct sun. Vases were consigned to the linen cupboard: the live, floral carpet in every room made the empty vessels look comical. Besides, to cut the poppies and arrange them in a vase would have veered closer to acknowledging the alien presence than either of them wished. The odd-job man they hired to trim the lawn and rake up wayward branches was not invited to give his opinion; had he been, he might have told them that the blooms had already exceeded their lifespan, and what began as a multi-coloured carpet would soon end as withered brown mulch.

*

The sex bothered Simon almost as much as Jane’s refusal to recognise the poetry in their situation. His lover’s hair was pink; her lover’s hair was red, a relative shade. Hers sold the prunes that topped the pastries that his baked that sired the poppies that led them here. The boy was probably pierced somewhere too,

beneath the bow-tied checks and distressed denim. He was more man than boy, but younger than Jane, so he lodged in Simon's mind as a youth. Simon felt an itching disgust for failing to find his wife attractive, which he converted to frustration at her indifference to the symmetry they had established. There had been no tacit agreement, as there had been when the poppies appeared; she had simply stopped bringing home any fruit that was not a dehydrated plum.

On the day the first flowers began to droop, Simon trod to the kitchen, lured by the smell of Jane's cooking. The bag that usually held his lover's pastries was not on the counter, but he thought no more of it, and sat down to his free-range Moroccan eggs with rich tomato sauce. Jane placed a cooling rack in the centre of the table: there, on the rack, sat a half-dozen prune and poppy seed danishes. Jane commented on how fussy making custard to go with the prunes had been. Simon lost his appetite. He stood quietly and calmly, and just as calmly left the kitchen, without pushing his chair under the table. The message was clear, if Jane cared to receive it.

She began with fruit cakes and steamed puddings, but the dried plums soon began to appear in savoury dishes: spiced couscous, grain-fed chicken pie, hand-cured bacon rolls – all came to the table adorned with the sweet dark flesh she bought from the prune-seller. The poppies died en masse; not being keen gardeners, neither Jane nor Simon cut them back or cleared the mulch.

Simon stopped eating dessert; Jane stopped coming home. Simon waited, kicking his shoes against the walls to dislodge the rotting flowers stuck to the soles, but she did not return. Sunday came, the day of the farmers' market, and it occurred to Simon that he had not heard from his lover all week. He knew instantly what had happened, and ran to the farmers' market, knowing it was already too late. He would find nothing there: an empty stretch of concrete, pigeons searching the stones for insects, no food, no farmers, no shoppers, no sign it had ever existed. Gone, like the poppies under his feet, and Jane, gone with it.

The market hall was lively with people when he arrived, wheezing from the race. The

pink-haired baker offered brownie samples to customers, the red-haired prune-seller scooped his produce into attractive mounds; people browsed, dogs sniffed, the buzz of food frying and conversation drifted to the roof, and Jane, at the boy's stall, shifted the sacking to stop the prunes toppling to the ground. Simon was offended to find them there, to find it all existed without him. He marched up to Jane but, as he closed in, they turned on him. The baker, the prune-seller, Jane: all three looked at the walkway between them, the place where he stood, but they did not see him. They saw each other. He could not mistake their meaning. Not even he could pretend that he was right, but wrong in the detail, that it was he who had disappeared, not them, not the market. They had simply excised him and carried on.

Simon went home alone. He had no idea which of them he would see again or when. When hunger trumped the nausea he felt from the smell of decaying poppy petals, he scavenged in the fridge, and came out with a dish of six prunes in Armagnac sauce. One for each room. He ate the flesh as he walked through the house, floorboards creaking and settling behind him, and dropped a seed in each room as he went. The days passed; the seeds were dormant. A steady trail of ants moved in. Simon waited, but the orchard of plum trees he expected to sprout from the mulch never appeared. If he had asked the odd-job gardener, he would have known that the season for plums was past. 🍷

Amanda Hildebrandt is currently undertaking her biggest writing project to date: a 100,000 word PhD on flight attendant uniforms. She has previously worked as a script reader and media analyst. She has been writing fiction and essays from the age of five, and her handwriting has not improved much since.

Binky

By Margaret Hickey

Runner-up of the 2018 Grace Marion Wilson Prize for Fiction.

Grace Marion Wilson
Runner-up ~ Fiction

It was hard to hear Vanessa's voice over the phone. There was a bit of background noise – she was at a champagne breakfast or something. Plus, as usual, coverage wasn't great at the farm. He wanted to hear how it was all going, what she thought of his new play and how much she missed him but all she kept talking about was Binky.

Binky. He asks her if Binky's parents are koalas but she doesn't find it funny. Binky, she answers, has just been shortlisted for the Booker Prize and everyone is reading his work. It seems to resonate, she says. People are yearning for this type of thing. Peter had read the blurb for Binky's book. It was about a retired Cold War spy moving to the Lake District and falling in love with a woman who raised goats. He couldn't imagine how anyone could relate to that – apart from retired spies or goat fans – especially when the author was some sort of weirdo marsupial.

But Vanessa doesn't listen. She says that Binky's writing is beautiful, his descriptions of the landscape so evocative that local hotels can't keep up with avid readers rushing to find the place where Spencer McLaren first spied the beautiful Maisie Jones and her goats.

Peter holds the phone away from his ear. He can't stand this type of talk and the thought of Binky makes him want to punch something very hard. Had Binky cast some sort of stupid spell on Vanessa? She wasn't normally so inarticulate. She must be drunk, he decides, and when he asks her, she says that yes, she is – very much so – and she must hang up the phone because she wants to drink some more.

He says goodbye, puts the phone back in his pocket and feels for the first time the full force of distance between them. Five hours drive to Melbourne, a day on a plane and an hour on the tube to Kilburn. Thirty hours, say, not including wait time for some storm hovering over the city or a terrorist scare. He squints toward the drive. It is even a good twenty-

minute walk to get to the gate. He sighs. 'I may as well be in Pura Pura,' he says in his best theatre voice. 'But hang on a minute,' he continues, 'I am in Pura Pura. What a fucking coincidence!'

He laughs a kind of crazy laugh and remembers when Vanessa last called his work beautiful. It seems an eternity, but in reality, it would have been five years ago, when he first moved to London. He'd written a play called 'Prints' about a dying man, reliving his past, looking at photographs of the landmarks that surrounded his home: a low hill, parched paddocks, dank dams and the troubling scars in the canoe tree. 'Prints' was an instant success. He won the Australian Emerging Playwrights' prize and within a week was on a plane to London, economy class packed with Contiki tourists, business class chocked with cricketers and ex-'Neighbours' stars, all headed for the Euro dream.

He picks up the bottle of scotch beside him, stolen from his father's house, and takes three large slugs. Bloody Binky with his fluffy ears and his big paws trying to write his next book. Good luck with that one, mate. He drinks more, coining some advice he'd give to Binky if he had the chance: stick to your own country and write about things that your fellow country men and women understand. The Brits get cold war spies. They don't get isolation unless it includes a serial killer and they don't get beauty unless there's a little cottage and a running stream or some girl reaping wheat. It's got to be manageable beauty for them, beauty to behold. The French don't get humour. The Saudis don't get fun. Stick to what you know, isn't that the great tenet of writing, after all? 'Prints' had been popular among the judges and acclaimed throughout the Australian literary scene. His one success. But, he knows, a major part of the appeal for the metro critics had been his rural charm. His kid-from-the-sticks freckles and

his big handshake, his 'how you going, mate?' type conversations. It was more than that, too, because in their pale critic eyes, he could see a kind of longing. In this country, doesn't every man secretly want to be from the bush, like Clancy of the Overflow? What greater honour is there in Australia than riding down some mountain on a brumby at break-neck speed? What greater honour? He takes another slug, alarmed to feel a sob coming on.

He can already see that his new play will be a failure. No one wants to read comedies, especially satirical ones set in Syria. What did Vanessa always tell him? Write about what you love.

Suddenly, Peter crumples like a third-world building. His poorly constructed self lies broken on the earth and he cries a little through his nose. He kicks off his shoes, wriggles out of his black jacket and discards his tie. He lies in the warm brown dirt feeling the sun warm his face. He runs his fingers through the soil and thinks about nothing. He moves his arms up and down, he digs his heels into the dirt. He makes little castles in the dust. He rolls onto his stomach and back again. He rolls onto his stomach and back again. And then he's rolling, rolling in the dirt. He's rolling, rolling in the dirt and it's just one of the best things he's done in ages. His face is getting gritty – sharp grass scratches his cheeks and there are granules in his eyes. He's flattening the earth, then roughing it up, getting it all over him. His black pants and white shirt are brown and red and he doesn't care. He doesn't bloody care! He's on his stomach now, poking out his tongue and licking the earth. It's gritty and hard and gets stuck in the back of his teeth. He spits a globule onto the ground and moves it about with his finger, making a dark red paste. He remembers doing this as a boy. He pokes his tongue out again and has another taste. It's no better, but it's no worse. He lies on his side, knees up to his chest like a child and once more he thinks of nothing, just feels the little stones in his mouth and ears and the sand between his fingers and the sky is big and blue and the wind is low.

It's been two weeks since his mother's heart attack. She wouldn't like to see him roll about in the dirt like this, but still he doesn't get up.

Maybe he is his father's son after all. Heart attack in the roses as she sprinkled them with

grey water from the shower. Collapsed among the Holy Toledos, the Yvonne Kennys and the Wedding Belles. Years ago, she'd visited him in England, and he'd taken her on a tour of the famous rose gardens of London. Although they'd enjoyed their time together, he sensed her fretting the whole time, for her Holy Toledos, her Yvonne Kennys and her Wedding Belles. Peter suspects that when the time comes she would prefer to be buried under her roses, making herself into compost for them but he doesn't suggest the idea. Not yet. His father has taken the heart attack badly. It's a rare farmer that considers the health of his wife before the farm and now his old man is facing the thought of what the next few years may hold. Like it or not, he's come to the realisation that it wasn't only the roses she kept alive all this time. And that question this morning from the family lawyer; 'What Do You Want To Do With The Farm?' – the deflated way his father looked at him ... it's another reason, he admits, why he finds himself drinking scotch and rolling about on the bare earth.

Peter can't decide whether that look from his father was an improvement on the wary one his mother gave him when he visited her in hospital. He bent to kiss her and felt her move away, slightly, as if he was being overly familiar. Had they really been strangers for so long? Her hands looked paper thin and he touched one of them, feeling the dry skin crackle under his touch. He remembers those hands rubbing big circles on his back to help him sleep when he was a boy. Big warm circles and a half-remembered song about a mouse. In the hospital, with all the tubes and machines, it would have been difficult to attempt a big warm circle on her, impossible really, but he did think about it. Instead, he tried to regale her with gossip from the London theatre scene and news about his latest play, but this fell flat. It was only when he mentioned Vanessa that his mother's face seemed to loosen and her eyes focus on him. The two women got along very well when they met in London. Because, of course, it was grandchildren that she was after, little people running around the farm and feeding lambs with a bottle. 'Wedding bells?' he thought he heard his mother whisper, but he wasn't sure whether she meant marriage or her rose bushes. In any case, he had no answer – he hadn't fed her plants the whole time he'd

been home. He digs his fingers into the soil, he makes circles in the dirt.

A scene comes to him. He's twelve years old and sent to call his father in for tea. He trudges up the paddocks, thinking about the book he is reading, wishing himself away, when he sees his father kneeling beside a fence, tightening the wires. He goes to call out to him but stops when the man drops the tool he's working with, clasps both hands together and rests them on top of the fence. Peter opens his mouth again but no words come. He watches and waits, half afraid of intruding. His father is staring across the paddocks, at the shadows widening and the orange ball of a sun descending fast. His weather-beaten skin is golden in the dying light and the expression on his face, radiant. In this scene, his father is not deflated. He is something completely the opposite.

Peter lets this image recede, then rolls onto his back. He opens his eyes and is horribly startled to see the large form of Ian Drummond, his father's nearest neighbour, looming above.

'Peter Finch,' the big man says. 'Well, fuck me sideways.'

'Not if I can help it,' he answers, words made difficult with the scotch and the dirt.

'So, you're back.'

'Yep.'

'The prodigal sun shining out of his arse.'

Peter shrugs.

'Been back long?' Ian asks.

'Ten days.'

'Shit, I didn't know.'

'Doesn't matter.'

'Sorry to hear about your mother,' Ian says.

'Hope she pulls through ok.'

'Yeah, well ...'

'Good woman and not a bad sort in her time.'

'She's not dead you know,' Peter says.

'Would have had a crack at her myself only had Beverley heavy breathing down my neck for most of the 70s. Hard enough keeping up with her carnal demands let alone your mother's.'

'That right?'

Ian points to his gut. 'God's gift mate, god's gift.'

'Shit,' Peter says, fumbling for the scotch 'Whatever happened to some nice towels?'

He lifts his head and shoulders from the ground like a wounded soldier and has a sip before offering it up to Ian, who gives a sideward nod to indicate the stubbie of beer in his hand. In rural Australia, Peter thinks, it's sufficient to communicate with nods, shakes and small flicks of the finger, himself giving Ian a sideward nod, inviting him to sit down next to him. Ian shakes his head. Peter shrugs. The two men drink deeply. The sun sinks on the horizon. It's orange and yellow and the dams are pink shimmering lakes. Peter thinks about his father kneeling beneath such a sky. He leans up onto one elbow and takes a risk; 'Ian,' he says more drunkenly than he feels, 'have you ever thought that it's kind of holy how people feel about this land?'

Ian gives him a downwards, sideways glance and burps. 'How the fuck would I know?' he says. 'I'm a lapsed Catholic married to a Church of England sex addict. I'm not Stephen Hawking, you know.'

'I don't think even he'd know that.'

'He knows everything there is to know, mate. Everything. Don't believe the dribbling vegetable hype. I've seen the shows.' Ian necks the rest of his can and throws it at a mob of sheep in the next paddock. 'Seen all the shows,' he says again. 'But I tell you what he might say, or write, or whatever the fuck it is he does into that machine. He might say that we here live in a pretty nice spot of the universe. And he might tell us not to fuck it up by being the general fuck heads we are. That's my ten cents worth for you.'

Peter is impressed. He likes a succinct argument. But there's a message in there somewhere for him ... or one coming. It is. Ian speaks.

'Now I dunno what this rolling around in the dirt is all about. Maybe it's some hippy Stonehenge shit you've got yourself into over there, but you might consider staying longer this time. Keep your old man company, help him out a bit. He's not getting any younger and there's only so many times I can drive over to show him how to use the new pump. Stay. You

can do more of your rolling around. Even give the seconds a shot.'

Peter remembers playing football, all that half-hearted dancing around the pack and the fumbled marks. 'They wouldn't have me,' he says. 'Not even in the seconds.'

'You're right. They're only bottom of the ladder, not terminal. Well, come and be a water boy if it's not too much trouble for a Pommy dickhead like your fine self.'

'I'll think about it.'

'And, for chrissake, get rid of the black suit. You look like some sort of shithouse spy,' Ian says, nodding down at him. Peter nods up at him in return. Then the big man walks off, heading towards the house, giving a backwards wave with his big meaty hand. Peter rests one cheek in the dirt and watches till his father's friend is a black speck shimmering in the heat.

What Do You Want To Do With The Farm?

He thinks about growing up and the old black-and-white photos of his family members and the stories of droughts and fires and locusts. He thinks about his parents telling him to stop reading and to help with the drenching, the shearing, the lambing and the fencing. He thinks about the fact that he's an only child. He thinks about all that bullshit about his great, great grandfather settling the land and clearing it and making it profitable, about his great grandfather building the house and raising the money for the little bush school. All the bullshit that ignored the scars in the canoe trees and the perfect rocks smoothed into carved edges that the header sometimes pulled up. All that ignorant white bullshit that he scorned in Melbourne and London that now he couldn't ignore and yet couldn't reject outright.

He didn't want the farm, didn't want it, didn't want it! And yet – now, he does. This farm, this land the brown soil, he wants to be part of it. He's tired of resisting the urge and tired of travelling, which surely is another word for escape. He could live here on the farm with his old man and help out, learn about the seasons, grow some more trees. Despite what the doctors say, his mother could pull through and he could help her run the place, build a watering system for the roses and whatnot. He could come up here and lie like this, think about another play. Vanessa could hang up her high heels, move here and try her hand at

farming – well, why not? He could try to find out who lived on this land before his great-great-grandfather and what they did. Forget his equine allergy, he could learn to ride a horse! It could work, it could all work.

Finally, as night closes in over the paddocks, he thinks of Binky and how perhaps Vanessa is right. That a man, an object of suspicion and fear, a man brought in from the cold to warmth and beauty and love might indeed be a story worthy of merit. As a fiction, it might even be beautiful. 🍷

Margaret Hickey is a playwright and author from North East Victoria. Her plays have been performed in regional Victoria, Brisbane, Melbourne and New York. Her short stories have been published in literary journals and have won prizes in several competitions. Margaret has worked as an English and theatre studies teacher and a university lecturer. She has recently submitted her PhD on depictions of land in contemporary Australian literature.

The Playboy Club of North Perth

Grace Marion Wilson
Winner ~ Non-fiction

By Karen McKnight

Winner of the 2018 Grace Marion Wilson Prize for Non-fiction.

It's a nineteen-eighties hard-rubbish night in Tokyo. The streets are filled with stuff. We drag a TV set home. It's just sitting there on the side of the road near the post office, so we grab it. People stare at us as we hobble along, hunched over in our coats, one of us on either side. We go back and find other things, a small table and a collapsible chair. We set the TV down on the floor of our empty apartment and switch it on. It works. Up comes a game show, yelling at us in Japanese. We do the dial and find more game shows, a TV commercial with Madonna holding up Suntory Whiskey, and 'Mad Max Three' – dubbed. A thick black band appears at the top of the picture. We take it in turns to sit in the collapsible chair.

It's December. Freezing cold Tokyo air. We've taken to catching cabs from our apartment to work. We've learned the ropes with the drivers: you virtually throw yourself onto the road in front of them and one might stop. Then you get in and scream, a hundred times where you want to go. 'Roppongi! RRRRRoppongi! Rop Ponggi!' Every pronunciation of the hip inner-city suburb until the driver goes, 'Ah, Roppongi!' and takes off. That's when you hold on, screaming left and right in Japanese. 'Hidari ... migigawa ... hidari ... migigawa!' Until you hail the landmark. 'Playboy Club!' you yell. 'Ah, Playboy Club,' the driver says. He jerks into a spot out the front. You pay him, grit your teeth and run.

We're late for work again. The other Bunnies are in their costumes already. Bunny Mother is waiting in the corridor with a worried look. She greets us, bowing and smiling, then is on the run. 'Isogu, isogu,' she says, pushing forward with collars and cuffs. The old lady is there too – the seamstress who makes all our costumes. She pushes through and is there behind me when I turn around, holding up my costume. Then she's running back to me with my tail and my ears. I'm in a floral number tonight. Big red roses on swirling green vines. We struggle into our tights. Two pairs. The first pair are thick opaque beige – nanna tights, like leg corsets, designed to streamline any set of pins, on top a sexier sheer black. We're both grunting. I step into my costume. The old lady appears to zip me up. 'Suikomu,' she says so I take a deep breath, hold it, savour it. It'll be the last one for a while; this thing really is a corset, made with real whale bone, a true instrument of torture. I look in the mirror. God. Then she's back with the dreaded foam pads, starts tucking them into my bra, pulling my boobs around with her fingers to get them in, into the sides and underneath. She squashes me together with both hands. Her goal is to create not only a cleavage but impossible cleavage. That woman wants mountains. She stands back, looks at me. 'Guddo,' she says and heads over to my co-worker, Pam, who sees her coming. I hear language, '#%\$^&!' I sit down, slap on foundation and throw some heated rollers into my hair.

'We got a TV,' I tell Bunny Mother who smiles and nods and translates for the old lady. 'It was on the side of the road,' I tell her. 'We couldn't believe our luck.' She looks at us for a while then translates for the old girl again and they both screw up their faces and laugh.

'What?' I say, but then the manager appears, and we are running. Five-inch heels clacking up the corridor towards the lift. The old lady runs behind us spraying our hair.

We line up in the conference room with all the other Bunnies while the manager shouts from a clipboard, addressing us like a football coach.

'Hai!' we all shout, 'Hai!' I shout a few more times, having no idea what is being said. We bow, fall out and take our places, trays in position, at the designated stations in the club. We stand there in the 'Bunny Stance' – shoulders back, tummy tucked in, the heel of the right foot nestled in the arch of the left. Customers come in. We don't talk to each other. We don't talk to customers either unless they are from the English-speaking foreign embassies, which is the main reason we were hired. 'We need English girls to have conversations with the diplomats.'

And that is what we do when they venture in – we reminisce about Vegemite and Polywaffles and lose ourselves in the telling of silly Aussie jokes and break out of Bunny Stance.

'Onegaishimusu! Three Sukocchi water, two Suntory biru, one mizu wari.' I slap an order down on the bar. The barman jumps to attention. It's a momentary opportunity to sit my tray on the bar and lean in, listening to Carol, the American nightclub singer doing 'New York, New York' AGAIN. I know every word. After that will come, 'I Left My Heart in San Francisco'. The lift opens. 'Irasshaimase!' I shout. It is the Japanese word for 'welcome' but you wouldn't know it by the way it's barked.

'Irasshaimase!' we yell to the customers, then we glide over, pulling out chairs for the men only, as taught, leaving the women to fend for themselves. We dote on the men, hand them their golden Bunny Menu, light their cigarettes while they look us over, wave us away on a whim, then click their fingers in elaborate ways when they want us again. 'Onegaishimusu! Sukocchi water, Suntory biru, mizu wari.'

We slap a hundred orders down a night. The barman nods and jumps. 'Hai,' he says.

We watch the clock. We stand at the bar, we stand at our stations. It's like a factory job, waiting for the hours to pass, weight on one leg, then on the other, resting those aching feet. Knowing the time by which number Carol is singing. She's up to 'My Funny Valentine', only five songs to go until the big climax – 'My Way', which will mean tables of drunken Japanese businessmen crooning along in crumpled suits ... in tears, signalling the end of another five-hour shift. Time to knock off and get the hell out of here, unzipping one another frantically and kicking off those high heels.

The lift doors open and more customers come in. It's getting very late. 'Irasshaimase!' It's sounding more like a growl now than a bark, the clipped-in smile has become bared teeth and I am no longer gliding to seat the men, no longer in the mood to take their order and deliver it in The Bunny Way: overarm, smiling, bottom and fluffy tail in the man's face. I look at my swollen feet in those heels then think of the pay cheque and remind myself that both Debra Harry and Gloria Steinem were Playboy Bunnies, although Gloria insists it was for research purposes only. I try to buck up.

We came to Tokyo to teach English – two Perth girls trying to better themselves, trying to escape unemployment and dead-end jobs and beer barns on a Saturday night. I researched for months, looking for places in the world where we could live and work and be adventurous. And then I discovered it: working holidays in Tokyo teaching English. All you needed was a thousand dollars to get you started and a ticket out of the country. But the reality was, the English language schools we contacted were out of the city and it would take time to build up students. We needed jobs quickly. In the 1980s, Tokyo was one of the most expensive cities in the world. Rockmelons sold for \$75 each, a dollar a cherry. Along came an ad in the 'Tokyo Journal' for Bunnies. 'You mean a rabbit costume?' I said over the phone. I pictured the two of us in head-to-toe fur, walking through the streets of Tokyo collecting money for foreign aid.

Hitomi sidles up to me with her drinks trolley. Her Bunny outfit is baby blue. I ask, 'Why did Bunny Mother give me that look when I mentioned the TV we dragged home?'

She grimaces and says, 'Oh ... Ouch ... we don't do that here.' Her accent is American even though she's never been out of Japan. 'When something breaks we throw it out and buy new.' I am suddenly too aware of my hometown gleaning nature, of our trash and treasure, dumpster-diving mentality, of my mother's voice saying, 'I put that old chair out on the nature strip and before I'd even got in the house, someone had pulled up and grabbed it.' Then me adding, 'I just might go out for a drive and see what other people have put out.' I look at Hitomi and feel an acute yearning for home.

Christmas is lonely and cold. They don't celebrate it here; everyone leaves the city to visit family in the provinces. We eat Kentucky Fried Chicken in the store then take it in turns blubbering in a phone box to our families. We walk the empty streets in silence until we come across a window display of a smiling Santa Claus nailed to a cross.

'Jesus,' Pam says, 'sometimes these Japanese have strange ways.' We laugh and take photos of one another standing beside it.

Pam sits in the collapsible chair in front of the TV. It's her turn. I get into the bath, a bath big enough for a baby. I try to soak, pretending that I am stretched out with my head laid back, looking at a tall ceiling instead of sitting upright with my knees underneath my chin. I look at the aluminium window frames that don't open, that just slide an inch to the side and think about the glamour attached to being a Playboy Bunny in Tokyo, part of Hugh Hefner's official empiric hutch. I imagine my mother bumping into people at the shopping centre, saying, 'Yes, that's right, Karen's working in Tokyo now, they've given her an apartment and everything.' I soak in the water even though according to the Japanese it is a dirty practice – to sit in your own foul water then towel off, telling yourself you are clean.

By March we have returned home with tails firmly between our legs to unemployment lines and dead-end jobs and Sunday mornings at the Trash and Treasure market. I spend a few weeks wondering what to do next then come across a job in the local paper for a nightclub waitress.

It turns out to be the Beer Barn at the North Perth Hotel. A sleazy middle-aged Italian guy is interviewing. I tell him I was a Playboy Bunny in Japan. He's interested. Wants to see how I look in a costume.

'I haven't got a costume,' I tell him.

He looks me over and gets me to strip off to my underwear and serve him, the way I would in a bar.

'You know, just pretend,' he goes. So, I show him The Bunny Way to serve drinks – standing with my tail in his face, lifting his paperweight high into the air and onto the folded hanky in front of him. 'Okay, we're in business,' he says, and there I am, a recycled Bunny.

He takes me over to a little bar on the far side of the hotel. It's sad and dark. A handful of old men are nursing beers and listening to the races.

'I'm gonna ask you to use your imagination,' he says. 'We'll kick out the old timers, and all the rough-nuts at night ... and once we put up coloured lights: the Playboy Club of North Perth.' 🍷

Karen McKnight is a Perth-born Melbourne-based writer whose fiction has been published in a range of small press journals. 'The Playboy Club Of North Perth' is her first published piece of non-fiction. In 2016 she was awarded 'Overland's inaugural writer's residency. When she's not busy raising kids, she's teaching writing in the community.

Myanmar and My Father

By Claire J Harris

Runner-up of the 2018 Grace Marion Wilson Prize for Non-Fiction.

At the age of twenty, my father set off from his native New Zealand. He travelled for the next three years, crossing Asia, the Middle East, passing through North Africa, all the way to England before he turned back – making it to Thailand, where he settled for a while.

In 1971, Dad's Thailand trip took an unexpected turn when he became friendly with Shan tribesmen from Burma (now Myanmar) who were members of the Shan State Army (SSA). There was one man in particular, known as 'Victor', who invited him to accompany the SSA to Burma as a correspondent, to take photos and write a story on the struggles of the Shan people. Dad went to live in the Shan headquarters to prepare to leave for Burma, a journey that he expected would take nine months to a year.

He never wrote his article. According to his letters, he marched alongside around forty SSA fighters, and crossed the Thai-Burma border. A photo labelled Kengtung would suggest he made it some way into Burma. He talked about a holdup with a 'rival group' who tried to arrest him, but instead he was sent back to Thailand and then deported. He never travelled again until his death twenty-four years later.

When I turned twenty, I also set off travelling, though I didn't come back for almost a decade. Every year, I would take a mental note of where I was on the date of Dad's death and count all the places I'd travelled that year. The first year I was in Cuba on the anniversary. The next year, Morocco. The following year, Egypt. After that, Bolivia. New York. Mexico. And so, I mapped out geographically the time that had passed since I had last seen him – until finally, I too arrived in Thailand.

In the north of Thailand, I asked some Shan locals how to find Victor. Go to Kengtung, they told me. There was a man there who used to be in the SSA at that time, the only one they could think of who was still alive.

'But he's very old, in his eighties – so go as soon as you can.' When I finally booked a flight to Myanmar, I hoped it would be soon enough.

Getting around the country was something of a challenge, with careful control over where tourists could and couldn't go by road. That was why I ended up flying to Bhamo in Kachin State – the northernmost province of the country. From there I was able to get on a wooden boat to Katha, where passengers sat on high wooden seats, our legs dangling a metre above the floor to make room for cargo that needed to be transported down the river.

In Katha, I was strolling along a dirt path past some two-storey teak houses when a group of women called out to me, inviting me to drink tea and eat lollies with them. When I admired the pottery that one of the women was making with her elderly mother at the front of her house, she held out a painted piggy bank.

'A present for you,' she said.

'But you need to sell that!' I protested.

'Present!' she insisted.

More women gathered around me, their faces streaked with a cheerful yellow paste made from bark, which protected their skin from the sun. One of them beckoned her teenage son over and he pulled out a smartphone from his pocket. Using a translation app, he opened up a line of communication between me and his mother –

one word at a time, painstakingly typed onto his screen. He loved his phone, he told me via the app. In the last few years, most of the population of Myanmar had acquired smartphones where before they hadn't even had internet access.

Katha used to be home to Eric Blair, a young officer in the British Indian army who later went by the name George Orwell. Despite this fact, few tourists made the journey there – but a local schoolteacher led me on a tour of the sites that were featured in his novel 'Burmese Days' in exchange for me helping her students practise their English.

One by one, the students were dragged in front of me – some of them literally, as they gripped onto the doorframe of the teak hut that served as their classroom. As we walked to Orwell's old house, Nyein explained to me that she was tired of teaching. The classroom was attached to her house and the students from the villages lived there with her, but she was tired of that, too. She only did it to make a little extra money. Her elderly mother also lived in the house.

'She hates me,' Nyein said.

'I'm sure she doesn't.'

'Yes,' she said. 'She hates me, and she loves my brother.'

Nyein's dream had always been to go to Yangon but now it was too late. She was in her fifties and would retire soon. 'The people here are so closed-minded,' she said. 'They don't care if their children go to school. I'm not like these people.'

The boat from Katha to Kyau Myaung left in the middle of the night. It was also made from wood but two storeys high, the top deck held on top of the lower one with beams lashed together. There were no sides so nothing stopped the chill wind from roaring in. The cargo was packed below – while above, families laid out mats and blankets across the wooden deck for their children to sleep on.

I rolled out a blanket alongside them and pulled out my copy of 'War and Peace'. I had promised myself that I would finally complete it while on this trip, but the 1500 pages were weighing down my luggage – so as I finished each chapter, I tore it out, leaving a trail of Napoleonic invasion and Russian masquerade balls across Myanmar.

Looking out over the top of Tolstoy, I found an elderly couple squatting on the edge of my blanket. I smiled, and they nodded enthusiastically. The man flashed a mostly

toothless grin and pointed at the book, as if to say, 'What's it about?' After miming out 'war' and then 'peace' as best I could, the pair burst into laughter. I shrugged and returned to my book.

The air temperature dropped as the boat ploughed on through the night. I wrapped myself in my blanket and a boy approached me from the kitchen carrying a mat, which he handed to me. I took it gratefully. Most people had double blankets and just the one was poor protection against the winds. I slept in fits and starts – and when I finally started to drop off early in the morning, a call to prayer sounded out from the loud-speakers attached to the wooden roof, rousing everyone from their sleep.

In the kitchen, the boy was lighting the gas stove and heating up coffee so I went to order a glass. Sipping the brew at the side of the boat, the edges of sunlight could be seen crawling across the riverbanks. I reached into my pocket with my free hand and grabbed my phone. While tapping the camera button with one finger, I lost my grip. The phone slipped from my hand, bounced along the lower wooden deck and disappeared into the Ayerwaddy River.

There was a gasp behind me. The mostly-toothless old man was staring open-mouthed at the river. He looked back at me and I shrugged. His face broke into another grin.

Slowly, still beaming, he pointed at me. He held one hand up to his ear, mimicking a person talking on a phone, while stifling a yawn with the other hand. Then he pretended to throw his phone in the river and look shocked. He pointed at me again. The crowd of passengers who had gathered around him laughed.

During the rest of the trip, one person after another would repeat this performance. After they'd finished mocking me, they held out tea or food as consolation or offered to paint my face yellow to protect me against the sun. Some expressed concern about how I would manage without a phone and tried to explain where I could get another one with the few English words they knew, the rest of the instructions made up in gestures.

The road to Kengtung was closed to foreigners. I met a guide named Eddy at the airport when I arrived, and the next day I was on the back of a motorbike riding to the Akha villages that dotted the countryside. The road wended around the side of a hill with views out across the rice paddies stretching down into the valley.

We stopped halfway up a steeper incline and got off the bike to walk the rest of the way. There were no roads to the village, and the path cut through the jungle – a mud track made slippery from the rainfall during the night. I wondered whether these were the same paths my father had traipsed almost half a century earlier.

Every so often, Eddy stopped to bombard me with questions like ‘Where is your family? What is your religion?’ He himself was a Jehovah’s Witness converted twenty years ago through the arrival of American missionaries. Before that, his family were Catholics, as were many other tribespeople, thanks to the missionaries who arrived five-hundred years ago. Within a single Akha village, you could find a mix of animist, Buddhist, Catholic, Baptist, JWs – all co-existing, intermarrying, occasionally converting from one religion to another.

On the outskirts of the village, a woman washing clothes in the river with a baby on her back engaged Eddy in animated conversation. He told me they were discussing the local drug problem – something called yabba that the villagers were using and selling. Eddy said this was the reason the road to China was closed, as the government attempted to stop the flow of drugs across the border.

He liked Aung San Syu Kyi, as had Nyein in Katha, but change was slow. When I asked him about reports of fighting between ethnic minorities and the military, he only repeated, ‘No problems here, no problems.’

But later he told me about the army’s incursions into the Kachin State in the north, then reassured me with ‘But it’s okay, it’s okay.’ We were on the other side of the country from where a genocide against the Rohingya people was unfolding, and no one ever spoke of it.

A cluster of children in bare feet and dusty clothes rushed out to meet us, from one or other of the small wooden huts perched on stilts. They followed us to another hut, where Eddy called out to the young woman – barely older than a teen – who was in a hammock rocking a baby, bundled in blankets. There were more children scattered about her, some clinging to her simple longyi. It was impossible to tell which belonged to her and which to her neighbours. She brought out a teapot and glasses on a brightly coloured plastic tray and went back to rocking her sleeping baby.

An old woman emerged from a field somewhere down below, trudging wearily up the hill towards us wearing a silver headpiece and rows of small

beads strung from one ear to the other, which draped all the way down her neck. Around her forehead was the strap of a bag she was carrying. It was full of beans and hung at her back.

She took a place on a stool, and soon two more women arrived, thin and small but tough enough to carry loads on their backs. When I gave them gifts of washing powder – that Eddy had encouraged me to buy in the marketplace – they bent forward to clasp my hand and laughed hoarsely. The gift-giving made me uncomfortable, but not giving gifts would have felt even more uncomfortable.

The women each took a glass of tea offered by the younger woman, and one of them lit a cheroot cigarette. It was this lady who invited us to her home, and we followed her slowly down a path, the children still calling after us.

The kitchen was a small dark wooden hut, with poles jutting out above us and beams placed between them for her pots and pans to sit on. Sellers occasionally came up here with their wares, but when she needed something, she had to trek back down the mountain to Kengtung and carry it back in a bag with the strap tied around her forehead.

The woman offered us rice whiskey and a small bowl of bean soup. I felt bad for eating the beans she sold for a living, but I did it anyway. She asked where I was from and how far it was, and Eddy tried to explain about how many miles or hours in an aeroplane, but her eyes glazed over.

‘She doesn’t know where Indonesia is,’ he said. ‘She doesn’t know anywhere outside this area.’ The furthest place she’d heard of was Yangon. This seemed to frustrate Eddy.

The old lady kept talking but her voice became lower and she was looking out the doorway that provided the only light into the dark interior of her hut. Eddy took out his smartphone and I could see him scrolling through Facebook as the woman continued to murmur.

‘What’s she saying?’ I asked him.

He hadn’t been listening, so he made her repeat it.

‘Just that she has a fever and she is old, so she thinks it is okay to die,’ he said. ‘She would like to get better, but she is very ill and so ...’ His thoughts drifted back to Facebook.

The woman was sixty-two, younger than my mother.

Inside another wooden hut, a family was gathered around a wood-fire. They were cooking soup for lunch and drawing close to the flames for warmth – it looked like an accident waiting to happen. A teenage boy entered the room and took his place on one of the low wooden stools. His hair was dyed blonde and he wore a crucifix earring in his left ear. He wanted to be a rapper and he regaled me with his own raps performed in Akha language.

The boy used to work in Bangkok but came back a couple of years ago for fear of being deported. There were plenty of people from Myanmar working illegally in Thailand. I calculated that he must have been just fourteen when he left.

Now he wanted to go to Australia, he told me through Eddy, so he could change his skin colour to white. I said with the sun in Australia he'd probably end up darker – but that he shouldn't care. He never stopped smiling, chattering away in Akha as he replaced the cigarette in my hand and topped up my glass of rice whiskey.

'He's so happy to meet you,' Eddy translated, 'and to see you in Australia.' I offered the boy a place to stay in Sydney, but I knew he would never arrive to take it.

On the way back down the hill, I told Eddy why I'd come to Myanmar – that I was looking for a man who might have known my father. I'd already asked the woman who ran the guesthouse as she was counting money on the table downstairs, and she only said, 'No, no, no.' I wasn't sure where to start asking around if anyone knew someone who may once have been considered a criminal and possibly still was.

But Eddy had an idea. He dropped me off at the head office of the Shan State Army downtown. I entered cautiously, armed with a black-and-white printout of the photos Dad took in Kengtung more than four decades before. I wasn't even sure whether the men seated around a table with my father in the faded photos were SSA or from the 'rival group', the Shan United Revolutionary Army.

I went in and said I was looking for information. A young man asked, 'Where do you need to go?' assuming I was a lost tourist.

I showed him the photos and re-told the story of my father's crossing from Thailand into Burma – mostly translated through a teenage boy. Some older men gathered around and peered into the faces of the men in the photos.

'How old is your father?' they asked via the young boy.

'He's dead – but he would be almost seventy now.'

The men shook their heads sadly.

'Very old,' the boy explained. It was true – the fighters in the photos were all older than my father, which would probably put them in their eighties. The average life expectancy in Myanmar was sixty-five.

The SSA men smiled at me kindly. One of them offered to make a copy of the photos and circulate them in the local newspaper, in case anyone recognised the people in it. I nodded gratefully, and then I remembered to tell them about Victor, who led the convoy across the border.

'Victor,' the name was passed from one man to the other – always accompanied by a slow shake of the head.

'When I was in Chiang Mai, they told me I might find an old man here who was SSA in the 1970s,' I told the young boy who translated. Again, the shake of heads.

I'd waited too long. There was a missing piece of the puzzle that was my father, and it may as well have been swallowed by the waters of the Ayerwaddy along with my own memories of Myanmar.

I thanked the men, returned to my room in the guesthouse, passing the owner seated before piles of cash on the table. And I cried. 🕊

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Art & Science

By Eugen Bacon. A Women Writers of Colour Commission.

(Note: This piece is a work of creative non-fiction, not scientific investigation.)

The natural human condition is not black and white – there are greys and multi-shades of grey in-between. Consider genetics and the basic mechanism of inheritance: a male parent produces either an X or Y chromosome – a carrier of genetic information – which, together with an X chromosome from the female parent, determines a child's gender: XX for a girl; XY for a boy. Yet instances arise in the complexity of heredity and evolution, resulting in triple chromosome, for example XXY or XYY, where dominant gender may remain inhibited until the child reaches adolescence. Such is diversity.

Even in the regular genetic pool of XXs or XYs, there are dominant and recessive alleles – singular parental imprints of a trait – whose combinations yield diverse traits, such as height, hair or eye colour, in progeny of the same parents. Population genetics shows there are different frequencies of alleles. Evolution – being the change in allele frequency over time – might occur, perhaps as a mutation in alignment with the Darwinian theory of natural selection.

Given the range of genetic diversity in the human populace, why imagine that there exists a 'clean' divide of the scientist and the artist? The cerebrum is the largest and most highly developed part of the brain and is also where complex functions such as action and thought take place. It is divided into left and right hemispheres. The prevailing (and simplistic) view is that the left is responsible for artistic function such as creativity and the right for scientific functions such as logic and spatial perception.

Yet much is still unknown about the brain and humans do behave in irrational ways. 'In A Mind of its Own: How your Brain Distorts and Deceives' (2008), psychologist Cordelia Fine explores in humorous style how the workings of the brain are not as clear-cut as one might imagine. The brain is capable of self-defensive and interpretative insulation, of manipulating our actions and perceptions to protect us. For example, it is not uncommon, even in the absence of obvious brain injury to diminish recollection, for victims of trauma to suppress the disquieting event. Pain science has, over the years, shown that pain is a survival mechanism whose main purpose is to

protect the body. Pain motivates you to move away from 'harmful' stimulus – you snatch your hand from a flame. This is one of the many protective functions of the brain, as is the intrinsic fight or flight stimulus when we are confronted with a threat.

Health specialists have uncovered countermeasures, such as deep breathing, relaxation and imagery techniques, that work to mentally stop physical pain. If the brain is capable of such complex manipulations, what is to prevent genetic, situational or evolutionary adaptations? Why can it not be that a person's left and right cerebral hemispheres are equally dominant to such effect that the person manifests strengths as both an artist and a scientist?

Coexistence of art and science

Italian mathematician, physicist and astronomer Galileo Galilei was also a painter, and his father a musicologist. Leonardo da Vinci, renowned for the Mona Lisa and the Last Supper among other eminent paintings, was a polymath – the Greek term for a person whose expertise spans a significant number of different subject areas. For all his artistic prowess, Da Vinci was endowed with architectural and engineering talent.

In a 2008 study of 'geniuses' and creative proclivity, Robert Root-Bernstein et al. determined that arts foster scientific success. The investigation considered Nobel laureates, National Academy, Royal Society and Sigma Xi members and concluded that most geniuses are polymaths. An inspection of biographies, autobiographies and obituary notices uncovered notable artistic ability, as in music, painting or literary creation, in these geniuses, affirming them as 'hybrids'. They were well-adjusted all-rounders who had the ability to be both scientists and artist-humanists.

Creative avocations included painting, poetry, dancing, photography, performing, composing, even glassblowing. What's more, the study also proved converse at an unveiling of scientifically and mathematically trained composers such as George Antheil, Aleksandr Borodin, Modest Mussorgsky, Mily Balakirev and Cesar Cui. Twentieth-century music revolutionary Camille Saint-Saens was a composer who was also an amateur astronomer.

Composer Edward Elgar had several chemical patents. George Antheil worked with an Austrian-American actress, Hedi Lamarr, on an early technique to spread spectrum communications and frequency hopping, necessary for wireless communication from the pre-computer age to the present day. English-born Beatrix Potter, famed for her imaginative writings and illustrations in 'The Tale of Peter Rabbit' (1902), was also a natural scientist and conservationist.

But what about Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, Bach, Lloyd-Weber, Mozart? Their absence in these examples might suggest there is a stage where even geniuses must focus on one thing: art or science. But the argument does not contradict that a creative critical divide between arts and science is perception. Given the Darwinian evolution of the species and selection of the fittest, not to mention the diversity of the human genetic pool, surely there are more polymaths, albeit to varying degrees. Talent and predilection are not black or white, art or science.

Furthermore, imagine the brain as a muscle that grows stronger with practice, and learning new ways and skills encourages it to change and grow. The neuron theory on the workings of the brain says that nerve cells communicate with each other to perform essential functions. A human brain has billions of neurons (tiny cells), each with their own identity, expressed by their interactions with other neurons. As an information carrier, a neuron receives impulses from other neurons. The more impulses a neuron receives, the greater its capacity to develop neurotransmitters, which are chemicals that help to convey impulses and stimulate a response. In using more functions of the brain – for example, in exercising the left and right hemispheres by challenging yourself to learn both artistic and scientific skills – you encourage your brain cells to grow. This suggests you get smarter when you challenge your brain – and this implies that intelligence favours 'hybrids' whose brain activity embraces two seemingly incongruent 'cultures'.

Practical coexistence

Beatrix Potter may have transferred her knowledge of botany (study of plants) and entomology (study of environmental sciences) to generate credible setting in 'The Tale of Peter Rabbit'. Indeed, she came from a tradition where women of her class were taught to study plants and paint and write and do pockerwork and learn a language. She is the result of her education and so may not have been a polymath in the full sense of the word. But she benefited from a mix of training in sciences and arts, a mix that many have indeed experienced in various schoolings. While this discussion does not mean to distinguish between our abilities and those

of a genius, it means to show that the arts and science disciplines are not really in conflict.

Without digging far, we come across science fiction writers such as Isaac Asimov (who was a professor of biochemistry) in his novel 'I, Robot' (1950); HG Wells (who was apprenticed to a draper, tried teaching, studied biology and then made his mark in journalism and literature) in 'The War of The Worlds' (1898), 'The Invisible Man' (1897) and 'The Time Machine' (1895); and Ray Bradbury (who was a visionary writer who first sold newspapers on the streets of Los Angeles) in 'The Martian Chronicles' (1950). These artists used their interest in technology to invent artistic works of extraordinary fiction. This does not make them polymaths or geniuses but it evidences coexistence of arts and science, where the one can inform the other.

Unlike Mozart's 'The Marriage of Figaro', a four-act opera buffa that is subterfuge and substance, there is no subterfuge in the marriage of art and science. There is substance.

*

Only an insecure artist or scientist would contemplate the other with suspicion rather than curiosity. And perhaps there is no true 'artist' or 'scientist', but rather inhibited polymaths who could well benefit from exercising both sides of their brain. Art can learn structure, organised scepticism, curiosity, attention to detail, adaptive persistence and a 'solutions' focus from science. Science can learn passion, aesthetics, vision, creativity, inherent meaning, diversity, uniqueness and the non-linear from art. Like 'The Marriage of Figaro', where peasants Figaro and Susanna find sync with the aristocrats, find room to grow their love for each other, and the audience claps, encore, encore, the union of art and science is a nuptial with a good social cause. Coexistence offers more than the reward of richer contribution to knowledge: it promises more intelligence. The nature of human genetics confirms there is no black and white. The marriage of science and art can find sync. It is a marriage with promise of evolving into a never-ending love story. 🍷

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Following the Soldier

By Damien O'Meara

'We're outta filters.' The soldier was inspecting the cylinder on his mask. 'We'll have ten minutes if the Mist hits again.'

'But there won't be Mist in the tunnel, will there?' David's voice trembled, giving away his fear. 'You said it has been sealed for years.' He looked into the soldier's striking green eyes, hoping for reassurance – not for the first time.

'You'd rather go in unprepared?'

The opening of the tunnel was sealed by thick steel, held in place by massive rivets. The only way in was a small door sealed tight with a metal wheel, like on the submarines he'd seen in old movies.

The soldier twisted hard. It took a moment for it to give.

'There's no water, neither,' he added, 'so I don't want to hear no complaining that you're thirsty.'

David shifted the weight of his heavy pack to another spot on his shoulders, savouring the brief reprieve before the bag settled again. His body burned under the heavy coat. The coal filter mask dangled from its strap. Clipped to the side of the bag, it hit him in the leg as he walked.

The soldier pulled the door. It groaned on its hinges and cold air, thick with the smell of mould, engulfed them. David wondered if they were the first to open it in eighteen years. The light from outside spilled through the door, illuminating a rhombus of light inside the tunnel. The soldier stepped through ahead of David. The boundaries of the light that poured in from outside seemed to hit a wall of darkness ahead of them. There was a second screeching groan from the door as the soldier pulled it shut, and the darkness closed in on

the small patch of light. Cracks of light thinned as the seals were wound tight.

The air inside hung thick around them. It was cool, but David was still sweating under the heavy coat. 'I can't see a thing.'

'Hold on.'

There was a slow ticking sound. It sped up to a whirl. In front of him, a small light came to life, flaring and dimming, getting progressively stronger as the soldier cranked the wind-up torch.

David followed the beam of light from one wall to the other. In-between each wall were six lanes of traffic. The cars' rooftops and panels were mostly eaten through, while the thicker, stronger frames remained standing. They stood as skeletal representations of what was sealed inside, bumper to bumper as far as the light could reach.

'There was Mist in here.' The soldier whispered. He'd stopped winding the light and it ticked down like a large wind-up toy.

'Where is it now?' asked David.

'I don't know, but it was here. This place mustn't be completely sealed.' He shone the light over the ground.

'Go back!' said David. He watched carefully as the soldier shifted the beam back, more slowly this time. The light settled on a patch of ground, where the dust was tumbling around in small circular patterns by an unseen, weak breeze. 'That's it!' he said triumphantly. 'There's a breeze from somewhere.'

'Keep moving,' said the soldier, suddenly officious and back on mission. He did this whenever they got too familiar. He was striding ahead, taking the light with him.

David stumbled and hit his shin on something. A dull metal thud echoed through the tunnel and he cried out.

'You okay?'

'Yeah.' David rubbed his shin, gritting his teeth against the pain. The light hit his face and he squinted, 'Don't shine it in my eyes.'

'Sorry. Come closer, it'll be easier to see.'

The light moved to the space between two cars and David shuffled ahead to join the soldier. They started moving again. He did his best to keep up.

'Slow down!' David called ahead. It felt like they'd been walking for hours and still the light was lost in the endless darkness of the tunnel. His bony legs ached with each uneasy step.

Not like the soldier, sure-footed even in the darkness.

David took a deep breath. The bitter taste of damp air caught at the back of his throat. It was as if it was getting thicker the further they went. He wrinkled his nose against the taste, wishing he had some water to wash it away.

'You said you'd keep up.'

David could hear the exasperation in his voice. 'I'm trying!' He shifted the heavy pack on his back and it ached as the bag settled in a slightly different spot on his shoulders.

The soldier was winding the crank on the light, again. It whirred loudly, echoing through the still air in the tunnel. The beam flared again with each turn.

David tried to jog to where the soldier was standing, but it was more like a waddle under the weight of his pack. 'Just give me a second,' he panted. He was pretty sure the soldier rolled his eyes.

The light was on his face again. 'You should have stayed behind,' said the soldier. 'I'll be able to complete the mission faster without you.'

'Her name,' David growled, 'is Alana.' He didn't like the way the soldier talked about her as if she were an object. 'And anyway, she won't go with you, she doesn't know you.'

'So you keep reminding me,' the soldier said. The light dimmed and he started winding again, the inner mechanism whirring to life as

it generated a weak stream of electricity. 'Keep moving.'

'What are you going to do with her?'

'With who?' The soldier was now walking at-pace, his longer stronger legs confidently finding stable ground with little effort.

'With Alana!' David stumbled ahead, again trying catch up.

The soldier whipped around, the ticking torch hanging limp in his hand.

David could see his eyes, wide but unfocused in the peripheral light. It was too dim to make out the striking emerald green that stood out from his dark skin. 'Well?'

The light fell from his hand, suddenly forgotten but still connected by a tether to his large pack. It swung from side to side, managing to illuminate them, just enough. David tried to speak again, but was shushed immediately. The soldier tilted his head as if to strain his hearing. They waited like that for another long second.

'Put on your mask.'

'I don't hear anything.'

'Mask!' he ordered, as if he was David's superior.

David fumbled at the side of his pack. He unclipped the mask and settled it over his face. Shaking, his hands struggled with the small buckles that secured the mask tight. He could feel the resistance of the almost-spent filter. His first breath had the desired effect, his hands stopped shaking just enough to thread the final buckle and pull it tight.

He looked over to the soldier, whose mask was on. He was busy zipping up his jacket and securing the hood to protect his head. David followed suit. His peripheral vision was completely obscured.

The light had grown so weak that he could no longer see. It remained forgotten as they prepared for the onslaught of Mist. The soldier grabbed his hand and pulled him forward. He took another breath, feeling the seal of the mask tighten as the filter resisted the flow of air. The buzzing of the Mist hit almost without warning. And then it surrounded them, as if it had sprung up from beneath.

David's arm was wrenched as the soldier dragged him more urgently through the narrow laneway of skeleton cars. They bounced off unseen obstacles. He could feel the pressure of the mist against the protective clothing, looking for a chink in the armour. It found one. He felt a sharp sting, it was isolated and small, like getting a jab from the doctor.

He stumbled, but the soldier's arm, almost in anticipation, flexed upwards pulling him to standing before he could hit the ground. They were running, and gasping through clogged filters. David was ready to give up.

There was a loud thud inside his head as his mask bounced off a sudden barrier. A wall. He started to feel along the wall. Taking in another breath, he could feel his filter was completely full. He breathed in as much as he could, scared that if he breathed out, the pressure would break the seal to let the Mist inside. This was his last breath.

He felt further along until his hand gripped something. It was the thin, rounded bar of the wheel that sealed the door. He grabbed it with both hands and twisted hard to the left. It didn't budge. The soldier's hand padded over him again. With a new rush of adrenaline, David grabbed the hand and placed it on the wheel. He was desperate for air. He twisted hard again, and a moment later, he felt the wheel budge as the soldier added his strength. The door gave a little, and then a little more. Like a dam breaking, it jolted and then started to turn freely. They wound it rapidly feeling the suction of the vacuum to the world outside until they fell through.

David hit the ground hard and rolled away from the door.

He heard the angry creaking of the door. A loud bang echoed, signalling that the soldier had locked in the Mist.

Desperate to breathe, he ripped back his hood, reaching for the buckles on his mask. His fingers fumbled. He couldn't find the strap to push it back through the buckle. He dug his fingers under the seal under his chin. Nails digging into his flesh, he tried to pull the mask up. It wouldn't budge.

David's chest burned. Involuntarily, his body tried to draw in breath. He felt the seal on the mask tighten further. His legs kicked in pointless frustration while he struggled for air.

Something heavy pinned his hips to the ground. David looked up through the dirty glass circles of his mask. He could see the soldier's bare torso, the jacket and shirt discarded somewhere between the door and the two of them. He watched as the soldier leaned down with his knife. His head was forced sideways by a strong hand and there was a sharp twinge on his jaw where the strap met the mask.

It felt like coming up for air when he was a kid trying to hold his breath the longest in the pool. There was a flood of clean air and David gasped it in, choking a little against the force with which his lungs demanded he inhale.

The soldier didn't move. He straddled David's hips, keeping him pinned down while his breathing slowed. David looked up at the soldier. His dark skin glistened with sweat that was forming in beads over his broad chest.

'That was close,' his smile wrinkled his emerald green eyes.

With each deep breath, David realised just how alive he felt in that moment. He lifted himself and reached around to press his own sweaty face into the soldier's chest. It was an awkward embrace, his hips still pinned. 'Thank you,' he managed on an exhale.

He felt the soldier lift himself slightly and then there was a gentle push against his shoulders. He'd taken it too far. One of the soldier's hands caught David's chin and he tilted his head up in response. He felt the soldier's lips press against his. Parting his own lips, he kissed back as the soldier's hands reached behind his back and pulled him closer. ❶

Damien O'Meara is an emerging writer living in Melbourne, who writes work in the young adult and speculative genres. He holds a Master of Arts (Writing) from Swinburne University and spends his days working as a communications adviser. Damien is currently working on his debut young adult LGBTI novel.

Milestones

Shirley Burgess from Rosebud has been awarded a silver medal from the 2018 Global eBooks Awards in the Popular Literature category, for her book 'It's A Long Way to Aunty May'. It is available from themoshshop.com.au (search for 'burgess').

John Bartlett has had poetry recently published in 'Porridge Magazine', 'Cordite', 'Orbis International Literary Journal' and 'InDaily'.

Belinda Harrison just published her adult fantasy/romance novel 'Princess of Thermopylae' on Kindle with the paperback version to be released later in the year. This is the first novel in a series of six.

Sarah Lindenmayer published her new book, 'Debt of Honour', in September. It's a narrative history of the untold true story of an Anzac hero who rescues the Assyrian people from genocide in 1918.

The book was launched at the Shrine of Remembrance with the support of Legacy Australia and is now available in book shops and online.

Deborah Sheldon's latest work, the noir-horror novel, 'Contribution', was released in September by IFWG Publishing Australia: deborahsheldon.wordpress.com/contribution/

Cameron Macintosh has had the third book in his children's sci-fi series, 'Max Booth Future Sleuth', published by Big Sky Publishing. It's called 'Stamp Safari', and is illustrated by Dave Atze. More info at bigskypublishing.com.au/books/max-booth-future-sleuth-book-3

Coral Waight's book, 'The Edge of the World: Next Stop Cape Horn', previously only in ebook form, is now in print. The book describes Coral's four solo road trips around Tasmania. It's the first of three books in her travel memoir series, 'Planning to the Nth', and is now available in most online book stores. Coral's short story, 'Silence', has been included in the American online publication, 'Flash Fiction Magazine'.

Gab Gardner won the 2018 Stringybark Short Story Award - \$500 and the anthology was named after her story 'Timber!'

Classifieds

Manuscript Feedback

Stuck at the beginning, middle or end of your draft? Need an extra eye on your work?

Receive a thorough read-through and feedback session to get your writing moving again! All genres. SMS now for free 15-min phone consultation from writing mentor Jan Cornell: 0415921303. writersjourney.com.au

Writing Consultant/Editor

Are you at a stand-off with your fiction or non-fiction writing project, and need personalised professional help? I offer appraisals and editing advice. I also proofread manuscripts before submission to publishers or self-publishing. Please contact me with your writing needs and I will reply within 24 hours: denisemtaylor.com.au/contact

The Memoir Circle

The Memoir Circle is an online community dedicated to memoir writing. You can share writing with other members and talk to people about your writing online. Check out my Facebook page 'The Memoir Circle'.

International Day of Failure with Victor Frankenstein and Dr Jekyll

Using the famous creations of Mary Shelley and Robert Louis Stevenson, 'Conversations of Regret' unpack what it means to fail – and fail big.

What do Victor Frankenstein and Dr Jekyll have in common? Both are men of science who stuffed up. Join me for a facilitated discussion of just how.

Free event; bookings essential. 13 October, 2.30-4.30pm, Ross House, Melbourne.

dangerousmeredith.com.au

Send your milestone or classified to editor@writersvictoria.org.au

Nitpicker [from page 15]:

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Comps and Opps

2018 Deborah Cass Prize

Early career writers of migrant background are invited to apply for the 2018 Deborah Cass prize. The winner will receive a cash prize of \$3000 plus a three-month mentorship with an established writer. On completion, the winning manuscript will be presented to Black Inc. Three of Australia's leading writers, Christos Tsiolkas, Nyadol Nyuon and Tony Ayres, are the judges of the prize in 2018.

Entries close 2 Oct.

writersvictoria.org.au/calendars/opportunities-competitions/2018-deborah-cass-prize

2018 Hazel Rowley Fellowship

Applications for the 2018 Hazel Rowley Literary Fellowship are now open.

Now in its eighth year, the Fellowship commemorates the life, ideas and writing of Hazel Rowley (1951–2011) and awards \$15,000 to an emerging or established Australian writer to support research and development of a new biographical work.

The Fellowship is open to Australian writers of biography but can also extend to include a writer working on an aspect of cultural or social history. It may be used to fund research or travel, to develop a new proposal, or to progress a manuscript for submission to potential publishers.

Judges will be looking for applicants who demonstrate excellence in the quality of their work, courage in their choice of project, and a passionate engagement with the world of ideas and the way that people live their lives. The subject of the biography needs to be someone who made a demonstrable contribution to society.

Entries close 16 Nov.

writersvictoria.org.au/calendars/opportunities-competitions

2019 KYD New Critic Award

Entries are now open for the 2019 KYD New Critic Award! Now in its third year, this award will assist the vocational development of an early-career critic.

In 2019, the New Critic Award is once again open to critics working in all fields of arts and culture (books, film, television, theatre, music, dance, performance, visual arts, etc).

The winner will receive a total of \$3000 prize money, consisting of a \$1000 cash prize and a regular paid column (5 long-form articles) in 2019, working closely with KYD editorial staff. Two runners up will each have the opportunity to publish one of their pitch proposals in KYD in 2019 (paid at KYD's standard contributor rate).

To read the guidelines and to make a submission, go to the submissions page.

Entries close 2 Nov.

killyourdarlings.com.au

Odyssey House Short Story Competition

This competition is open to writers of all ages and experience.

Each submission must be no more than 1500 words and follow the theme 'Reflection'. It will need to make a reference to alcohol and/or drugs. There is a limit of three entries per person, and the entry fee is \$10 per story. The money raised from this competition will go towards the work of Odyssey House Victoria.

First prize is \$1000 and a one year membership to Writers Victoria.

Entries close 2 Nov.

odyssey.org.au/reflection/

Find more comps and opps at:
writersvictoria.org.au/calendars/opportunities-competitions

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.

In-person

Travelling in Time:

Writing History

with [Sophie Cunningham](#)

How do you balance past and present in your work? This course, a follow-on from last year's 'Writing History', will develop ideas of history as character and the importance of getting voice right – both your own voice and the voices from the past. There will be an emphasis on writing exercises to explore these ideas, and on the writers sharing their work when they feel comfortable.

When: Tuesdays 2, 9, 23 and 30 October, 6-9pm

Member price: \$320/\$360

Non-member price: \$480

Level: Emerging, established

Reading for Writers

with [Paddy O'Reilly](#) and [Ellen van Neerven](#)

Join Ellen van Neerven for a discussion of 'Future Home of the Living God' by Louise Erdrich, the third instalment in our Reading for Writers series, a book club curated by Paddy O'Reilly. Evolution has gone into reverse, birth rates are dropping and fertile women are held prisoner – a horribly plausible story about human survival.

When: Wednesday 3 October, 6-8pm

Member price: \$35/\$45

Non-member price: \$60

Level: All

16 Rules for Writing Memoir

with [Sarah Vincent](#)

This workshop will give you a practical checklist of 16 ways to ensure your memoir writing is powerful and relevant.

Some of the 16 'rules' are obvious and well known, some are subtle and complex, but all of them will give you a sound toolkit to make you a better memoir writer. Rules are often made to be broken, but these 16 guides make for great memoir writing – ignore them at your peril! All 16 can be applied to short memoir pieces or full-length memoirs.

When: Saturday 6 October, 10am-4pm

Member price: \$135/\$145

Non-member price: \$195

Level: Early, emerging

Pitching

with [Melanie Ostell](#)

A pitch is not a synopsis, but a good synopsis will help your pitch. This course covers both. Please note that participants must have completed at least a first draft of a manuscript to attend this workshop.

When: Saturdays 6 and 20 October, 10am-4pm

Member price: \$270/\$290

Non-member price: \$400

Level: Emerging

Writing a Non-Boring Family History or Memoir

with [Hazel Edwards](#)

In this fun and informative workshop, you will learn how to master family history and memoir writing, one of the biggest hobbies worldwide. Why are you writing it? Who is your prospective reader? How can you craft the facts for them to access easily? This workshop is relevant for those writing autobiographies, memoirs and family history. Please note this workshop is part of The Victorian Seniors Festival 2018. You must be 60 or over to attend.

When: Friday 12 October, 11am-12.30pm

All (seniors only): \$20

Level: All

Rewilding the Short Story

with [Roanna Gonsalves](#)

Inspired by the techniques of writers from different storytelling cultures across the world, this workshop will till the terrain of the short story and play with language and structure. We will aim to build writerly toolkits to help us take apart some well-known stories, find out what makes them work and then use them to rewild our own stories in new and interesting ways. Come prepared to do lots of writing.

When: Saturday 13 October, 10am-4pm

Member price: \$135/\$145

Non-member price: \$195

Level: Emerging

Disability Binaries in Writing
with [Micheline Lee](#)

Join Micheline Lee to explore disability binaries like the tragic/inspirational stereotype of disabled people, and what disability can actually help writers bring to the page. This half-day workshop is an interactive and supportive space to explore how our experiences of disabilities enrich our writing, and how we as writers respond to the stereotypes and biases against disability.

When: Sunday 14 October, 11am-2pm
Member price: \$18/\$25
Non-member price: \$40
Level: All

Start Writing on Any Project
with [Writers Victoria](#)

Have an idea for a writing project, but not sure about the next steps? Whether your project is fiction or non-fiction, this session for writers beginning a new project will give you tips and tools to start writing – and keep going once you start.

When: Thursday 18 October, 11am-12.30pm
Member price: FREE
Non-member price: \$15
Level: All

Ask... A Debut Novelist
with [Kate Mildenhall](#) and [Katherine Collette](#)

About to put your book out into the world? Done it recently? Planning on it happening in the future? Come along to hear two debut novelists talk about their very different experiences and what they've learnt talking to other writers about the debut rollercoaster on their podcast *The First Time*. They'll share practical advice

on navigating the logistics and all the emotions, and will answer your burning questions about writing, publishing and promoting your first book.

When: Thursday 25 October, 6-7.30pm
Member price: \$18/\$25
Non-member price: \$40
Level: All

Your Perfect Beginning
with [Eli Glasman](#)

Stuck at the start? Learn how to write the perfect opening to your book. In this workshop, you'll discover how to introduce characters, open chapters, hook your reader and set up your plot through a series of reading and writing exercises. Create great beginnings for your short, or long, fiction of all genres.

When: Saturday 27 October, 10am-4pm
Member price: \$135/\$145
Non-member price: \$195
Level: Early

Reading for Writers
with [Paddy O'Reilly](#) and [Lucy Treloar](#)

Join Lucy Treloar to discuss 'Housekeeping' by Marilynne Robinson, the fourth instalment in our Reading for Writers series, a book club for writers curated by Paddy O'Reilly. 'Housekeeping' is the story of Ruth and Lucille, orphans growing up in the desolate town of Fingerbone, Idaho, who find themselves in the care of their aunt, Sylvie, an enigmatic drifter. Steeped in the bleak and icy landscape around them, the girls' struggle towards adulthood is powerfully depicted in this novel about loss, loneliness and transience.

When: Wednesday 7 November, 6-8pm
Member price: \$35/\$45
Non-member price: \$60
Level: All

Being a Bilingual Writer
with [Gabriella Muñoz](#)

Why do writers choose to call home a language that is not their native tongue? What triggers the need to tell stories in different languages? Do we choose the language we write in or does it choose us? Join Digital Writer in Residence Gabriella Muñoz to discuss, in a supportive environment, being a bilingual writer.

When: Saturday 10 November, 10am-1pm
Member price: \$18/\$25
Non-member price: \$40
Level: All

Generating Sparks in Fiction
with [Steven Amsterdam](#)

We read fiction, paradoxically, for the moments that feel true. How can we slip them into our tightly wound stories? Our workshop will be a search party for just such sparks. We will use exercises to free up our narrators, characters and their worlds. Through brave workshoping and discussion, you will be able to breathe more life into your fiction. Please bring a very short story or an extract from your trove (approximately 500 words). We will do CPR on it.

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

Word + Image: Hybrid Texts
with [Bella Li](#)

From William Blake's 'Songs of Innocence and Experience' to Andre Breton's 'Nadja' and WG Sebald's 'Austerlitz', there is a rich tradition of texts that bridge the divide between the literary and visual arts. Through discussion, the relationship between word and image, and examples of hybrid texts that combine the two forms, as well as practical workshop exercises, students will learn how to develop and enrich their own writing practice through active engagement with the visual arts.

When: Sunday 11 November,
10am-4pm

Member price: \$135/\$145

Non-member price: \$195

Level: Emerging

Writing Younger Characters
with [Julia Prendergast](#)

Younger adult voices can be compelling, raw and uninhibited. In this workshop, we will explore strategies for drawing the reader into the experiential world of your story. Through examples and exercises, we examine younger perspectives, focusing on the way ideas and experiences are measured in an emotionally intuitive way. Meaning is often foregrounded through raw insights and the power of associative imagery. We will evaluate methods for fine-tuning voice and foregrounding the idiosyncratic lens of your characters.

When: Sunday 11 November,
10am-4pm

Member price: \$135/\$145

Non-member price: \$195

Level: Emerging

Indigenous Place Intensive
with [Claire G Coleman](#)

In this intensive two-day writing workshop, you will discover how getting out into the landscape and learning Indigenous understandings of place will help you better write and describe Australia, no matter what genre you are working in. Day one (Thursday) will include Cultural Awareness Training delivered by the Koorie Heritage Trust, exploring the culture, identity and history of Australia's First Nations pre- and post-colonisation. Day two (Friday) will be a practical workshop with Wirlomin Noongar writer Claire G Coleman at Writers Victoria.

Where and when:

Thursday 15 November,
9.15am-4pm at the Koorie
Heritage Trust, Levels 1 & 3,
The Yarra Building Federation
Square Cnr Swanston &
Flinders Streets, Melbourne;

Friday 16 November, 10am-4pm
at Writers Victoria, 176 Little
Lonsdale Street, Melbourne

Member price: \$270/\$290

Non-member price: \$400

Level: Emerging, established

Ask... About YA Publishing
with [Shivaun Plozza](#) and
[Michelle Madden](#)

Find out how to navigate the YA publishing space, with pro-tips from author Shivaun Plozza and publisher Michelle Madden. Presented in partnership with The YA Room.

When: Thursday 15 November,
6-7.30pm

Member price: \$18/\$25

Non-member price: \$40

Level: All

Structural Editing for Writers
with [Laurel Cohn](#)

Most writers know their manuscript will require a structural edit, but have little understanding of what this entails. This workshop explains structural editing, what role it plays in manuscript development, how to go about it and how to survive it. Learn strategies and tools to guide writers through the process and explore the challenges that underlie critical engagement with your work. Suitable for writers of fiction and narrative non-fiction who have a completed manuscript draft.

When: Sunday 25 November,
10am-4pm

Member price: \$135/\$145

Non-member price: \$195

Level: Emerging

Regional

Murray Mallee Writers – Places of the Heart (Swan Hill) with [Lyndel Caffrey](#).

What is the geography of your fictional (or non-fictional) world? In this workshop, we'll explore how 'real' the backdrop of our story should be and practise techniques designed to draw the reader deeper into our writing world.

Where: Swan Hill
Neighbourhood House, 98-100 Gray St, Swan Hill
When: Thursday 11 October, 6-8pm
Price: \$30
Level: All

Write-ability: Own Voices – Why Writing Matters Forum (Wodonga) with [Jax Jacki Brown](#).

Explore how language, writing and telling our own stories help transform ways of thinking about the self, disability and community. Developed by people with disability, the forum also provides professional development on the Social Model of Disability and best-practice language for organisations.

Where: The Cube Wodonga, 118 Hovell St, Wodonga
When: Wednesday 17 October, 11am-4pm
Price: FREE
Level: All

The Writing Voice (Linton) with [Paddy O'Reilly](#).

Great writing shows us the world in a new way, using language and imagery to surprise and engage all our senses. This workshop will focus on finding the story voice through exploring the sensuousness of writing. We'll talk about how voice is

conjured on the page. We'll bring those sensations to the page in writing exercises that exploit the infinite possibilities of the sentence to give the writing a powerful and distinctive voice.

Where: The Known World Bookshop, 64 Sussex St, Linton
When: Saturday 20 October, 10am-1pm
Member price: \$35/\$40
Non-member price: \$65
Level: All

Hidden Stories, Emerging Knowledge (Lake Tyers) with [Jan Wositzky](#) and [Lynne Kelly](#).

Join storyteller Jan Wositzky, writer and academic Lynne Kelly, Elders and contemporary story-makers for the very special Stories of Influence @ Lake Tyers. Gain insight into why sharing hidden stories is so important in reclaiming the vibrancy of our lives and regions.

Where: Lake Tyers Hall, Lake Tyers, Gippsland
When: Saturday 20 and Sunday 21 October, 10am-12pm
Price: Weekend Pass \$50; see online for more information
Level: All

The Memory Code in Practice (Port Fairy) with [Lynne Kelly](#).

Unpack the hidden history of traditional memory methods. Learn how to use the landscape and portable decorated objects as memory devices, helping develop a deep appreciation for the mnemonic skills of Indigenous cultures and recognition of why knowledge restrictions were essential for information accuracy and survival.

Where: Lake Tyers Hall, Lake Tyers, Gippsland
When: Sunday 21 October, 11am-12.30pm
Price: Weekend Pass \$50; see online for more information
Level: Early, emerging

Murray Mallee Writers – Elements of Storytelling (Swan Hill) with [Cate Kennedy](#).

In this fun and engaging three-hour workshop, Cate will cover ways to create compelling characters, devise situations and plots we care about, and use description, dialogue and imagery to bring it all to life.

Where: Swan Hill
Neighbourhood House, 98-100 Gray St, Swan Hill
When: Saturday 27 October, 10am-1pm
Price: \$30
Level: All

Murray Mallee Writers – Heroes, Villains and Lovable Rogues (Swan Hill) with [Lyndel Caffrey](#).

If your story is a road trip, who will you bring along for the ride, and who might you meet along the way? Just as importantly, who will you leave behind? In this workshop on character and dialogue, we'll examine how the words and actions of protagonists, antagonists, allies and mentors can drive your story and keep your readers turning the pages.

Where: Swan Hill
Neighbourhood House, 98-100 Gray St, Swan Hill
When: Sunday 11 November, 2-5pm
Price: \$30
Level: All

Membership Form

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*We will not supply or sell your information to a third party.

Suburb

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Postcode State

Gender Female Male Other

Date of birth (optional) / /

At what stage of writing are you?

Early (just begun) Emerging (some publication) Established (published a full-length work)

What do you write, or what would you like to write?

Academic Crime Literary fiction Radio Web content
 Biography/Memoir Essays/Reviews Lyrics Romance Young adult
 Blog Family history Non-fiction Screenwriting
 Business/Technical Feature writing Playwriting Short stories Other
 Childrens Graphic novels Poetry Speculative fiction
 Copywriting Journalism Popular fiction Travel

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Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander Person with Disability

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Total payable \$ Name Signed

Find out more about what it means to be part of an association on our website at <http://bit.ly/1MQAcQt>

Get Real.



3 days, 76 writers, 45 sessions. Time to get real.

Visit wordforwordfestival.com.au for full program details and to purchase your tickets. Discounted Early Bird tickets on sale until 5pm Friday 19 October 2018.

Geelong Library & Heritage Centre
16-18 November 2018

