

The Victorian Writer

Jun-Jul 2017

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The Kit Out

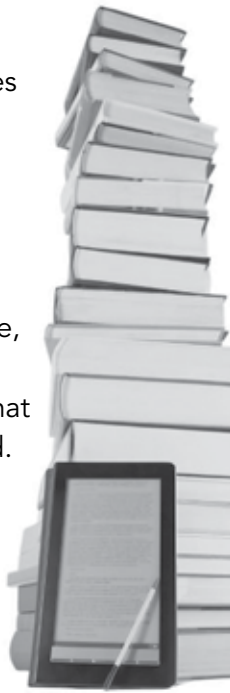


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novel, to state with precision what is and what is not
working and to comment with perception on style.*

Paula Chatfield

*I have no hesitation in saying that Leonie Tyle
is one of Australia's best editors.*

Bill Condon



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Editorial

Despite the happy distraction of various writers festivals, winter is the perfect time of year to retreat to your warm, cosy work-in-progress. In this issue, we aim to kit you out with all you'll need to weather the next few months of writing.

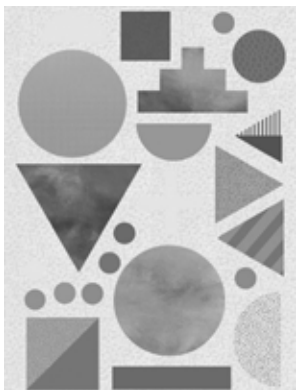
The word was first and Alex Fairhill kicks things off with a comprehensive, no-nonsense writers' glossary; Arnold Zable follows the story; Cory Zaroni gets 'appy with the latest digital writing tools and programs; and agent extraordinaire Jacinta di Mase answers the questions she's most often asked by us writers.

We have an introduction to indie publishing by Transit Lounge's Barry Scott; Sandi Wallace has advice for aspiring series writers; Wendy J Dunn has some tips on writing historical fiction on the cheap; and to get those creative juices flowing we have the go-to writing exercises of some of our favourite writers: Eliza Henry-Jones, Sofie Laguna, Eli Glasman, Sarah Vincent, Angela Savage, Carmel Bird and Max Barry.

Also in this issue, new writing by our members Gabrielle Gardner, Barry Revill and Rachel Morrison-Day. If you have a short piece of fiction or non-fiction you'd like to see published, our members' section is currently open for submission. We publish work by writers at all stages and across all genres. Guidelines and forthcoming themes can be found at writersvictoria.org.au/resources/the-victorian-writer.

Rug up, hunker down and read on! 📖

Emma Cayley, Editor



Cover Artist: Beci Orpin
'Space and Time'
jackywinter.com/artists/beci-orpin

Acknowledgement

The Writers Victoria office is situated on the traditional lands of the Kulin Nation.

The background of the poster is a grayscale illustration of a grand, classical-style hall with high ceilings and columns. In the foreground, there is a large, detailed rose on the left and a complex, mechanical-looking structure on the right. The text is overlaid in a clean, sans-serif font.

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emergingwritersfestival.org.au

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Ask an ALAA Agent

What Does an Agent Do?

ALAA agent Jacinta di Mase answers some common questions about literary agents.

What does a literary agent do?

A literary agent is a writer's representative in the commercial world: their manager, their business representative, protector of their copyright, the one who weighs in on the side of the author/illustrator in all dealings. An agent represents an author/illustrator in all commercial dealings with publishers, film producers, translations rights and other subsidiary rights such as audio, film and television, dramatic, enhanced e-book and interactive digital adaptations of works are also actively pursued by an agent.

An agent is familiar with and keeps abreast of changes in:

- copyright and contract law
- general industry practices and trends
- contractual practices of Australian publishers
- staff in publishing and related industries.

Why should a writer consider taking on an agent?

All creative people have agents – cabaret stars, opera singers, musicians, comedians, radio announcers, film directors, cinematographers, stage and set designers, costume designers, cartoonists... the list is endless – so why would it be otherwise for writers and illustrators?

Now perhaps more than ever a writer or illustrator needs an agent. Publishing is in a constant state of flux with new technologies presenting many radical changes to old publishing models. Editors leave publishing houses; publishing houses are sold, or taken

over, or sometimes abandoned. A writer needs a buffer to protect them during times of change. An agent knows the publishing industry and can offer this protection. Other professionals, such as lawyers, can help writers with contracts and legal issues, but an agent is in the industry at the ground level; an agent is there for the writer.

How should a writer approach an agent?

Look up a suitable agent from the list provided here or from the Australian Writers' Marketplace website and then check their submission guidelines before making contact. If these guidelines are not available on their website, phone or email them according to their stated preference. Some agents prefer you to make a phone call first; others prefer email.

If an agent wants to look at your writing, they will generally ask you to send in an initial submission by email or post, according to their guidelines. They usually do not want to see the whole work at first. [Please note: if sending hard copies, send copies and not the originals. Always keep the originals in a safe place. Agents cannot be responsible for loss of material.]

Also, keep an eye out for writers festivals and other similar events, where agents often have a range of sessions (for instance, I'll be at the Emerging Writers' Festival this month). That way, you can hear from an agent first-hand and gain a better understanding of what sort of writers they represent. 📞

ALAA Agents

Australian Literary Management
austlit.com

The Authors' Agent
theauthorsagent.com.au

Camerons
camerons.dreamhosters.com

Curtis Brown
curtisbrown.com.au

Drummond Agency
drummondagency.com.au

Golvan Arts Management
golvanarts.com.au

HLA Management
hlamgt.com.au

HMMG Pty Ltd
harrymiller.com.au

Jacinta di Mase Management
jacintadimase.com.au

Jenny Darling & Associates
jennydarling.com.au

Margaret Connolly & Associates
margaretconnolly.com.au

Margaret Kennedy Agency
margaretkennedyagency.com

The Naher Agency
naher.com.au

Rick Raftos Management
rickraftosmanagement.com.au

Jacinta di Mase is Director of Jacinta di Mase Management and President of the Australian Literary Agents' Association (ALAA).

Jacinta di Mase Management
jacintadimase.com.au

Australian Literary Agents' Association:
austlitagentsassoc.com

Nitpicker

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



CC image courtesy of John Bugg on Flickr.

1. Jonelle had been approached by a blustery former politician to ghostwrite (an autobiography of his life/his autobiography).
2. They were to meet for the first time at the (oldest/older) Italian cafe in Melbourne's CBD.
3. Their purpose was to (explicitly determine/determine explicitly) the terms of the arrangement.
4. After two lattes, an (hours/hour's) wait and no word from the prospective author, Jonelle left.
5. When an unapologetic text finally arrived days later, Jonelle decided that (whoever/whomever) took on that job would need the patience of a saint.

Answers on page 33

Write Words

Forget all that literary terminology, Alex Fairhill has created a glossary for the street-smart writer.

advance A sum of money that may be offered to an author signing a contract with a publisher. Yes – ‘may’. Advances are not always offered and the author must earn more than that amount from sales before earning royalties.

ARC abr. Advanced reader’s/reading copy. Also known as an ‘uncorrected proof’. Copies of this small pre-publication print run are sent to reviewers and bookstores before the official release. Not to be confused with a character arc – the character’s change in, well, character from the start to finish of a narrative.

ASA abr. Australian Society of Authors. A national professional association for writers and illustrators, providing advocacy and advice. See asauthors.org.

beta reader A non-professional person who reads a work at any stage of its development and provides feedback to the author.

bookshop A retail outlet where writers can research their intended publishing house, keep up-to-date with what’s being published and purchased, and ask staff about what readers are loving. Warning: Can cause unplanned TBR increase.

bum glue An imaginary substance that binds butt to chair to enable the act of writing.

competition An excellent way to hone your craft and bring your work to the attention of industry professionals. Competitions can be themed, provide feedback, or offer winners and selected entrants publication. Read the fine print carefully for traps, such as entering the competition meaning you sign copyright of your work over to the organisers.

Copyright Agency aka CAL (Copyright Agency Limited). The body that oversees, collects and distributes copyright payments in Australia. Writers can register with CAL to receive any copyright payments they may earn. See copyright.com.au for more information.

DDS abr. Discount department stores. Retailers such as Big W, Target and Kmart, where books are sold at heavily discounted prices.

deadline A set time or date by which a work or section of work must be completed. Historically named because any journalist who did not meet the deadline was fed into the printing press by the editor. Few survived.

dictionary A book of words in alphabetical order. Keep within reach and consult often. Online and specialist, such as medical, dictionaries are also available.

DLR abr. Digital Lending Right. While creators and publishers receive payments to compensate for free multiple uses of their books in libraries (see ELR), there is no such payment made for ebooks and audiobooks. The ASA is campaigning for lending rights to be extended to DLRs.

draft The early or preliminary versions of a completed piece of writing. A first draft should never be the last draft. Not to be confused with draught: the gust of air that comes through the hole in your garret floor.

editing, copy The second stage of editing. In this close edit, words are examined for accuracy, consistency, ambiguities, and general use of language and its effect within the text.



editing, structural or developmental The act of reading a piece of writing looking at the 'big picture', including plot, themes, characters, pace, structure, flow and content. This is the first stage of editing and identifies strengths, weaknesses and plot holes before the author rewrites the text.

elevator pitch A short, sharp description of your work that's no longer than a short elevator trip. For example, 'A boy discovers he's a wizard and must defeat the lord of dark magic to save both the magic and non-magic worlds.'

ELR and PLR abr. Educational Lending Right; Public Lending Right. Administered by the Department of Communications and the Arts, these payments are made to creators and publishers to compensate for free multiple uses of their work for books (excluding material such as audio and ebooks) held in school, TAFE and university libraries (ELRs) and public libraries (PLRs). Payments are based on the number of copies of each title found in a sample survey of the respective libraries. See also DLR.

exercise Raises the heartrate in a manner other than reading an action-packed book while lying on the couch. Examples include walking, running, swimming and team sports. Stops the build-up of excess bum glue and often provides a fresh perspective on your work. A writing exercise is a challenge within set parameters, such as free writing for five minutes, designed to flex the writing muscles.

Both physical and writing exercise is useful in countering writers block.

fiction A work that's 'made up', although can contain real people, places or events.

genre A style of writing with its own set of conventions, such as crime, contemporary, historical fiction, romance, poetry, steampunk or science fiction.

guideline A friendly sounding word used in terms such as 'competition guidelines' or 'submission guidelines' and establishing elements including line spacing and font type and size, or whether the organisation is open to submissions. These are more drill sergeants than guides and should be followed to the letter. Many competition organisers and publishers use guidelines to test a writer's capacity to follow directions, and will automatically reject an entry or submission that does not follow the guidelines.

house style Trackies and a hoodie, pyjamas, or undies and a T-shirt – whatever you feel comfortable wearing while you write. Handy tip: some 'writing at home' clothes are not appropriate for out of the house (see pantsing). Also the spelling, grammar and punctuation conventions specific to a publishing house or publication, such as a magazine or website.

ISBN abr. International Standard Book Number. A unique identifying number that allows a book to be tracked, ordered and catalogued by publishers, distributors retailers and libraries.

library Encourages the borrowing of books and other material. An excellent resource for researching current and previous releases, and great when you're on a budget. Another source of inspiration. Warning: May result in unplanned TBR increase.

manuscript The electronic or hardcopy version of an intended book. Manuscripts sent to publishers cold are 'unsolicited' (see slush pile) while those that have been requested are 'solicited'.

MC abr. Main character. May or may not lead the festivities at a wedding, public event or school dance.

non-fiction A work based in fact, such as how-to guides and textbooks.

non-fiction, creative A factually accurate narrative told in a literary style, or fact that reads like fiction. This is not to be confused with a 'fictionalisation' of a true event.

pantsing A 'pantser' writes by the seat of her pants, off-the-cuff, without planning or plotting while remembering to put pants on before leaving the house.

parallel importation Current parallel importation rules (PIRs) mean Australian retailers can only purchase bulk copies of a title from the Australian publisher. The Productivity Commission last year recommended that PIRs on books be lifted, which would allow Australian retailers to bulk buy titles from overseas publishers. While this could result in lower book prices for consumers, there are concerns the Australian market would be flooded with overseas titles, reducing publication opportunities for Australian authors and stories. The industry's Books Create campaign spoke out against lifting PIRs, and many political parties have declared their opposition to the changes. See bookscreateaustralia.com.au for more on the industry's campaign against PIRs, recommended changes to copyright periods and 'fair use' provisions.

plotting The act of planning and/or listing the plot points of a narrative before starting to write. Also planning the food, venue and drinks required at your book launch, if you ever get the book finished. A 'plotter' is the opposite of a 'pantser'.

POD abr. Print on demand. Available through several websites, POD enables the printing of

small runs of books as needed. The cost per unit is higher than larger print runs. Ideal for small or niche projects such as family histories.

POV abr. Point of view. The perspective through which a story is told, such as a single or various characters or omniscient narrator.

procrastination The prolonged ability to spend time doing anything other than writing, while knowing that you need to do the writing. See social media.

proofreading The final stage of editing, following a structural and copy edit, in which the completed work is examined for typos, design and formatting inconsistencies.

publishing, electronic The publication of a work in an electronic format, such as an ebook.

publishing, partnership The publisher offers a 'partnership' whereby the author pays money, the publisher supplies the labour needed to publish a book and profits are split between the two parties. Read these offers and contracts carefully. Traps can include distribution being left to the author, no marketing or back-end support, or non-transparent sales figures and financial data.

publishing, self The author also takes on the role of a traditional publisher, including organising and paying for editing, cover and page design, printing, marketing and distribution of a work, either in print or electronic format.

publishing, traditional The author is contracted to and works with a publishing house to produce a work, may receive an advance, and is paid royalties based on sales. The publishing house arranges and pays for the editing, design, marketing and distribution of the work.

query A query is not a submission. It is a brief approach to a publisher in which you explain your work and ask if they'd like to see more. Many publishers who are closed to submissions may be open to queries (see guidelines.) Also any statement in response to you telling someone you're a writer, usually delivered with a quizzical head tilt, including 'Is that a thing?' and 'I could knock off a novel in a weekend. Why can't you?'

reading A key part of writing that helps you develop your craft, provides inspiration and supports the industry.

remaindered Publications that are unsold after a period of time are 'remaindered'. The publisher will sell the remaining copies cheaply, often to cut-price bookstores. There are no royalties earned on remaindered books.

royalties A royalty is the percentage of the recommended retail price that the author earns on each book sold. Ebooks have higher royalties than print but sell for less. If the author has an agent, the agent then takes a percentage of the author's earnings. An advance is paid against royalties, which means an author who receives a \$2000 advance will start receiving royalty cheques once their royalties top \$2000.

shelfie A photo of your bookshelf, or a photo of a book you've written on a bookshelf, posted to social media.

slush pile The mythical repository of all unsolicited manuscripts sent to publishers or agents. These documents clog up desks and computer servers with subsequently published manuscripts the literary equivalent of a needle in a haystack.

social media Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr and Snapchat are among many social media platforms that can be a lifeline or a black hole. Social media (alongside websites and blogs) can be invaluable for building your profile as a writer, linking you to the wider writing community, and learning about publishing opportunities. On the downside, did you see the gif with the red panda that was scared of a rock? Give me a minute, I'll send it to you... See procrastination.

spellcheck A word processing tool that allows righters to cheque spelling in there documents. Knot all ways write.

structure The way in which a narrative is constructed, e.g. three-act structure, linear or circular.

submission A package of work sent to a publisher or agent with the aim of gaining publication or representation. Depending on the guidelines, a submission could include a cover letter, author bio, the first three chapters, entire manuscript, short synopsis, long synopsis or any combination of the above. DO NOT send chocolate, include glitter or dancing emojis or ignore the submission guidelines.

submissions, multiple When you send more than one piece of work to the same organisation, such as a magazine. Check submission guidelines – some allow this, some don't.

submission, simultaneous When you send the same piece of work to more than one organisation; that is, the same manuscript to several different publishers or agents. Always inform the recipients if it is a simultaneous submission, and if it is accepted, inform the other parties that it's no longer available.

synopsis A description of your work's plot submitted to publishers and agents, who may ask for anything from a few paragraphs to several pages. Must give away the ending. Warning: Penning synopses is one of the most hated tasks in writing and may lead to prolonged procrastination.

TBR abr. To be read pile. Can be physical books, ebooks or a list. Once started, your TBR will continue to grow, no matter how many books you read, eventually taking over your life if not regularly reviewed.

tense The state of any writer on deadline, awaiting a reply after submitting a manuscript, who's had too much coffee or not enough wine.

thesaurus A helpful, handy tome, volume or publication in which to search, seek or fossick for alternative words or replacements. Also a useful source for looking up synonyms.

WIP abr. Work in progress.

workshop noun: A gathering at which interested parties learn an aspect of writing craft or business, led by an experienced tutor.

workshop verb: To discuss a piece of work and talk over problems with like-minded people in a supportive and constructive manner.

writers block I'm drawing a blank here.

WV abr. Writers Victoria. If you're reading this article, you're probably already a member. If you're not, sign up now at writersvictoria.org.au. 📧

Alex Fairhill is an emerging author for children and young adults and WV's Write-ability Goes Regional and Online Local Mentor for the Central Highlands.

The Art of Story

Arnold Zable on letting a story take you where it wants you to go.

Story is an ancient art form. They stood by the campfire, the early storytellers, and gave shape to their experiences, and in doing this, they gave voice to the collective. The storyteller acquired their art through practice. Their tales took shape as they worked at them. They found the best ways to tell their stories by standing in front of an audience and seeing what worked through trial and error.

I am often asked 'What is the most important thing you have learnt in years of creating stories?' My answer is: follow the story. Write that first line, that first paragraph or chapter, and allow the story to lead you, rather than trying to control it. The creation of a story is a fluid process. The structure, the tone, the rhythm, the plot, all arise out of the doing.

I have applied this process across genres, in both fiction and non-fiction, to novels and short stories, memoir and biography. Once I write that opening, the journey begins – and the journey has invariably taken me to unexpected places.

Take, for instance, my most recent book, 'The Fighter'. I set out to explore the lives of the champion boxers, the legendary Nissen twins. I sensed there were many potential threads in this tale. However, stories are as much about what is left out, as about what is included. Early on, I decided to initially focus on Henry Nissen – the bullied, self-styled loser from immigrant Carlton who rose so high in the boxing ranks, he was offered a world title fight.

I was drawn to his story for several reasons. Apart from the archetypal tale of his apparent triumphs, Henry spent forty years working on the streets on behalf of the disaffected, outsiders, street kids and those lower on the socioeconomic ladder. And after all this, he

worked on the docks. The story spanned both past and present. I knew also that the fate of his immigrant mother, Sonia was potentially a major thread in the story.

What sealed it for me was writing that first line: 'So it's come to this, sixty-seven years old and he works on the docks.' Then I was truly on the way. The story began to evolve and take shape. I cannot emphasise this enough – get going, put pen to paper, put finger to the keyboard. And do this sooner, rather than later. The beginning can always be changed, but without plunging into it, nothing will happen.

I began to literally follow Henry around town. He drove a yellow Hyundai. The car itself became a character. It led me to unexpected places, to many worlds in contemporary Melbourne – the wharves, the Seafarers mission, Crown Casino on boxing-hall-of-fame nights, fight-nights in the Pavilion, opposite the Flemington high-rises, and to the old bluestone Spiritualist church in the city, to the magistrates courts and rooming houses, the Gatwick Hotel and the Port Diner café off Footscray Road servicing truckies and wharfies. And eventually, it led me back to the streets of post-war Carlton, and to the tiny cottage the Nissens lived in, and the backyard gym they trained in.

And it led me to Sandra, Henry's youngest sister, who, more than any other sibling, shed light on their mother's tragic past, and her descent into madness. This was the unexpected twist that came from following the story. A narrative that began in the masculine worlds of the docks and the boxing fraternity, led me to a mother-daughter relationship and to the mental homes where Sonia was incarcerated. It led me also to Sonia's fight

to be a mother, her pre-war experiences in Ukraine. And to her love for her children, her strengths and hidden talents.

It led me also to the neighbourhood mothers, who looked out for the twins, who could see they were hurting. Late in the process, as the book was about to go to the printers, I found my unexpected dedication: 'to the mothers of the neighbourhood'.

In every story that I've crafted, there has always been two interconnected challenges: What is the story? And, what is the best way to tell it? Fiction or non-fiction? Memoir or novel? Short story or feature?

Often it could have gone either way. The difference between fiction and non-fiction is not so distinct. Especially if we turn to the root meaning of the word, 'fictio', which means to shape, or to make. Indeed, every story we write or tell is shaped. The author must eventually decide what to leave in, and leave out – how many threads they can allow themselves to weave.

Usually the novel and the memoir allow for many threads, while the short story is more restricted. But these limitations can, paradoxically, allow depth, as we see in the works of the great short story writers, such as Anton Chekov, Alistair McLeod and Alice Munro.

At the heart of both fiction and creative non-fiction is the art of scene construction. Stories move from scene to scene. The storyteller's job is to bring each scene to life. To do so, the storyteller must be present to each scene, immersed in it. If I, as the storyteller, see it, the reader will see it. If I hear it, the reader will hear it. If I go to the docks, the Port Diner, the casino, and am fully alert to what is happening, to the details, the choreography, then the reader will become alert to it.

Alert to what, though? John Carey, in the introduction to his wonderful anthology, 'The Faber Book of Reportage', calls it 'the incidental image'. This is the image that may not be immediately obvious – the men of Gallipoli crying because they could not keep clean. Or the people of Ireland, during the famine, with their lips of green, because of eating grass.

Every story requires research of some sort. The word literally means, to 'look again.' This can entail many things: drawing on memory, walking the streets of childhood again, revisiting the scenes of the crime or working with historical documents. When I wrote my novel 'Scraps of Heaven', set in post-war Carlton, I read newspapers of the times to see what people were talking about, the fashions, the styles of furniture, the headlines. Each era has its anxieties, and the anxiety of that time was the Cold War and the dangers of nuclear war.

As for the quality of the writing, I always read what I have written aloud. David Malouf has said that it is the narrative rhythm that keeps the reader engaged. In reading the work aloud, I hear what the reader will hear. I hear the sentences that have become unwieldy. I hear the affectations, and the overuse of certain words, certain phrases. And, most importantly, I become aware of the tone.

Story is both an art form, and a craft. In this short piece, I have tried to look at the basics. There is so much more that can be said. The most important thing, however, I have left till last – as a storyteller follow your passions, your interests, the mysteries and questions you personally wish to explore. Write about what you know and love – and if you don't know enough, find out. It is in the exploration, in the journey itself, that your story will find its shape, and its unexpected destinations. ⑩

Arnold Zable is an acclaimed Australian author. His books include 'Jewels and Ashes', 'Café Scheherazade', 'The Fig Tree', 'Scraps of Heaven', 'Sea of Many Returns', 'Violin Lessons' and 'The Fighter'.

Arnold is running three workshops in Writers Vic's Season 2 program. Check out writersvictoria.org.au for details.

Apply Writing

An introduction to apps and software for writers by Cory Zaroni.

Is something missing in your writing life? Are you sick of looking at Microsoft Word? Fortunately, we live in a world of software and apps and there's one for writing that's just perfect for you. But with so many options available it can be hard to find the kind of writing software you need.

Let's look at some options, but before we do, know this: the best writing tool is the one you're using. If that's a smartphone with a notes app, great. A notebook and pen? Get scribbling. (Try Muji's A5 notebooks – they're great.) Better gear can make your writing experience more pleasant but that only works if you're already writing.

If you're committed to finding something new and digital to help your writing, start by deciding what you'd like to accomplish. There are three rough categories we can look into:

1. Large projects
2. Distraction-free writing
3. Fun stuff

Keep your goals in mind as you read this and you'll find the right tool for your job in no time.

Large projects

Trying to wrangle a large writing project? These pieces of software will help keep you on track.

Scrivener (Windows, macOS, iOS)

Scrivener is a fan favourite. It offers just about everything you could ask for in a writing application. It features tools for research (including an option to embed other files, such as images), outlining, file organisation, screenwriting, drafting, writing goals and more. It even has a 'corkboard' you can pin digital index cards to.

It endeavours to be your 'complete writing studio' and, in many ways, it accomplishes that goal. The downside to that is complexity.

Once you master its tools you'll have some nifty stuff at your fingertips. For example, those index cards? Each one represents a document in your project. You could, say, make each chapter in your novel one card. You suddenly have a bird's eye view of your work you can move around and re-order on your corkboard.

Some clever exporting options mean that, when it's time to bring your work together, Scrivener will collate your discrete files and provide everything in one document.

There's a lot happening with Scrivener. Watch some of its introductory videos online and try its free trial. It's not the most intuitive piece of user interface (UI) design but it may be worth the effort.

Ulysses (macOS, iOS)

Full disclosure: I adore Ulysses. To me, it's the ideal marriage of simplicity and features to help you organise your writing.

Ulysses takes a similar approach to project management as Scrivener but simplifies things. You can group your work into projects and make each chapter its own file. Add in subgroups for your research or planning and you're good to go. Like Scrivener, Ulysses lets you attach images or other files so you have everything you need. You can tag each file with keywords to make them easy to find and filter.

However, Ulysses just plain doesn't have the feature set of Scrivener. It lacks the large-scale view of a project offered by Scrivener's

corkboard and it doesn't support script formatting. Ulysses is a more focused offering.

And focus is its best feature. It even provides a view option that highlights the line, sentence or paragraph you're working on and dims the rest of your text. It makes it easy to stay focused on what you're doing.

Quick and simple writing

Maybe you don't need a full suite of writing features. Maybe you just want something simple you can use to get some work down without distractions.

iA Writer (macOS, iOS, Android)

iA Writer is the reason I got into writing software. It has a lot to answer for. It's also one of the nicest things around if you're looking for distraction-free writing.

Writer takes away all the things you can fiddle with instead of writing and just leaves you with your words. There's only one font option. There aren't any menu bars to get lost in. You just have to write.

The main selling point here, beyond the pleasant writing environment, are focus mode, its sentence highlighter and its syntax breakdown.

Focus mode keeps your cursor in the centre of the screen so it's always at your attention. The sentence highlighter functions identically to Ulysses' feature (although Writer did it first). Writer's syntax breakdown highlights things like adverbs, nouns and adjectives, making it easy for you to get a high level look at what you're writing and how you're writing it.

A few others

There's nothing quite like iA Writer available on Windows but Write! has a lot of the same features in a less stylish package. If you want the syntax analysis without installing anything, there's Hemingway App—that'll highlight long sentences and other elements of style, too.

If you want a minimalist writing experience that leans into the 'experience' side of things, there's Omm Writer (Windows, macOS, iPad). Omm Writer creates an environment for you with attractive backgrounds and custom soundtracks designed to hold your attention. It wants to be meditative. Personally, I find it a bit gimmicky. But gimmicks can be fun, can't they?

Fun stuff

Let's round off this list with a few fun web-based writing tools.

Written? Kitten!

Set a word goal and, every time you hit that goal, delivers you a picture of a kitten, puppy or bunny (your choice). What more do you need?

The Most Dangerous Writing App

You set a time period you want to spend writing. If you stop typing during that time, the app will delete everything you've written. Write or Die 2 does something similar but adds more options and a minimum words per minute option.

Ilys

Silence that inner editor of yours. Tell Ilys how many words you want to write and get to work. The kicker? You won't be able to see anything you've written, except for the last letter you typed, until you reach that goal. Ilys comes with a monthly subscription fee but there's a free trial too.

Get writing

The kind of digital tool that's right for you depends entirely on the problems you're trying to solve. Something like Scrivener is perfect for managing a large project, but if you're just kind of bored, you'll want Written? Kitten! or something along those lines.

And remember that these are all writing tools. There are limits to what they can accomplish. A writing app that limits distractions can't replace personal discipline, for example.

The world of writing software is worth exploring. Just keep your goals and the limitations of software in mind before you start doing so – all of them. 📌

Cory Zaroni spends too much time thinking about digital things. He spends his days writing for State Library Victoria's online channels. He co-hosts the 'Press X to Something' podcast on the side.

Finding Seeds

A few of our favourite writers share their go-to writing exercises.

Eliza Henry-Jones

Finding writing seeds

Put a piece of music on. It can be slow or quick; classical or punk. Pick a song that calls to you in that moment, because that will help your writing to breathe. Sit down with a pen and a piece of a paper, if you can, rather than a keyboard. And write without stopping for the whole song. Notice if you write to the swell of the music or whether your writing has its own beat. At the end, read through. Most will probably be a chaotic mess, but there will be parts that are not. Mark lines and images that interest you. Maybe only two words out of two hundred. These are your writing seeds.

Sofie Laguna

Choose a topic and write for twenty minutes every day for a month about that same topic. Don't miss a day. Don't read over your work. Just write for twenty minutes a day, every day. Stop at the end of twenty minutes. Don't write more, or less. The same topic, every day for a month. Don't edit or check or read over. Give your self permission to explore the depths, to fly, to write badly, to be repetitive, to be cliched, to be personal, and to write in detail. Twenty minutes, same topic, every day. Go for it.

Eli Glasman

Get to know your characters with a Q and A. Write some personal questions to your characters and then write their answers in their voice. Try and ask personal questions and have them answer as if you they are talking to a close friend. The purpose of the exercise isn't just to lead you to think about who your characters are. It's also an opportunity to learn how they speak when they are opening up in an intimate space.

Sarah Vincent

Taking out the letter 'e'

This is a good exercise to try if a section of your manuscript isn't zinging, is feeling hackneyed or is relying too much on cliched descriptions that aren't evocative. You take the section, usually just a few paragraphs, and rewrite it keeping the same meaning but omitting the letter 'e'. For example, the previous sentence, when rewritten without the letter e, might read, 'This is a good workout to try if a part of your manuscript isn't zinging, looks stodgy or is using too many obvious worn-out portrayals of individuals or locations. Try another go at this sluggish part without the secnd consonant.'

Angela Savage

Walkies

Take your character for a walk, ideally somewhere you haven't been before, preferably somewhere you can walk around for a bit. Imagine yourself looking at your surrounds through the eyes of your character. Ask yourself the following questions and take notes on the answers:

What would stand out for this character in the landscape (or cityscape), given their state of mind? What might they overlook? Are there particular objects that might resonate or jar with how they are feeling? Take photos if you like. What effect might the presence or absence of other people have on their thoughts and emotions?

When you get home, write a scene that describes your character's thoughts and emotions as they walk through the landscape/cityscape. Weave their observations about their surroundings into the scene, relating these observations to their thoughts and emotions.

Carmel Bird

Find an old photograph of yourself, one in which you are alone. Study it carefully before writing.

With pen and paper write a detailed description of what you see, as if you were looking at a picture of a stranger. So you would say, for instance: 'a girl of about four is sitting on a rocking horse'. Go into as much physical detail as you can.

Then begin a personal narrative in which you own the scene you have just described. For instance: 'I remember the old rocking horse in our neighbour's hallway'.

Continue to write as freely as you can for twenty minutes, roaming among feelings and thoughts as well as among recollections of physical details.

Max Barry

Write a letter

This is a ten minute exercise. By then, you won't want to stop, so really it's longer. But I'm saying ten minutes because that's all you need to discover it's working. Because if you give this ten minutes, you get one of the best characters you've ever written.

You have to be ready to write. Don't read this on the train and think about it and then by the time you get home your thoughts have wandered to the cleaning or the TV or whether the dog needs a walk. Don't do that. Wait until you're actually at the keyboard, and you have ten minutes. If you're not there now, go away.

Now write yourself a letter. The first word is 'Dear', the second is your name. Someone is writing you a letter. You don't know why, just yet. You will discover that later. I don't want to spoil this for you, but I have a feeling that what they say they're writing to you about, that's not the real reason. They'll get to that later. But for now, it's because of the bins you keep leaving out, or how they can see into your bathroom from their window, or the scratch they saw you leave on their car. I don't know. I'm not writing this letter. You know your life better than I do. And it doesn't really matter, because, like I said, the real reason will come later.

You can start in reality, or invent from the get-go. Your character can be based on a real person or not. All this is up to you. But what you'll find, around the ten minute mark, is that this letter is dripping with personality. You've animated someone. You just made a real character. ①

The exercises by Angela Savage, Carmel Bird and Max Barry were originally published on writersvictoria.org.au.

The Long Game: Series

Sandi Wallace has advice for aspiring series writers on wrangling character, continuity – and URST.

Writers are often described as ‘plotters’ (approaching novels by first drafting comprehensive synopses, chapter outlines and character profiles) and ‘pantsers’ (flying by the seat of their pants from start to finish), although many fall into another group that could be called ‘plantsters’ (combining both categories at any ratio... and that’s where I sit). You don’t have to be a plotter to write a series, but some early planning helps the process, avoids mistakes and stress, and fosters success.

As you want to write a series, presumably you love to read them, but maybe you haven’t analysed why and how you can use that knowledge. So, think about this: what draws you to a new book series? What keeps you hooked? Why do you care if an instalment comes to end on a personal cliff-hanger? And why are you excited when the next book is out?

Author, setting (time and place), genre, plot and style may grab your attention and hold it to some extent. But for the most, it’s the characters who keep you hooked across a series. Characters who you connect with, relate to, like, or love to hate. They deal with conflict, barriers to goals, resolutions (not necessarily ‘happily ever afters’), and resultant growth or change (not always positive). They might fall in or out of love, be injured physically or emotionally. They are on a quest and you are either rooting for or against them.

This story and character arc applies within one novel, and across the series, as although the main plot is completed within each book allowing them to be enjoyed as standalones, some threads continue. These are generally

personal to the characters or deal with fallout from a previous book.

Characters needn’t be predictable but how they act or react must be believable. For any novel, the author should know their characters well, and have a concept of where their characters have been and what’s happening to them now. But for the series author, while you may let stories evolve quite organically, you should have an idea about where your characters are going.

For instance, does URST (unresolved sexual tension) advance in subsequent instalments and what might need to be established early on to allow that... or hinder it? And if you don’t have an overall vision, how will you answer your publisher when they ask about your next instalment, or your Number One Fan who wants to know if the main characters return?

Aside from creating characters who hook readers, and ensuring they have an arc across each instalment and the series, it’s also crucial to build a ‘continuity toolkit’ – a method of maintaining self-consistent detail or recording facts about the characters and their world.

As an aspiring or emerging writer, you may have limited resources that are best spent on upskilling via courses or engaging a mentor, so your toolkit could be as simple as a notebook, lever arch folder with dividers, and Word or Excel documents, rather than an elaborate computerised program.

Include in the toolkit any information that you must get right or beware the consequences! Thorough character profiles could start with basic details that you build on as you write until these contain an image or sketch that matches your imagination or photo of the

actor you'd cast in the role, a full description including date of birth, any injuries, motive for involvement and actions, quirky speech patterns, mannerisms, etc; pictures of characters' homes (inside and out, including layout, decor, access points); images and specs relating to their main mode of transport (maybe test drive too); maps or mud sketches of places (real or fictional) with street names and focal points marked; and topography, climate, and distinctive features about the setting.

The next aspect to plan is: to enjoy the writing process. Sounds silly, doesn't it? But it's like breathing – you know how to do it, but how often do you hold your breath when trying really hard at something? Don't try so hard at writing your series that you don't enjoy it. After all, you have nurtured your writing dream for some time (probably a long time), and the first may be the most enjoyable book you write, as it's the one for which you aren't working to deadlines or juggling marketing with writing.

Sure, you're impatient to finish your novels and see them fly into the wilds, but your series relies on a strong entry into the marketplace, so slow down and have fun creating your unique style and stories. Practice thorough research and caution with information dumps and backstory, be merciless when you rewrite and edit, and learn from speedhumps.

Before you consider pitching or self-publishing, seek qualified feedback, particularly via a manuscript appraisal or a mentor. While you're waiting for that critique, work on augmenting your author bio to stand out from publishers' slush piles, or competitor titles, with prizes for or publication of stories in a similar niche as your series. Also, use this time to do your homework on publication options – self-publishing or traditional publishing – and if you aspire to the latter, gather information on publishers or agents to pitch to (a starting point is who publishes or represents your competitor titles). Then work on your submission so it grabs attention, while your novel and series must hold it.

Whether you're a plotter, pantsers or plantser, some planning will help your series succeed. Have fun and good luck!

Ten things I've learnt about writing a series:

1. It is possible to get your first novel published. I did, by continuing to believe in and work on my manuscript until it was taken up by a publisher.
2. Don't rush: enjoy the creative process of building your fictional world and characters, and developing your skills as a writer.
3. It is crucial to have a continuity toolkit and keep it up to date, as you must know your characters and their world intimately.
4. Characters need a development arc across a book and series. It might not be entirely positive change or something you plan completely when you launch the series but an overview is useful.
5. You might give reference to your previous book/s but it's usually best to avoid spoilers, allowing the books to be enjoyed out of sequence and as standalones.
6. Be sure to check your preferred publisher or agent is open for submissions and strictly follow their guidelines (check their websites).
7. Working titles, cover letters, synopses, loglines and pitches are art forms that need to be as polished as your manuscript. You can find tips at janefriedman.com/novel-synopsis/ and savvyauthors.com/blog/se-pitchrules/. When pitching the first instalment in a series, include a working title and three-line pitch for the next novel in the cover letter.
8. If you self-publish, you will still need everything in point 7 for promotion purposes.
9. Readers love to ask what's coming next, but be careful what you reveal.
10. Don't do it for fame, fortune or to give up your day job. Write because you love writing and sharing your stories. 📖

'Dead Again' is Sandi Wallace's second rural crime thriller and follows her debut novel, 'Tell Me Why', winner of the 2015 Davitt Award Readers' Choice and shortlisted for the 2015 Davitt Award Best Debut. Sandi has won prizes in the Scarlet Stiletto Awards for her short crime stories.

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Indie Publishing: A Passion- Driven Thing

The desire to bring writers and readers together is what drives Australian independent publishing, says Transit Lounge co-founder, **Barry Scott**.

'I must live my own passion now, because that's what passions are for. In the years I've not lived my passion, I've shrunk. It's time to come home to myself.'
– Jane Carswell, 'Under the Huang Jiao Tree' (Transit Lounge, 2009).

It's probably true to say that starting and running an independent publishing company in Australia is not for the faint hearted. Our population is relatively small, the distances are huge, the costs for editing, print production and design, distribution and marketing are high, while the financial returns are extremely variable

Yet when I think of the books I truly love, most have been published by small independent publishers: 'A Girl is a Half-formed Thing' by Eimear McBride (Galley Beggar, UK), 'Firmin' by Sam Savage (Coffee House, US), 'Monkey Grip' by Helen Garner (McPhee Gribble, Aus), 'Owls Do Cry' by Janet Frame (Pegasus, NZ). Independent publishers often can and do take more risks, championing unknown and adventurous writers.

Yet all publishing survives on the successes of those few books that take off either by being slightly ahead of the current zeitgeist or being fortunate enough to win a major award

or receive critical recognition. Mexican writer Gabriel Zaid has written a brilliant book called 'So Many Books: Reading and Publishing in an Age of Abundance'. In it he says: 'To write, publish or distribute a book is like putting a message in a bottle and tossing it into the sea: its destination is uncertain. Yet time and again the miracle occurs: a book finds its reader, a reader finds his book.'

This desire to bring writers and readers together is certainly why we publish at Transit Lounge – we need to connect with the book as reader. After that it is working out how we might edit, market and bring it to broader attention. Our bias is always toward the work at hand rather than the prominence of the author.

The new writer will invariably think they need to be published by a larger publisher; yet, while those publishers may have higher advances to offer and more advertising dollars in the rapidly changing mediascape, smaller publishers have as much chance of receiving a substantial review in the daily print media. The plethora of blogs, online book spaces and social media means word of mouth has become more important than ever. In many respects the Australian publishing landscape has opened up. The literary closed shop that Mark Davis once wrote about in the book

'Gangland: Cultural Elites and New Generationalism' (1997) is less prevalent.

In 2016, 'Black Rock White City' by AS Patric, published by Transit Lounge, won the Miles Franklin Award, in 2017, 'Poum and Alexandre' by Catherine de Saint Phalle was shortlisted for the Stella Prize. 'Black Rock White City' jumped from 3000 to 20,000 sales and its author is now a regular guest at literary festivals. The novel will be published by Melville House (New York) in September, while Alec Patric's new novel 'Atlantic Black' will be published by Transit Lounge later this year.

A few years ago a literary awards judge said to me that panels rarely give listings and prizes to books published by small independent publishers. I am not sure that prejudice still exists. The 2017 Miles Franklin longlist also includes three novels published by indies: 'Extinctions' by Josephine Wilson (UWA Publishing), 'Waiting' by Philip Salom (Puncher and Wattman) and 'Their Brilliant Careers' by Ryan O'Neill (Black Inc). Judges and readers are looking more widely for what is new and interesting and good bookshops are prepared to go the extra distance in dealing with a broader range of distributors. However, the amalgamation and domination of distribution in Australia by one huge corporate is still an issue for many independent publishers. There is no such thing as a level playing field anywhere, or in any industry, and independent publishers often do have to look at new and original ways of getting their books into the hands of readers.

Some have argued that the spike in independent publisher shortlistings and awards wins is due to the withdrawal of major publishers from the literary fiction space as they increasingly focus on genre fiction and non-fiction books to maximise sales and income. This may be a factor – many Australian novels may only sell 1000 copies (just break even for Transit Lounge). The model of high-end offices and large numbers of permanent staff is costly and, while often reassuring to authors, is arguably against the trend in an era of leanness, freelance work, technological mobility and networking. Increasingly too, it has become easier for publishers to start in a small part-time way as Transit Lounge did ten years ago, and to work on establishing a full-time presence and a more comprehensive list.

‘Independent publishers often can and do take more risks, championing unknown and adventurous writers.’


The increasing variety of independent and small publishers can readily be gauged by a glance at the Small Press Network website and for writers canvassing their submission options it is worth approaching those most in tune with your own writing style or orientation. However, be aware that if a publisher has had success with, for example, an immigrant story or a romantic comedy they may want to move onto something different rather than just publish a variation on a theme. Independent publishing is not necessarily averse to genre writing, and literary judges shouldn't dismiss it either, but it is hard to beat a story or writing that feels fresh and original. It doesn't have to eschew entertainment value but rather add something to it.

The top three tips I have for writers when they ask about submitting their work could apply when submitting to all indie publishers:

1. Know your book is ready. Does it have that indefinable magic – an element that makes the book fly – usually a winning combination of story, writing and voice.
2. What is your passion? Be excited about your own writing and ideas. This may or may not involve placing what you are doing in the context of other books that can be seen as parallels.
3. Let us know who you are and how you think you might be able to help promote your work (do you have mentors, or know other writers who might be willing to blurb your work?). Sound interested in us, our books and what we are trying to achieve.

At Transit Lounge we have learnt that persistence can eventually reap rewards. The same integrity and perseverance characterises the independent publishing scene in Australia. Publishers may come and go. The threats to our industry are huge: parallel importation and the pressure to undercut prices, decreased funding support,

and the homogenisation of big-box retailing. Many Australian indies of the past, such as McPhee Gribble, have long gone, buffeted by the commercial realities. But their legacy and spirit has spurred new generations to follow. And maybe there is enough of a seismic shift in the perceptions surrounding indies to be positive about where things are heading. The publishing industry is dynamic and changing. It may always be dominated by major players but the independent and small presses will make serious headway across all genres and styles of writing.

The important thing for the writer is to write, to give voice to the stories that need to be told. To start with an aim of writing for a market is not a viable option. Who ultimately publishes your work will invariably be the editor or publisher (large or small) who falls in love with your work. Ultimately independent publishing and the writing that is at its centre is an urgent and passionate thing. 

Barry Scott is the co-publisher at Transit Lounge, a press that has a particular interest in writing that engages with other cultures. Since 2005 Transit Lounge has published literary fiction and non-fiction by new, emerging and established writers.

Barry has a background in literary arts administration and has previously undertaken a study of independent publishers in the USA, and has been an Asialink arts management resident in India.

transitlounge.com.au



PEN: Writers

Among Languages

Judith Rodriguez reports from the International Translation and Linguistic Rights Committee.

I've just attended the PEN International conference of its International Translation and Linguistic Rights Committee, held in India with its 27 official languages.

How is this relevant to us in Australia, which despite its migrant communities and (still!) many surviving indigenous languages, exerts an unrelenting pressure towards monolingualism? Many are the families which, like my mother's, abandoned non-English languages in favour of English. Yes, the kids can feel dinky-di Australian. When they travel, they can be as unprepared as most other young Australians, for the fact that the world has many nations where to be monolingual and unpractised in acquiring language, is to be under-equipped for real life.

My Melbourne-consciousness was particularly stirred by one session at the conference in Bangalore (now once more the resonant Bengaluru, its name in Kannada – the language of its state, Karnataka). The participating delegates came from Switzerland, Belgium, Norway and Barcelona. Each had a fascinating story of national multilingual policy to unfold.

Switzerland has four official languages: Swiss German (65%), French, Italian and Romanch – this last spoken by only a very small percentage of the Swiss, but indispensable in one or two canons. Beside these, English is widely used. School pupils are started early in two languages and have educational access to all the official languages.

The Belgian speaker told us of the historic basis which brought together a French-speaking south and Flemish-speaking north. One interesting linguistic-rights aspect: he reported that Belgian authors publishing in French have difficulty accessing the large reading market of France.

Norway is cooperating with other Scandinavian countries to support the continuing use of Sami, the language of their northern people. A written form had to be developed for Sami and now its lore is collected and its writers published in Sami.

Barcelona, like Melbourne, is a seriously multicultural city. Twenty per cent of its inhabitants are foreigners, many more were born abroad, and well over a hundred languages are spoken. As the capital of Catalonia, Barcelona of course lives, works, plays and publishes in Catalan, which has a rich literature going back to at least the thirteenth century. Spanish of course is necessary for communication in Spain (where Basque in the Basque Country and Gallego in Galicia are other prevalent and literary languages, despite Spanish being the only official language). Catalan policy is that all children should be educated in their mother tongue, even if it is foreign; Catalan and Spanish are both part of schooling; and English is widely used – Barcelona is Spain's commercial capital.


These accounts had a rich resonance in India, where its peak literary body, the Sahitya Akademi, keeps a view across writers' achievements in 27 languages. The day after I arrived in Chennai, the capital of Tamil Nadu, the Akademi awarded its prize for a novel to a Tamil work. Tamil, a culture older than Sanskrit, was celebrating a transgender novel – in itself an astonishing cultural breakthrough. It was also celebrating a translation into elegant English of Perusal Murugan's 'One Part Woman'. Murugan spoke to delegates in the final session of the conference.

All this made me wonder at the difficulty Australia has always experienced with language education. 'Girt by sea', our isolation and the Anglo illusion of exclusive ownership of our continent, as well as our very English-and-white first 150 or so years, have left us uninterested in languages. Planning their education, not enough Australians are alive to

the usefulness of language acquisition and the cultural richness it makes accessible.

In Melbourne, we go some of the way. Several language communities have newspapers; certain neighbourhoods have foreign-language bookshops. This is a richness we should celebrate and where we can't do it directly, translators are the linguist-writers who throw the gates open (you have your Dante, Balzac, Tolstoy and Nordic Noir, after all!) so that we can share it.

PEN International supports and celebrates writing in translation through its Translation and Linguistic Rights Committee, recognising that translation is a vital part of PEN's work in promoting literary creativity and collaboration between cultures. PEN Melbourne is one of 149 PEN centres around the world promoting literature and defending freedom of expression.

For more information please contact Melbourne PEN admin@melbournepen.com.au or through our website penmelbourne.org. 

Judith Rodriguez's poetry has been published since the 1960s, and translated into French and Romanian. Her 'New and Selected Poems' was published in 1988. Recent publications are 'Manatee' and 'The Hanging of Minnie Thwaites'. She wrote the libretto for Moya Henderson's opera 'Lindy', performed at the Sydney Opera House in 2002. Judith has taught at universities on four continents and has read in Europe, North America and India.

On the Cheap: Historical Fiction

A survivor's guide to writing historical fiction
when you can't afford a research trip by Wendy J Dunn.

Let me begin by telling you a story. Last year, I decided to spend my first ever healthy royalty payment (yes, these things actually do happen!) on a month-long research trip to England. I had three book projects to research, including a work based on the early years of Mary Shelley.

My imagination was already well fed by images and information provided by one of Mary Shelley's most respected biographers – and I had the London address where Mary lived with her father, William Godwin, stepmother, her half-sister, half-brother and step-siblings. I was also blessed to be staying with my friend, Valerie. Born and bred in London, Val is an embodiment of a living, breathing, walking London map and history book. On our Mary Shelley day, we took three London buses from Val's flat, walked down a few roads, and then stood in front of a three-storey brick building. It was the right address – but it didn't feel right. Mary's biographer had described her teenage home. The house before me left me feeling bemused, and strangely out of place.

'There's no blue plaque,' I said to Val. Blue plaques were a common feature in London streets, proclaiming the birth places and homes of the famous.

'Perhaps they thought Mary Shelley didn't deserve one,' my friend replied.

I stared at her in disbelief. 'What? The author of 'Frankenstein' doesn't deserve a blue plaque?'

Val shrugged. 'London has many famous people. Being a woman might have caused them to decide against giving one to her.'

I looked back at the building again. 'But what about her father? There isn't even a plaque for him, and he was a famous author and philosopher.'

We stood in silence, looking at the building, and the neighbourhood all around us.

'I suppose we better locate Mary's church,' Valerie said. 'What was its name again?'

I glanced at my notes. 'St Sepulchre.'

'Are you certain?'

'Yes. Why?'

'Didn't you say the church was close to where Mary Shelley lived as a girl?'

'That's what it said in her biography.'

'That church is not close to here.' Val pointed to a church spire a short distance away. 'It must be that church.'

We walked to the church and once again I felt at a loss. 'It is so different to what I expected from the descriptions of Shelley's biographer.'

Val frowned and shook her head. 'I don't think much of this biographer.'

That evening, back at Val's flat, we talked about why our day's field research had seemed so off target. We pulled up our computers, began a Google chase, and found old city maps and also legal documents belonging to Mary's family. The address on the legal documents was exactly the same as one I had brought from Australia. By 11pm, I was still protesting that the places we had visited that day felt wrong and Val was still blaming it on Shelley's biographer. I bid Val good night, not realising

that I had left behind a woman determined to solve the puzzle. In morning, over breakfast, Val set out before me the findings of her research – findings that showed, over one hundred years ago, the names of London streets had shifted. The address we had was correct, but not the location. In Mary Shelley's time, that address I had written down in Australia was elsewhere.

'What do you want to do?' Val asked. 'Do you want to go and find the right place?'

By this stage, I had been in England for over three weeks. Tired by weeks of touring Suffolk and now London, my health was giving me grief. Forced only two days ago to visit a major hospital for medical care, I just yearned to go home. I shook my head. 'I'll use Google Earth, and search for period paintings and drawings on the internet.'

And that's the thing. While it has been wonderful to be able to go overseas to research my historical novels, I know I can also write – especially now, thanks to the resources available on the internet – my European-based historical novels at home in Melbourne. In fact, if I hadn't been so focused on my trip to England to take me to where Mary Shelley grew up as a teenager, I would have searched more thoroughly on the internet and discovered the photos taken by others in search of Shelley, photos of a property that would have made me question whether I had the right location.

So, please believe me, if you don't have the money to go to Europe to research your historical novel, you can do it based in Australia. Here are my tips to help you:

- Read lots of historical novels set in the period and location that you want to write about. I call this feeding your imagination – and your writerly compost. Reading historical fiction is an important and necessary step to help your own world-building. By reading historical fiction, you arrive at a time when you can write your own dreams of history by drawing from your imagination.
- Read books that include primary materials describing settings, and make use of the internet. It is truly a gold mine of resources that bring alive the voices and places of the past.


- Study period paintings, drawings and maps. Once again, the internet is a great resource for this, and biographers of historical personages generally include fascinating illustrations. For the Tudor period, I particularly love the details provided in royal books of hours. The paintings of the court painter Holbein are also brilliant for their very human studies of the people of Henry VIII's court.

- Find non-fiction books that do the field research for you. For my Tudor fiction work, 'In the Footsteps of Anne Boleyn', co-authored by Natalie Grueninger, and 'On the Trail of the Yorks' by Kristie Dean were indispensable. Books like these make great companions for armchair travel.

- Join Facebook historical groups where you can post research questions. My favourite groups include Anne Boleyn Files, On the Tudor trail, Queen Anne Boleyn and the Anne Boleyn Society.

- Consider joining the Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA). I have been immensely impressed with the wealth of historical knowledge offered by its members. The SCA puts on regular events where you can take part in workshops to increase your own learning and expertise.

- Find a historical group with an interest in your time period. For example, the Richard III's Society has a group in Australia: richardiii-nsw.org.au.

- Keep an eye out for history themed conferences. In September this year, the Historical Novel Society conference is on in Melbourne with a fantastic program: hnsa.org.au/conference/programme/. 

Wendy J Dunn is an Australian writer who has been obsessed by Anne Boleyn and Tudor history since she was ten. She is the author of three Tudor novels: 'Dear Heart, How Like You This?', 'The Light in the Labyrinth' and 'Falling Pomegranate Seeds'.

wendyjdunn.com

Swooning: Just for the Words

By Gabrielle Gardner

A few years back I went to see another acclaimed production of 'Hamlet'. It was okay, though Hamlet looked a bit too just-out-of-bed for me and Ophelia had one of those universal accents acquired from television, such that I expected her at any moment to say 'OMG! That's awesome!' But that's all by-the-by, because it's the words we go for, isn't it? Those oh-so-famous speeches that half the audience knows by heart – what pressure to deliver those and hope to satisfy!

The pinnacle of words in 'Hamlet' still brings tears to my eyes and, on this occasion, made the lady beside me suck in her breath and clutch both hands to her mouth. (Tears were apparent.) Poor Horatio, to have to deliver such lines as these:

'Now cracks a noble heart. Good night sweet prince,

And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!

In my writing course at RMIT there is much discussion about words, they being a key ingredient in why we write and, for many, why we read. And there's often some good-natured jousting about the role of description in both reading and writing. Some hate it, some thrive on it. For me, I need a book to be oozing a sense of place and I want that described so that I can see it, so that I can be there. I don't mean endless blah about sunsets, rolling hills and storm clouds the colour of bruises (very popular), but some image that stops you in your tracks to stare off into the distance and momentarily be transported to that writer's imagined world.

Pages and pages of 'economical sentences' or unremitting snappy dialogue will often have my eyes reading on while my mind is writing shopping lists or wondering if anyone's fed the dogs. I want a book that enfolds me, traps me and takes me away to another place, a new place where I can 'be'.

In a website I neglect shamefully I have a section for Swooners – phrases or sentences that strike me as so apt, so evocative or beautiful that I want to keep them with me forever. I started to keep a list of them but the process of stopping reading to write them down was, in itself, disruptive so it fizzled out quite early in the piece.

But when John Banville, in 'Ancient Light', talks about 'soft pale days' in 'the lapsing of the years' or Tim Winton in 'Island Home' describes stars coming out 'like gooseflesh in the heavens', and Alex Miller in 'Landscape of Desire' offers this perfect image: 'Dust motes floated like worlds journeying in different galaxies', it does tend to make you catch your breath.

And you don't need to be famous to hit the spot. I know a man who writes and self-publishes – just for his own pleasure and the fun of sharing with friends – a book a year. They're very good. This was the melancholy sentence that made me first decide to start keeping a list of Swooners:

'The glint of light on a man's dark hair brought him back and brought back his absence.' – John Fisher, 'Berlinda'.

‘Pages of ‘economical sentences’ or unremitting snappy dialogue will often have my eyes reading on while my mind is writing shopping lists.’

Voltaire said the ‘secret of being boring is to say everything’ and in support of this many of the most evocative phrases or sentences that strike us are brief, often with words of few syllables. It’s how the words are selected and arranged that gives them their impact.

From Stephen Samuel in his powerful reimagining of the journey of Burke and Wills, this gut-wrenching image: ‘The night ebbs away on the moans of one wounded man.’ – Stephen Samuel, ‘Strange Eventful History’.

Joseph Conrad claimed ‘My task, which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel – it is, before all, to make you see.’

Some writers make us see as if by magic, others labour away at describing their scenes but nothing materialises, nothing at all.

We’re lucky to have so many writers in this country who belong firmly in the first group. When I avariciously collected all the Miles Franklin shortlistees to read last year I wondered where to start. Picking up Lucy Treloar’s ‘Salt Creek’ I scanned a few pages to see if this might be the one and I came across this:

‘Beecham is grander by far... Yet I would give it all up for a week, a day, an hour in the valley of shells among the sand hills of the peninsula, or for the touch of the first north wind of spring against my face.’

Read it aloud. Are you swooning yet? I was, so I started with ‘Salt Creek’, initially, just for the words.

It’s worth starting your own list of swooners. I plan to resurrect mine and be more conscientious about it this time around. It’s wonderful to go back to the collection, to revisit those phrases, sentences and even paragraphs that once stopped you in your tracks with their impact, their beauty or their capacity to transport you helplessly into another writer’s world. The challenge then becomes the task of identifying the common element within. If we can do this, our writing too might soar and future readers keep lists of our very own Swooners and remember us – just for our words. 📖

Gabrielle Gardner is a previous Varuna fellowship winner and recipient of a 2015 ASA Mentorship for her manuscript ‘Sweetmans Road’. She has had short stories published in three ‘Stringybark’ anthologies, the international flash fiction collection ‘1000 Words or Less’ and non-fiction pieces in ‘The Big Issue’. She is currently finishing an associate degree in Professional Writing and Editing at RMIT. She blogs at gabriellegardner.com.au – ‘Reading, Writing & a Few Dog Stories’.

The Doctor

By Barry Revill

'Good morning Eliza, my name is Dr Gillespie, I am here to talk to you.'

'What did you say your name was?'

'Dr Gillespie.'

'Your first name?'

'Still Dr Gillespie to you Eliza.'

'Like that is it?'

'Yes, that is the way it is, and will remain so I'm afraid.'

'Now Eliza, I want you to tell me how you feel, what it is you are worried about, what is on your mind?'

'How many weeks have you got?'

'Yes, nurse did tell me you could have a bit of a sense of humour.'

'Is that what you call it?'

'Eliza, I see from your chart that you are not eating well. Do you not like the food?'

'I had a dog once. Most of the time he would not have eaten what they dish up in here.'

'So you wish to make a formal complaint?'

'Forget it.'

'Do other patients worry you? Do they disturb you, stopping you from sleeping, for example?'

'So many questions, questions, questions, questions, don't you ever shut up?'

'Now Eliza, you must behave, you must calm down; we are only trying to help you, to get you better, so you can, well, one day, go back into the wider community, to re-join your family, and, dare I say it, make a contribution to society.'

'Do you always talk such bullshit?'

'Now Eliza, that will not do at all.'

'I wonder whether you are really a doctor at all. Have you ever listened to your own words, to what you are actually saying to me. I'm here, you know, I'm a real person, I have feelings, you know, my bloody family put me in here, my bloody daughter, she done it, she done it, that's what she did, put me in here.'

'Now Eliza, I need to talk to you about your cognitive skills.'

'My what?'

'Your cognitive skills.'

'My George reckoned I was pretty good in the cot, that what you mean?'

'No Eliza. I'm talking about your ability to recall things, your capacity to analyse situations and draw logical conclusions.'

'But if I could do all that crap I would not have been put here in the first place.'

'Eliza, sometimes there are temporary oversights which are caused by conclusions that are based on evidence to which proper guidelines have not been applied.'

'You mean a fuck up?'

'In a word, yes.'

'Eliza, explain the word, 'Friend' to me.'

'Well, a friend is a special person, they can be a woman, and they can be a bloke.'

'Go on.'

'Well, they can be someone you meet for the first time down the street, or sitting on a tram. I met a bloke once; I was sitting in the park. He did not seem to want anything from me, money, or anything else, if you get what I mean, he just wanted to sit there with me. Sometimes he would sit there for nearly half an hour just saying nothing. And then we would both start to talk about all sorts of things, kids climbing trees, footy, the war, the new copper, George, put in for me once, and I used to tell him about all my silly invention ideas that come into my head.'

'Did you like him?'

'Yes, he was a real friend.'

'You stopped seeing him?'

'I was put in here, in case you hadn't noticed'

'But he was a real friend?'

'Yes, he was. Not like some other blokes I have known, too many, I suppose.'

'How often did you meet?'

'In the end we were meeting in the park every day. Some days he would bring fish and chips all wrapped up in nice warm newspaper. He would put them on the seat between us and we would just sit there, talking and munching away. It was so good, I have never known a bloke like that before. None of the sex stuff, not that I mind that either, I can tell you, but this was different, very different, sort of pure, if you get what I mean.'

'I understand.'

'I wonder if you really do, really understand what I am talking about, any more than I understand your big fancy words.'

'Did you regard him as a real friend?'

'Yes, I did.'

'Eliza, how would you define a real friend?'

'I will try to answer your question even though I

know what you are up to with all your forms, and all your questions. A friend is someone you feel just right with, as simple as that. If he happens to be a bloke, the sex business does not have to be important, or even part of it. It is all about feeling comfortable with someone, knowing when to talk, when to shut up, when to touch him on the shoulder, when to ask him how is he going, is he feeling crook, how is his bit of garden down by the back fence, that sort of stuff.'

'Sounds like you really liked him.'

'Yes I did, we had fun. We used to just sit and talk, talking softly all the time. And we would laugh at the silliest little things. There might be a bird having a bath in a puddle, splashing water all over the joint, there might be a couple of kids walking past, deeply involved in the most serious of conversations that you would reckon the world is going to end tomorrow. So we would laugh at these things, and then he would mumble to himself in his funny little way, and then do a funny little laugh, then he would go quiet for a while, and then we would start again, looking at this, looking at that.'

'Eliza, drawing on what you say, the conclusions I have drawn, based on the available evidence, is that you were very happy then.'

'Dr Gillespie, I think you should take a lesson in brevity.'

'So, Eliza, what happened to your friend, why did you stop seeing him?'

'Don't you bloody listen? I told you before; I was put in this shit hole, not fit for a dog this place, not fit for a dog, that's what I say, not fit for a dog.'

'Ok Eliza, settle down now, settle down.'

'Settle down my ass, what the hell do you know about this place. You, with all your forms, you, with all your smart questions, forms, more bloody forms, leave me in peace will you, leave me in peace. Do you know who I am and how I came to this bloody place? I bet you don't. Do you know how I lost my George? What my life has been like since then? Do you know what it's like for a woman to be lonely, to feel as if there's not a friend anywhere, to have no work, to have no pride? Do you know what it's like to be this way? Of course you don't, so bugger off!'

'Now, Eliza, I have to talk to you.'

'Bugger off!'

'Eliza, in our discussions, we have to try and get to the aetiology of your condition.'

'The what?'

'The aetiology.'

'Any chance of saying why I got crook in the head?'

'Well, Eliza, I think that might be enough for today, thank you for your time, I will see you again soon.'

So he's gone now, and I am here. I can sit now; I can rock back and forth, nice and slow. And I can think now because it is quiet, even the leaves and the shadows are not a worry today. But they will be a worry, I know they will, they will come back, all the shadows, all the thoughts, all the mumblings

in the night, the screams, the yelling, the white coats rushing past my bed, the muffled sounds as the screams go quiet, the smell of fear, the smell of shit, the muffled quiet. And outside I can see a tree, and there is bark, and leaves hanging low, and there is bark on the ground all around the tree, and in parts it is piled up quite high for that is the way it is meant to be, that is the way of things.

And down the little path a bit, down towards the ha ha wall, I can see where the path starts to curl round a bit and that is where I am sure it drops down to the street. On clear days, I can hear the kids going past, can hear their talk, and I can hear all about the important things kids have to talk about. Sometimes they whisper, as if some great discovery has come their way, some great thought has come to them in the night, creeping to them, softly, quietly, ever so softly on the night. Down the corridors of their dreams, into the sleep of the dark, into the deep dark quiet sleep of the night, where high and clear come thoughts of things and more things at the bottom of garden paths, which lead to nowhere, and soft light comes in the morning, when they do not want it to come, because they have found a place and been to a place which is all their own. And the dawn colours come softly into their rooms, softly, quietly, as if the shadows are asleep, softly, like the bush awakening in a distant gully, where the rocks start to warm up as the sun dares to touch them, as the first rays come to them, in that early day. Down the back lanes, softly now, creeping, teddy bear sleeping, softly now, you can hear the rattles of the early carts, men making noises, grunting, pullovers flapping in the wind, trees bending in the wind, as if they were trying to make up their minds whether to stay or go.

'Good morning, Eliza'

'Oh Dear God, not you again.' 🗨

Barry Revill is a young 82-year-old with a story published in 'Overland' ('Harry'), another in 'Smashwords' ('The Kill'), eighteen gardening 'Muses' in 'The Age', and a monologue, 'Cry of a Forgotten Woman', which had six performances at the Melbourne Writers' Theatre. He is currently working on a novella.

Living with a Child Actor

By Rachel Morrison-Day

The sound of chairs scraping across wooden floorboards roused me from my Sunday morning slumber. Rubbing my eyes, I slumped down the stairs to find one of my six-year-old son's living room 'rehearsals' in full swing. He had been given a part in the movie 'Gremlins 3', as one of the Gremlins of course, and he was preparing furiously at home.

I was greeted by a grand construction of lounge room cubby houses using all the cushions and linen in the household, amid an array of toys scattered over the floor, camouflaging a lone fallen cup that had some hours ago oozed hot chocolate into the cracks between the floorboards. An onlooker would be forgiven for assuming that a cyclone had torn through the house. Waging war against his big sister was also fine preparation for the role, which involved constantly hitting and throwing objects at her while swearing madly.

The problem was that even after filming had finished, he felt that he had licence for life to play his Gremlin role at home. I'll never forget the shock at finding my bedroom wardrobe in ruins one afternoon as he swung from the clothes-hanger railing wearing only his sister's stockings, her school hat and a cheeky wide grin.

Before this role, he modelled kids' clothes, performed in commercials and made guest appearances in a few TV series. My favourite was his part in a children's toothpaste commercial. He actually paid attention to the director who taught him how to brush his teeth properly (he'd never listened to me). From then on, he would stand by the bathroom mirror and brush with pride, showing me his great white pearls with a twinkle in his eye.

In contrast, the role I detested was for a car commercial. His memory of prancing around

a shiny new SUV in utter glee made stale any future car journey in our humble old and worn sedan. I had to endure his painful complaints time after time: 'Mum, why can't we get a "real" family car; this is an embarrassment!' 'Sure Darling,' I would reply, 'our next car will be a Bentley when you make us a trillion from your brilliant acting career.' That kept him quiet. He would then sit back in silence and imagine what future roles lay before him.

I was initially grateful that his next movie role after 'Gremlins' was more subdued. He played the shy but curious child who did not speak in the film 'Witness 2'. While preparing for this role, he would tread silently about the house and creep up on me. I would be working at my computer when suddenly an eerie feeling would come over me. I would turn around to find him standing closely behind me, peering intensely over my shoulder. It would always make me shiver to find him there, and I became cursed with a constant paranoia that he was upon me. He would also suddenly appear out of nowhere, like a ghost, standing silently and solemnly in different parts of the house. The house was certainly cleaner and calmer, his sister unbruised, but I was quietly pleased when filming ended. His behaviour had become all too spooky.

Once he acted in a foreign film and seemed to pick up some Spanish while on the set. It was cute at first, the Spanish words tumbling from his little mouth. Cute, until I realised he was intent on adopting this new language as his own. Every question I asked would be met with a flurry of Spanish (or Spanish sounding) words. I don't understand a word of Spanish, so asking him what he wanted for his school lunch became a ten-minute endurance test. My frustration (and blood pressure) would rise. I suspect that he was swearing at me as he shouted and gestured with mad and intense

eyes. If I became angry or attempted to punish him for this outburst, he would gasp at me as if amazed and offended (using his acting skills, of course) and assert indignantly that he was only telling me a story about a cricket game. Sly.

One of his favourite pastimes is pretending to be a film director. He climbs onto the dining room table and waves his hands madly, shouting at the whole family, ordering us here and there. He might turn to his sister, 'You, jump up and down screaming like ants are biting your feet.' Depending on her mood, she might giggle and oblige him, or simply shout at him, 'Oh shut-up, idiot.'

He once directed me: 'Mummy, it's time for you to do the dishes now, and I wanna see you sing and wiggle it.' As permission to sing from my children is almost unheard of, I responded with great enthusiasm. My sacred opportunity had arrived, and my heart pounded wildly as I nostalgically broke into a (somewhat croaky voiced) 80s hit.

At kids' dress-up parties, he directs his own shows. He has the time of his life with all the superheroes, princesses and cowboys eagerly running around. Mind you, not every would-be child actor is happy, for when they divert from the role he has given them, he begins to shout and bully just as he does at home. Sadly, half his cast ends up in tears, while he retreats to a corner, kicking a ball and shaking his head as if he didn't understand how his project could have soured. 'But this is what directors have to do!' He would protest indignantly on the way home in the car from the party, with arms folded and lips pouted.

The problem is that it is difficult for him to distinguish between realities. And for me, it is just as difficult to try to explain to him the difference. This goes deeper too. At times I don't know whether I am talking to him or some character that he is playing out in his imagination.

Taking him out in public can also be interesting. He senses people looking at him, and it is usually other children who notice him. Some just quietly stare and others point and alert their parents loudly and excitedly. 'That's the kid off that commercial/movie/show!' Sometimes he waves back at them, at others he simply looks at me and rolls his eyes. I loathe it when an annoying mother approaches me and asks how she can introduce her child into the brilliant world of acting, and then

attempts to discuss with me at length the ins and outs of the whole business. I have a smart arrangement with my son here. On these occasions he starts to yell and drag me away. Innocently and apologetically, I allow myself to be taken.

Living with a child actor is complicated. Yes, he has been given the opportunity of a lifetime and we have had some dazzling engagements. But will he grow up with an exaggerated sense of self-importance and entitlement? Will he continue to be confused and misinformed about reality? Is it too late now? Is he on an unstoppable path? Has his acting identity already meshed with his ego, or for that matter, mine? My son's career infiltrates our lives in ways I could never have foreseen. I honestly don't know if I would choose this path for him, for us, if I had those choices again. 📌

Rachel Morrison-Dayan is originally from coastal NSW and recently moved to Melbourne with her two primary school-aged children. She is a lawyer with a Master of Laws in Migration Law and is currently undertaking postgraduate research. Rachel's passion is creative writing and her writings have been published in 'Australian Breastfeeding Association' and 'Skive' magazines.

Classifieds

Writing Consultant/Editor

Do you need personalised help with your writing project? Whether it is a work of fiction or non-fiction, are you ready for an objective appraisal? If you've had your manuscript assessed and made changes, it is a good idea to have your writing copyedited or at least proofread before submitting to a publisher. You are welcome to email me an overview of your writing needs to denisemtaylor.com.au/contact or call me for a chat on 0438 113 331.

Milestones

Eugen Bacon's new book 'Writing Speculative Fiction: A critical and cultural approach' is out with Palgrave MacMillan in 2017

Joan Katherine Webster's poems 'Hi-Ho Silver' and 'Autumn' were published in 'The Waterline News' in February and March, and 'A Glass Darkly' in 'Poetry Matters' in March. joanwebsterauthor.com/poetry-2/

Gayelene Carbis's first book of poetry, 'Anecdotal Evidence' (Five Islands Press), will be launched by Alex Skovron on Thursday 22 June at Collected Works Bookshop, 6pm for 6.30pm. Refreshments will be available.

Angela J Dawson's 'Like Two Mexicans Dancing', a romance and a memoir of 90s Melbourne/Tasmania and the band The Fish John West Reject is now available at Readings Bookshops. 'The Port Phillip Leader' featured an article about the book on Tues 14 March (see p9), which can also be viewed online.

Myfanwy McDonald's story 'Numb' was shortlisted for the 2017 Commonwealth Short Story Prize. The story was one of 21, selected from 6000 entries by an international judging panel. commonwealthwriters.org/2017-cs

Wyn Moriarty has published her memoir 'A Father's Dreams', about her early life, an ebook with Amazon. Search 'Wyn Moriarty' on amazon.com.

Coral Waight has published her latest ebook, the third in her travel memoir series, 'Planning to the 'Nth'. The series describes her challenges, pitfalls and joys while road-tripping around Tasmania, New Zealand and England. Her author page is amazon.com/author/coralwaight and her blog can be found at coralwaightravel.com.

Tony Berry has just had his latest crime fiction novel published by Endeavour Press UK. 'Death by Diamonds' is the third book in the series featuring reluctant sleuth Bromo Perkins and based in the Melbourne suburb of Richmond. Endeavour is scheduled to publish the next in the series, 'Twisted Trees', in the very near future.

Louise Truscott has published her third book, 'Project January: A Sequel About Writing', a follow-up to 'Project December: A Book About Writing'. A collection of thoughtful articles on writing, it contains discussions, tips and tricks. Available in paperback from Amazon US and CreateSpace and as an ebook from Amazon, Kobo, Smashwords and Apple.

Cindy Tomamichel's first novel was published by Soul Mate on 18 May. 'Druid's Portal' is a time travel romance set in Roman Britain in the shadow of Hadrian's Wall. On Amazon: myBook.to/DruidsPortal.

Competitions and Opportunities

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

Bundanon Artist-in-Residence program

Applications for the coveted Artist-in-Residence program at Bundanon are now open. It's an exciting time for Australian artists!

The time to create that Bundanon provides has led to seminal works, exhibitions, and pieces that are woven into the Australian contemporary arts landscape. Alumni include the full spectrum of arts practitioners – designers and dancers; novelists and playwrights; silversmiths and singers. Residency is open to groups and individuals.

Closes 19 Jun.

bundanon.com.au/residencies/

2017 Grace Marion Wilson Glenfern Fellowships

Emerging writers are invited to apply for the 2017 Glenfern Fellowships.

One of the most precious gifts to a writer is a dedicated and secluded space in which to write. Writers Victoria is pleased to offer three emerging writers the use of a Glenfern studio for a period of three months, thanks to the support of the Grace Marion Wilson Trust. The 2017 Glenfern Fellowships will afford these authors the time and space to write, as well as the opportunity to be involved in a vibrant community of writers in the historic surroundings of the Glenfern mansion in St Kilda East.

Applications will include an outline of the project you intend to work on while at Glenfern Writers' Studios, as well as support material that may include an extract from the project, examples of your writing, or details of previous publications.

Closes 3 Jul.

writersvictoria.org.au/calendars/opportunities-competitions/2017-grace-marion-wilson-glenfern-fellowships

2017 GMW Emerging Writers Competition

Writers Victoria is pleased to announce that applications are now open for the ninth Grace Marion Wilson Emerging Writers Competition. Short story or creative non-fiction submissions of between 2000 and 3000 words are being accepted from emerging Victorian writers with no more than three stories or articles published in a recognised book, magazine or journal.

Winners of each category will receive a \$1000 cash prize, with second prizes of \$250 awarded to one runner-up in each category. The first and second prize entries will also be published in the October/November issue of 'The Victorian Writer' magazine.

Closes 3 Jul.

writersvictoria.org.au/calendars/opportunities-competitions/2017-gmw-emerging-writers-competition

Offset Journal

Submissions to 'Offset' are open to everybody, and can be in the form of fictional and narrative non-fictional prose, poetry, visual art, and comics. As long as you follow our submission guidelines, there are no restrictions.

There's also no limit to the number of submissions you can make. Whether it's one, ten, or a million. Just don't go overboard, we can only read so much!

Closes 3 Jul.

offsetartsjournal.com

Lord Mayor's Creative Writing Awards

Victorian writers, put pen to paper and enter the City of Melbourne's Lord Mayor's Creative Writing Awards, which give you the chance to be recognised for your talent and win up to \$12,000.

Closes 31 Aug.

melbourne.vic.gov.au/writingawards

Nitpicker: 1. his autobiography 2. oldest 3. determine explicitly
4. hour's 5. whoever

Workshops and Courses

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

Online clinics and webinars

Online: Digital Novel Intensive with [Phillipa \(PD\) Martin](#)

Tackle your project through a combination of webinars and submissions of your own work. Cover all the essential novel-writing tools – research, refining ideas, genres, setting, writing craft, character development and a variety of plot tools to help you structure your story. Submissions of up to 3000 words due midnight Weds 26 Jul, 23 Aug, 27 Sep, 25 Oct.

Webinars: Mons 19 Jun, 17 Jul, 21 Aug, 18 Sep, 16 Oct, 20 Nov

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

Business Writing Online: Persuasive Writing with [Jacinta Cubis](#)

Writing is critical to persuade people to do something. Change legislation. Inspire local action. Grant funds. Win a client. Support your cause. It doesn't matter who you're trying to persuade or what format you're using to convince them. Use real examples and your own work to identify and practise the key elements of persuasive writing.

When: Mon 26 Jun, 10.30-11.30am
NFP price: \$70
Corporate/Gov't price: \$85
Level: All

Online: How to Write... A Funding Application with [the WV team](#)

Get some top tips on writing effective funding applications in this webinar with the WV team.

When: Tue 27 Jun, 6-7pm
Member price: Free
Level: All

Online: Poetry Clinic with [Terry Jaensch](#)

Receive direct feedback from your tutor and fellow course participants with this email correspondence course for early and emerging poets.

Poems due midnight Weds 12 Jul, 16 Aug, 13 Sep, 11 Oct, 8 Nov.

Member price: \$240/\$250
Non-member price: \$310
Level: Early and emerging

Online: Advanced Short Story Clinic with [Laurie Steed](#)

Whether you're an experienced writer working towards the completion of a manuscript or looking to maintain momentum and sharpen writing skills, this clinic provides sustained mentorship and specific feedback on the refinement of your own voice and style. Participants must have had a short story published OR have already participated in a Writers Victoria Advanced Short Story Clinic to enrol in this course.

Stories of up to 1500 words due midnight Weds 12 Jul, 16 Aug, 13 Sep, 11 Oct, 8 Nov.

Member price: \$240/\$250
Non-member price: \$310
Level: Emerging and established

Online: Intermediate Short Story Clinic with [Steven Amsterdam](#)

At any stage of a writing career, the feedback we receive is either acceptance or rejection, which lacks nuance and usefulness. In this intermediate clinic, regular critiques provide the basis for constructive, independent learning, with the goal of helping you develop as many as five stories over five months. Stories of up to 1500 words due midnight Weds 26 Jul, 30 Aug, 27 Sep, 25 Oct, 29 Nov.

Member price: \$240/\$250
Non-member price: \$310
Level: Emerging

In-person

Building Your Novel's Spine: Classic Narrative Structure

with [Alison Goodman](#)

Trying to get a grip on your novel's structure? Finding the best beginning, middle and end is only the start! Get a firm grasp of traditional narrative basics in this hands-on workshop – plot, pace, scenes, conflict, character goals, and an ending to remember. Learn how to manipulate classic storytelling to create an exciting and riveting narrative.

When: Thu 1 Jun, 10am-4pm
Member price: \$135/\$145
Non-member price: \$195
Level: All

Scrivener for Beginners

with Alison Stuart

Gain a basic working knowledge of the main tools Scrivener has to offer and the confidence to use and adapt the program for your own bestseller. Participants will need to bring their own computers to the workshop preloaded with Scrivener (available free on a 30-day trial).

When: Sat 3 Jun, 10am-4pm
Member price: \$135/\$145
Non-member price: \$195
Level: Emerging and established

The Salon Does Season 2

Join us for a sneak preview of the literary goodies we'll have coming up for you in Season 2, with special guest appearance from Winter School tutor Candy Bowers and a chance to share your own work in our rapid-fire open mic.

When: Tue 6 Jun, 6.15-8pm
Price: Free
Level: All

Woodend: This Fascinating Life - Writing Memoir

with Spiri Tsintziras

We each of us have a fascinating story to tell. Learn how to identify what your story is, how you can get it down and how to craft it so that it sparkles. Whether you want to create a life blog, a personal essay or a full-blown memoir, the workshop provides a supportive space and the tools for you to start (or continue) your memoir-writing journey. Presented in collaboration with the Woodend Winter Arts Festival.

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

So You Have an Idea for a Book... Now What?

You have an idea. How do you get started putting words to paper? How do you structure a first draft? Should you self-publish or approach agents or go to publishers? All these questions and more will be answered by the team from Writers Victoria. Presented in collaboration with the Williamstown Literary Festival. Book at willylitfest.org.au

When: Sat 17 Jun,
3.30-4.30pm
Price: \$12/\$15
Level: All

Writers on Wednesdays: The State of the Sector

with Ben Eltham

Survey the health of Australia's writing sector, in which the 'average' Australian writer makes \$13,000 from their creative labour each year. Writing for a living remains a difficult pursuit, but it's not all doom and gloom. Book sales are rising for the first time in years, Australian publishers are notching significant victories, and literary festivals are going from strength to strength. Join us for a story of survival and resilience.

When: Wed 28 Jun, 10am-4pm
Member price: \$30/\$40
Non-member price: \$55
Level: All

Writing Memoir

with Alice Pung

This workshop will give an introduction to writing your memoir and explore characterisation, setting, plot, place and language. Presented in association with the Glen Eira Storytelling Festival and the National Trust of Australia (Victoria).

Where: Rippon Lea, 192 Hotham St, Elsternwick

When: Thu 29 Jun, 5-7pm
Member price: \$30/\$40
Non-member price: \$55
Level: Early and emerging

Business Writing: The Art of Corporate Storytelling

with Ros Marsden

Learn how to be brave with text and develop a personality for your workplace through imaginative writing. Explore different writing platforms, including social media, and discuss the right words for each. Talk about which words to use in a crisis. And discover that every business has a great story to tell.

When: Fri 7 Jul, 10am-1pm
NFP price: \$210
Corporate/Gov't price: \$265
Level: All

Winter School: Writing Grief and Trauma

with Eliza Henry-Jones

Trauma and grief are daunting issues to write about. Learn what trauma and grief actually are, how to address them in your writing and how to keep yourself safe while doing so. Learn practical tips for exploring grief and trauma and have a go at some fiction-writing exercises.

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

Winter School: How to Write Your Perfect YA Novel

with Eli Glasman.

Teenage readers are among the most discerning critics. If they're not enjoying your book, they'll say so. Cover some of the foundations of writing for young adults, including how to create relatable characters, write realistic dialogue and structure engaging plots.

When: Tue 11 Jul, 10am-4pm

Member price: \$135/\$145

Non-member price: \$195

Level: Early and emerging

Winter School: Authorpreneurship

with Hazel Edwards.

In the business of creativity, the author is the brand. Writers and illustrators are solo operators in the business of ideas. This session is designed for aspiring and published writers, biographers, illustrators and those who have a professional attitude towards the publishing of their books and ideas.

When: Wed 12 July, 10am-4pm

Member price: \$135/\$145

Non-member price: \$195

Level: Emerging and established

Winter School: A Crash Course in Freelance Journalism

with Greg Foyster.

Whether it's your core practice or a stimulating side venture, freelance writing offers journalistic independence and creative control. Get a toolkit for getting started, including advice about pitching, planning, interviewing, editing your own work and building a successful business model.

When: Thu 13 Jul, 10am-4pm

Member price: \$135/\$145

Non-member price: \$195

Level: All

Winter School: Other People's Lives – Storytelling and Ethics

with Michael Green.

Deep stories about real people can illuminate complex social issues. But how do you best tell those stories? Do you even have the right to tell them?

How can you do it without taking advantage of the people you're describing? Delve into the practice and ethics of non-fiction writing, drawing on some of the lessons of 'Behind the Wire', an oral history project about Australian immigration detention.

When: Fri 14 Jul, 10am-4pm

Member price: \$135/\$145

Non-member price: \$195

Level: Emerging

Winter School: Writing and Structuring Memoir

with Meelee Soorkia.

So, you've decided it's finally time to write your memoir. But how do you sift through the millions of moments that make up your life and distil them into something worth reading? Learn how to turn your life events into an unforgettable narrative that will captivate the reader from page one.

When: Sat 15 Jul, 10am-4pm

Member price: \$135/\$145

Non-member price: \$195

Level: Early and emerging

Winter School: Lessons from Commercial Fiction

with Kate Cuthbert.

No matter your chosen style or genre, there is so much to learn from your colleagues writing commercial fiction. Build great worlds like a fantasy author; learn to pace like a crime writer; access your characters' emotional landscape like a romance author. Deepen and strengthen your own writing by learning the lessons commercial

writing has to teach.

When: Sun 16 Jul, 10am-4pm

Member price: \$135/\$145

Non-member price: \$195

Level: All

Winter School: Writing Place

with Alice Robinson.

Stories must occur somewhere. Use places – both human-made and natural – as the starting point for stories. Working with remembered, experienced and imagined places as a means of generating narrative, we will also explore how research, character development, structure and theme function in fiction writing.

When: Mon 17 Jul, 10am-4pm

Member price: \$135/\$145

Non-member price: \$195

Level: Emerging

Winter School: Writing and Advocacy

with Arnold Zable.

Story has the power to humanise, and to create empathy. A well-crafted story takes the reader into other worlds, whether your own or that of others. Issues of social justice and advocacy can be expressed in many ways. This workshop will explore the art of story across genres, and will include discussion, writing exercises, and feedback on your projects.

When: Tue 18 Jul, 10am-4pm

Member price: \$135/\$145

Non-member price: \$195

Level: Early and emerging

Winter School: Finding Your Voice

with [Carrie Tiffany](#).

Finding your writing voice can be a struggle. A blank page is confronting. It can tempt you to perform for it – to be writerly. Discover your own true voice and uncover the drives, desires and concerns that will get you writing distinctively and with confidence.

When: Wed 19 Jul, 10am-4pm
Member price: \$135/\$145
Non-member price: \$195
Level: Early and emerging

Winter School: Writing for Performance

with [Candy Bowers](#).

Gain skills in story-making and storytelling for the stage in this highly interactive workshop. Learn how to create fierce work to crack open the form and birth greater creativity.

When: Thu 20 Jul, 10am-4pm
Member price: \$135/\$145
Non-member price: \$195
Level: Emerging

Winter School: Science Writing

with [Marina Hurley](#).

When writing about science it's easy to drift onto related topics in the researching, planning and writing stages. Learn how to stay on track and be more efficient at each stage of writing: researching your topic, planning your document structure, and staying focused when writing and rewriting your early drafts. Bring along a current document, outline or brief to use during the writing exercises.

When: Fri 21 Jul, 10am-4pm
Member price: \$135/\$145
Non-member price: \$195
Level: Early and emerging

Winter School: Creativity 101

with [Karen Andrews](#).

Have you ever thought certain people are born with creativity encoded into their DNA – and that you are not one of those people? Join us for a day of learning, self-exploration, experimentation and play. For new writers and those who need to get unstuck. Bring your favourite writing tools!

When: Sat 22 Jul, 10am-4pm
Member price: \$135/\$145
Non-member price: \$195
Level: Early

Winter School: Writing Science Fiction

with [Michael Pryor](#).

Looking to learn the ins and outs of Science Fiction? Want to know how to create convincing and immersive alternative worlds? Keen to understand the difference between different SF sub-genres? Curious about SF that doesn't include robots, aliens or space travel? Hungering for tips on how to include robots, aliens and space travel? This workshop is for you.

When: Sun 23 Jul, 10am-4pm
Member price: \$135/\$145
Non-member price: \$195
Level: Early and emerging

Writers on Wednesdays: Funemployed – Living with yourself as a writer

with [Justin Heazlewood](#).

There's more to writing than word counts and dollars. How does one handle rejection, self-doubt, anxiety, jealousy and the other internal wrestling matches? What are the mental health hazards of pursuing a high-risk and fanciful career? Look at the fun, emotional side of being an artist, investigate self-care

and success while celebrating the unique protagonist of yourself. (WARNING: May contain mindfulness.)

When: Wed 26 Jul, 6-7.30pm
Member price: \$30/\$40
Non-member price: \$55
Level: Emerging and established

Memoir in a Year: Finding Your Story

with [Arnold Zable](#).

First there is the question, what is the story? Then, what is the best way to tell it? A memoir focuses on a specific aspect of one's life – a specific journey, relationship, family episode, or theme. There are many ways of writing a memoir, ranging from non-fiction to more daring approaches which cross the boundaries into fiction. Find out how to identify and tell your story.

When: Sat 29 Jul, 10am-1pm
Member price: \$80/\$90
Non-member price: \$120
Level: Early and emerging

Writing Social Justice

with [Arnold Zable](#).

Story has the power to humanise, and to create empathy. Issues of social justice and advocacy can be expressed in many ways, but what unites the work is the craft of story. The workshop will explore the art of story and will include discussion, writing exercises and feedback on your projects. Presented in association with Apollo Bay Arts and the Grace Marion Wilson Trust.

Where: Apollo Bay (venue TBC)
When: Sun 30 Jul, 10am-4pm
Member price: \$70/\$80
Non-member price: \$130
Level: Early and emerging

2017 Grace Marion Wilson Emerging Writers Competition

Applications are now open for the ninth Grace Marion Wilson Emerging Writers Competition. Short story or creative non-fiction submissions of between 2000 and 3000 words are being accepted from emerging Victorian writers.

- Winners of each category will receive a \$1000 cash prize
- Prizes of \$250 awarded to one runner-up in each category
- Three shortlisted writers to win one year's free membership to Writers Victoria
- First and second prize winners will be published in 'The Victorian Writer'.

ENTRIES CLOSE MON 3 JULY

writersvictoria.org.au/calendars/opportunities-competitions

Member benefits

- › Discounts on courses, manuscript assessments, mentorships and writer's studios
- › 'The Victorian Writer' magazine delivered straight to your door
- › Weekly enews filled with writing news, events and opportunities
- › Up to three free listings a year in 'The Victorian Writer' enews
- › Discounts on books for sale on the craft and business of writing
- › Information, advice and guidance from the Writers Victoria team
- › Access to the Writers Victoria library on level 3 of The Wheeler Centre (10am to 5pm weekdays), including a great collection of writing-related reference books, literary magazines, journals, trade weeklies and more
- › Access to a place to write in our library, writer's studios or meeting rooms.
- › Representation and advocacy on issues affecting Victorian writers

writersvictoria.org.au/membership

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At what stage of writing are you?

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

Academic Crime Literary fiction Radio Web content
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