

Women's Ink!



Spring/Summer 2021

The Society of Women Writers NSW Inc.
www.womenwritersnsw.org

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Editor's Message

After 106 days of lockdown, Greater Sydney has slowly begun to reopen. There were times in those months, as we collectively held our breath waiting for the pandemic to end, it felt like time was standing still. At other times, it felt that I was standing still while time moved on around me.

When collating the content for this issue, I noticed a related theme emerging - the passage of time in relation to the writer's journey.

In this issue, emerging author Sally Jane Smith takes an authentic look at her first experience with the professional edit. Award-winning author and poet Libby Hathorn moves into animation, and Wai Chim swaps being a children's author for 44 days in the outback on Australian Survivor. We travel through time with the poetry of Pip Griffin, and we celebrate the life and work of Hilarie Lindsay, an extraordinary writer and entrepreneur whose significant body of work continues to impact readers after her death.

The magazine is bookended with poems that capture pathos, joy, and uniqueness of where we are in this moment, right now.

I hope you enjoy our spring/summer issue.

Jacqui

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Giving Women Writers A Voice.



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President's Message

BY GEORGIE DONAGHEY

It is a privilege to be entrusted with the role of President of the Society of Women Writers NSW. I was honoured to be recruited by the previous President, and I am embracing my new responsibilities with the same passion I bring to Creative Kids Tales.

It is a committee's responsibility to ensure the organisation's continued success and growth during their term. New people bring new ideas and a wealth of knowledge. The 2021 committee, a blend of new and existing members, are working towards creating new opportunities for our members. Your creative growth, as well as our own, is what is important.

As I prepare this inaugural report, I'm surrounded by noise and chaos. The double-brick house next door is being demolished. Normally this would be disruptive, but I find the sounds welcoming, as it signifies we are emerging from under the COVID cloud. Shops are reopening, people are getting out and about, businesses are beginning to recover.

We edge closer towards resuming our face-to-face literary events and workshops. Look out Christmas!

While there's no denying face-to-face experiences are more satisfying for our creative souls, a positive to come from COVID is that the world has become smaller. For a long time it had been a dream of mine to attend overseas writing conferences and festivals. This past year, with everything going online, those opportunities presented themselves. From the safety and comfort of my home, I was able to attend festivals and conferences in the US and UK, workshops in New Zealand and all over Australia. I've been inspired and educated by speakers I never thought possible to hear. I've made new friends and my writing is richer for having had these opportunities.

There has been much talk about taking the Society towards our Centenary celebrations in 2025, and while that milestone is important, I am looking beyond 2025.

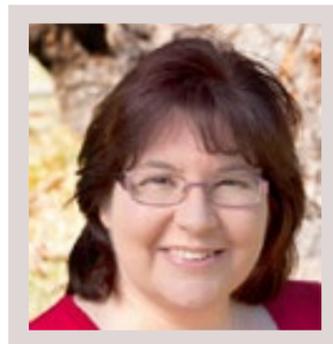
Let's take this journey together.

Happy writing!

Georgie Donaghey

'If someone offers you an amazing opportunity and you're not sure you can do it, say yes – then learn how to do it later.'

Richard Branson



Introducing

🔹 INK DROPS

a new regular section in Women's Ink!

What is Ink Drops?

It's a place for mini contributions - nothing is too small!

Whether it's a writing quote that's helped you, micro-fiction, vignette, a book recommendation, commentary, your best review, your funniest review, a podcast episode you've loved, whatever you'd like to share...

From a paragraph down to a few words, use your imagination, it's up to you!

Submissions for the Autumn issue of Women's Ink! are now open.

Email the editor Jacqui Brown at jacqui.brown@panachecat.com

A Lockdown Walk

AN ABECEDARIAN POEM BY PIPPA KAY



As I go for my daily walk by myself, I follow a family. Children on bikes, dad with a puppy exploring the treasures footpaths offer.

Grandma is a little slow, holding the youngest child's hand in case he runs onto the road.

Jasmine and wisteria vines knit themselves through fences like a springtime blanket.

Mum untangles a jasmine sprig nicks it with her nails, and ties it onto her mask,

perfuming the air she breathes. Quietness is broken by birdsong, ringing of bike bells and

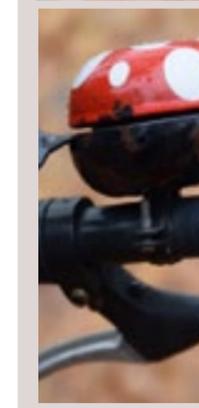
shrill children's voices that come from backyard games.

Under the railway bridge we walk, which is vividly graffitied. A train whistles a warning,

eXcept that it sounds like fun.

Young and old walk alike,

Zealously within five kilometres of home.



Unwrapping the Publishing Process with Sophie Masson from Christmas Press

QUESTIONS BY JACQUI BROWN

It's nearly Christmas, so what better time to chat with Sophie Masson from Christmas Press! Named for the joyful feeling people associate with parcels of wonderful books under the Christmas tree, Christmas Press is a small press with big ideas and beautiful books that tap into the huge pleasure of reading. Now Sophie removes the wrapping and lets us see the publishing process inside.

Hi Sophie, What type of books does Christmas Press publish and why?

Children's books: mainly fiction (chapter books, junior fiction, middle-grade and YA novels). But we have also published poetry and plays, anthologies and illustrated storybooks (the *Two Tales* series of traditional tales). We only publish books aimed at children and YA, because that is what we have always focussed on, from the start. And we love publishing in that area!

For submissions which arouse our interest - whether individually or together - we draw up a commissioning document, which looks at the book in detail, and outlines pros and cons of taking it on.

What sort of pros and cons do you consider?

A number of things might be noted in pros and cons, eg. whether the manuscript, even if we really like it, is in a good enough shape to go forward into editing or whether we'd need to spend a long

“ It's about the quality of writing, and the potential of the idea. It doesn't matter who the author is, whether they're published or unpublished - **we have to love the book** and want to take it further.

How many books do you publish a year?

Varies between 4 and 6, depending on the year.

It often feels to writers that the publishing process is a mystery. What's the process once you receive a submission to publishing?

We don't take on unsolicited submissions; we have submissions periods every so often, and also sometimes agents approach us with book proposals from their authors.

We always read every submission as a team. However we can soon tell which submissions might be worth pursuing - it's about the quality of writing, and the potential of the idea. It doesn't matter who the author is, whether they're published or unpublished - we have to love the book to want to take it further.

time getting it there (as we only have a very small and overworked team, this matters); whether a particular genre is hard to sell (for example, collections of short stories); if a middle grade or YA novel is intended as first in a series, could it be standalone or is the author absolutely fixed on it being a series (we can't really commit to series of long novels but we are more open to chapter book series).

We have to weigh up all kinds of things, even if we like the writing, characters and story.

Once you've got all the information together, what happens next?

Then we look at all those documents and discuss them together to decide what we can take on. We are a very small company with a very small team

and we can only publish a few books a year, so we have to be very choosy!

Once a book is taken on, and the author contracted, then we start work on editing, design, marketing, and millions of admin tasks that have to be done before a book is ready to go to the printer and from there to our distributor and on to bookshops. It's a long process!

How do you work with your authors?

Closely - we are in touch with them throughout the process on a book, and beyond that too in promotion and marketing.

When so many publishers are closed to unsolicited submissions, what can new authors do to break through?

Many publishers now do have submissions periods when you can submit work online, eg. Allen and Unwin have the Friday Pitch. Keep an eye out for submissions periods, and when they are open, always follow the guidelines. also, try pitch sessions, like the ASA run, for example. It can be disheartening, I know - and I speak personally as a writer too - but there really are opportunities out there. And don't just think about the big publishers - small publishers may be much more willing to look at the work of new authors.

What is your favourite part of the job?

Finding wonderful books and publishing them! We are very proud that our books have won and been shortlisted for awards and we are delighted that we have worked with absolutely fantastic writers and illustrators, both established and emerging.

How do Christmas press books stand out in the market?

I think the best way to answer that is to refer you to a couple of little videos we've made about our books: one is about backlist highlights, the other of our list for 2021. I think you'll see how joy, excitement, fun and immersiveness is at the heart of our publishing.

(Go to the Christmas Press channel on youtube to see these gorgeous little videos!).

Thank you Sophie!

Demystifying the publishing process...

If you're looking for more information on the publishing process, **Sophie says:**

'Watch out for a book being published next year called *Inside Story: the wonderful world of writing, illustrating and publishing children's books*, which we are involved in compiling along with fellow Armidale-based children's books publisher, Little Pink Dog Books, under our collaborative UPA Books imprint.

It is absolutely packed with fantastic information and advice from many writers, illustrators, editors, designers, publisher and agents and is coming out in May 2022.

There will be a crowdfunding campaign for it in November, by the way, so people can pre-order that way.

There's also a recent book called *How to be An Author* by Deborah Hunn and Georgia Richter, which has great info on various aspects of authorship and how it intersects with publishing.



The Christmas Press Team: (left to right): Fiona McDonald, Sophie Masson, Beattie Altravaz and David Allan
www.christmaspresspicturebooks.com

From kid's author to contestant on Australian Survivor, Wai Chim talks about 44 days in the Australian outback and how it's impacted her writing and her life



Hi Wai, thanks for chatting with us. First, what inspired you to go on Australian Survivor?

I went on the show for the personal challenge. I knew it would be so unlike anything I had done in my life and I wanted to see how I would fare. I was terrified of how I would do the water challenges and all of the tough living but I was also excited by the unknown and unpredictable nature of it. I knew it would be the experience of a lifetime!

In what way is Survivor and being a children's and YA author similar?

I definitely found myself analysing my tribe mates the same way I think about characters in a book. This helped me to understand the other players' motivations and how they might approach tricky situations and relationships.

As an author, I also understand it is important to dissect the intention behind what someone is telling you - if an editor is giving feedback on a piece of text, it's often not about implementing the suggestion they're making, but understanding why they are making it. The same concept can be applied to Survivor, it matters less what people are saying to you in the game, but knowing why they are saying it will help you keep a better perspective and make better moves.

I assume you couldn't take writing materials with you - how did you cope not being able to write anything for 44 days?

That was the hardest challenge! Sticks in dirt do not work - I tried! I do feel that not having writing materials with me and having nothing but time and my own thoughts gave me a better sense of living in the moment and appreciating it for what it is.

What was your strategy throughout the season?

My strategy was to take it one day at a time and just aim to make it one vote further. I kept an eye on the numbers and had good relationships with quite a number of my tribe mates which helped me stick around for as long as I did.

Do you have a favourite Tribal Council moment from the show?

Tribal Council was always so nerve-racking and we never knew what to expect - especially with all those last moment twists! JLP (that's Jonathan LaPaglia, the host of Australian Survivor) is asking you questions and you're trying to think of the right answer that will answer the question but also not reveal too much so as to keep all the plans in play - to be honest as a wordsmith, I found that aspect of it pretty fun. I think the Simon blindsides was a good tribal council because there were 3 different layers of deceit happening and we were trying to keep Simon unaware (I still can't believe that one pulled off!).

What are your biggest takeaways from 44 days

on Survivor?

I met so many amazing people that I never would have encountered in my everyday life and I'm so grateful for that. I learned a lot about the simple act of being human. Having most of our creature comforts taken away from us meant you really rely on basic human instincts; we learn more about ourselves (ie how we act in times of stress) and we have to come to accept that that's okay and we learn to be kinder to each other and to ourselves. Ultimately, my biggest takeaway from my experience was how proud I am that I somehow

I definitely found myself analysing my tribe mates the same way I think about characters in a book.

did this to begin with and of how far I got; I never thought I had it in me!

How did you get into writing for kids?

I taught English to kids while I lived in Japan for 18 months. I really enjoyed my experience working with children and I felt that storytelling was a great way to connect with them. When I started to look for stories that I wanted to put on the page, I realised so many of the ideas were stories that I had missed out on reading when I was growing up. I didn't grow up with books that had main characters that were Chinese-American with the particular nuances that I felt as a young person, where I never felt fully Chinese nor fully Western. And probably, in my heart of hearts, I'm still very immature or am just a giant kid at heart. :)

From China to Australia and a global writer in a language that is not your first - what's key on your journey to success?

Growing up straddling two cultures, I don't think I ever had a blueprint or template for how to 'be successful' at the things I wanted to do. The expectations were different, society had misconceptions about what I could and couldn't do and I didn't feel like I had role models or mentors that I could look up to and say, this is my path to success. So I think maybe I've been fortunate in that way as I had to work things out for myself - to figure out how to write the stories that would resonate for the audience that I wanted to reach, work out how to communicate to the industry why these stories should be put into the world and the how to find that audience I wanted to connect

with. I just had to figure out a lot of it as I went along!

During your time on Survivor, you were named a finalist for the 2021 Kirkus Prize. Tell us about that.

Survivor finished filming in mid June and I came back to Sydney and was plunged pretty much straight into lockdown right as the show started to go to air. The whole process of watching the show back after filming was an experience in itself (very very surreal). Finding out I was a Kirkus Prize

Finalist added another layer of surreal on top of it - I just had never expected it to be a possibility so it came as a huge, huge shock! I think the strangest part was I wasn't allowed to publicly talk about it until a certain date. I had never anticipated how much of my author life would be about keeping secrets!

Do you think Survivor will impact your future writing in any way?

I know it will - I learned a lot from my experience and I know this will manifest itself on the page. I don't think I'll be writing a 'Survivor' story per se (but who knows!) but I always take a lot of inspiration from my personal journey when I write and this will certainly shape my future craft.



Opus

BY PIP GRIFFIN

‘These three poems are from an autobiographical series I’m writing called *Opus*. ‘Party Piece’ was triggered by hearing (on Classic FM) a Chopin waltz I played as a child. So far I’ve written seventeen poems. The memories keep coming!’
Pip

No 1

Party piece

She hears the lilting Chopin Waltz
suggested by her teacher
for ‘party piece’ occasions
to show off to her mother’s friends.

The mother,
task-mistress of her daughter’s piano practice,
dreamed a brilliant musical career
denied her when she was young.

At thirteen,
her father’s near-death
a failed piano exam
new house, new school
turned the daughter
into an over-anxious teenager
who donned a Kevlar coat
to shield her real self from the world.

At sixteen,
the Chopin piece she learned to love
accompanied her coming out.
As performance fear receded
she cast off the coat –
new confidence propelled her into womanhood.

At eighteen,
leaving her hometown, she promised
take her last exam.
Instead, the newborn self took charge.
Piano was abandoned for her larger life
but music was always with her –
a velvet garment of first love.

No 2

New song

Choruses surround her –

more complex than church hymns
more worldly than school choir
more testing than playing piano.

In tarantella student halls
resounding with cacophony of strangers
quiet voices are not heard.
She learns to shout.

Bill Haley, Elvis, shake her
wake her
to dance with actors
artists and musicians

who introduce her to cool jazz
in coffee bars in Cuba Street
and joy of unimagined liaisons
that take her to the edge.

Hearing James K. Baxter
recite his works one night
she is propelled to poetry
she hopes will save her soul.

No 3

First Brahms then poetry

A frosty, chilblained morning –
music surges
from the draughty post-war lecture room
as she shivers to be let in;
portentous chaconnes
and tumultuous themes
sweep from jeopardy
to promise and exhilaration;
seize
excite
envelop her
carry her into the unknown.

The English lecturer
plays Brahms each week
a prelude to their study
of the poets
Brasch, Baxter, Beaglehole
Curnow and Campbell
Fairburn, Johnson
Mason and Anton Voght.

Emotions bared
poetry takes hold
and dances her to infinite horizons.



Tackling the Professional Edit: An Emerging Author's First Experience

BY SALLY JANE SMITH



It wasn't a magic wand. It was the most strenuous – and most confronting – practical task I have ever undertaken.

My coming-of-(middle)-age travel memoir had already been through an early manuscript consultation and multiple beta readers. Feedback had ranged from uplifting, through uncomfortable, to bewildering. I'd delved into it all, drafting and redrafting as the months and years ticked by.

I'd expected this preparation to stand me in good stead, and I was both right and wrong.

My editor, Elisabeth, agreed that I could skip a developmental review and progress straight to a line edit. I'd saved myself thousands of dollars.

But the text she sent back was riddled with digital redlining, and my smug anticipation of a light revision collapsed.

THE EDITORIAL PACKAGE

Two documents arrived in my email inbox.

The first document, an eleven-page **editorial memo** was a gentle arrow to the heart of my book. It dealt with theme and structure, pacing and voice. And it exposed a mortal weakness: characterisation.

There was a reason why these particular trips had inspired me to write. Unpacking Greece might be a Bill Bryson-style travelogue, but it was based on a journey steeped in emotional growth.

Greece was where I reclaimed the wanderlust I'd lost after a traffic accident had shattered my life ten years before. I faced my deep fear of dangerous roads on Kefalonia and abandoned anxiety in Delphi, moving towards the embrace of slow travel. It was on Rhodes that I conquered temptation, and on the rim of Santorini's ocean-filled volcano that I laid to rest the discontent that had me at risk of becoming a middlescent

'I'd dreamed of an editor polishing my text with a soft cloth, handing it back to me all aglow, but what she did was point out the rough edges and pass me the sandpaper.'

stereotype. I unearthed the decades-buried shortcomings in my relationship with my mother as I traced her footsteps on the Saronic islands, and found peace with her memory on the Peloponnese Peninsula.

It wasn't until Elisabeth pointed it out, though, that I realised little of this character arc had made it onto the page. I'd given the reader no reason to care about me or my journey.

Her memo was perceptive and sensitive. It built me, and my story, up.

The second document, a **line-by-line edit** of the narrative, almost broke me. Barely a paragraph had escaped her electronic pen. She'd sifted through each of them, critiquing, rearranging, striking out over-explanations and questioning assumptions of prior knowledge. She identified

flaws I'd learned about in theory – filter clauses, passive sentences, and nominalisations – but had difficulty recognising in my own work.

THE PAIN...

It certainly wasn't the straightforward accept-or-reject exercise I'd anticipated.

I'd dreamed of an editor polishing my text with a soft cloth, handing it back to me all aglow, but what she did was point out the rough edges and pass me the sandpaper. She'd done her job; now it was my turn to sweat.

Most frustrating was that I couldn't simply accept Elisabeth's amendments. Sure, she'd caught typos that astonished me at having survived countless revisions. Plus, she'd discovered a few startling inconsistencies. Had I really said there were three gringas in that Peruvian bus, when there'd been four of us all along? And she showed a masterful touch in shuffling my words about, giving power to a sentence through a deft reordering of its phrases.

But her voice was very different from mine. Her version had a stranger telling my tale. And, try as I might, I couldn't warm to the way she was telling it. Yet, her unsatisfying alternative opened my eyes to a distressing truth: I hadn't told it as well as I'd thought I had.

Muttering 'you just don't get it!' at my computer screen was one thing. Acknowledging it was my responsibility that the reader 'got' it was another. If Elisabeth didn't understand what I was trying to communicate, the problem was mine, not hers.

THE BATTLE...

I tackled the task in three rounds.

The first was the most painful. I grappled with the gritty detail, one phrase at a time. I ticked some of Elisabeth's recommendations and flicked others. But the bulk, I laboured over, cursing as I wrestled the words into shape. Sometimes, they fought back. I'd pick my battles, highlighting the offending passages in yellow and moving on.

Elisabeth had pointed out spelling, idioms and measurements that might cause an American reader to stumble out of the story. I coloured these green, as something to consider if I end up querying overseas. Occasionally she surprised me, both in what she'd changed – funny little terms like cowpat, spruiker and splodge – and in what she hadn't. I'd presumed she would transform my taps to faucets, leaves to vacations, and

further to farther. But when I cross-checked these omissions with an American friend who is a talented Spanish-English translator, he backed her up every time.

All the while, I kept her over-arching critique in mind, inserting a couple of rough paragraphs here or a cue to develop theme there. These I highlighted in turquoise.

The manuscript was to become more colourful yet. In the second cycle of edits, I returned to the turquoise to work on the character and narrative arcs. In went the purple (anything to do with my mum or the unexpected companion I'd found in her 1978 travel diary) and the grey (dealing with trauma or my midlife malaise). I struggled through the yellow as I went, tussling with the recalcitrant sentences until they surrendered to my will.

By the time the bell rang for the third and final round, I knew I was winning. I turned to Page One and worked my way through to the end, resolving any outstanding highlights and checking that the story still flowed.

...AND THE GLORY!

Somewhere in the second round, the magic happened.

It was as if I'd turned a corner I didn't even know was there. The words began to dance with life, rather than just report on events. The elusive 'show, don't tell' maxim made sense for the first time.

It's hard to explain, because Elisabeth's specific suggestions didn't focus on this aspect of my writing. But the timing couldn't have been coincidence. Somehow – combined with the cumulative effect of advice received from established authors, courses completed, reference books studied – the tortuous process of line edits set my words free.

I'm under no illusion that I've mastered the craft, but, thanks to the professional edit, I am more excited about my writing journey than ever.

Immigrant Australian SALLY JANE SMITH has visited 33 countries and lived on five continents. She is the author of *Some Leafs: Grandma Gropp's Tale in Itchy Feet: Tales of Travel and Adventure* and has recently completed her manuscript *Unpacking Greece: Turning the Pages from Fear to Fulfilment*, in which she demonstrates that an out-of-shape, middle-aged woman on a budget can confront her demons and experience a life-changing adventure.

www.JourneysInPages.wordpress.com

A Remarkable Life and a Voice for All Women: a thank you to Hilarie Lindsay

BY JAN CONWAY



Hilarie Lindsay. Illustration by Paul Delprat: *The Naked Gourmet* (1979)

Cows grazed the slopes of Mosman and the Sydney Harbour Bridge was still on the drawing board when Hilarie Lindsay (nee Dyson) was born in 1922.

In the words of her son, Andrew:

'Hilarie's father was building some of the first houses and apartments in the area ... he thought Mosman would eventually catch on. Some said her father was clairvoyant, but he didn't see Jack Lang and the Great Depression coming. A massive downturn in the family's fortunes saw her father lose almost everything he had built up through a lifetime of work.'

'Hilarie never forgot those early years of struggle, and the hardships of a depression-era childhood was something she shared with the man who became her life partner, Phil Lindsay. They were both battlers, and they never forgot what it was like to struggle.'

From a young age, Hilarie became aware of sexist attitudes. It's possible her mother was a strong and positive influence, having refused to say the words 'obey' in her wedding vows in 1917. Hilarie wanted to be a writer, but it wasn't until she'd raised her three children that she found time for her writing. At the time, prejudice against women compelled her to write under the

pen name Lindsay Dyson (a combination of her married and maiden names). To be taken seriously, she considered she'd need to masquerade as a man. In 1966 as Lindsay Dyson, Hilary won the Grenfell Henry Lawson Festival of Art short story competition – backing it up with a win the following year. She would go on to be the festival Patron. At the age of 44, Hilarie was finally on her way as an author.

So began a lifelong campaign of championing the rights of women and a passion for ensuring women's voices were heard, read, and taken seriously in their own right. She became an advocate of women writers, Australian writers, and for women's rights, forging a three-pronged attack as a writer, publisher and businesswoman. She became the President of the Fellowship of Australian Writers and a member of the Society of Women Writers Australia. She remained an involved and loyal member of both

these organisations. As President of the Society of Women Writers Australia, 1971 – 1973, 1975 – 1977, Hilarie drew attention to the difficulties faced by women who wrote, encouraged Aboriginal women to write, and lobbied for the removal of questions of gender and marital status from literary grant applications.

Hilarie drew attention to the difficulties faced by women who wrote, encouraged Aboriginal women to write, and lobbied for the removal of questions of gender and marital status from literary grant applications.

Hilarie wrote copious letters to newspapers about government policies, or the lack thereof. At a time when the imposition of death duties could leave a widow homeless and penniless, Hilarie successfully lobbied NSW Premier Robert Askin and was instrumental in changing the laws on death duties which was a boon to all Australian women.

In tandem with her writing, Hilarie evolved another life of high achievement as a pioneering

businesswoman. Young, married, and working in the family business, Lindsay's Toy Factory, she soon became aware of the inequality between the sexes, which further fuelled her determination to achieve change. She was President of TAGMA (Toy & Games Manufacturers' Association) and the first woman to head up a division of the Chamber of Manufacturers in the country.

In 2014, the State Library of NSW acquired what they described as, among other things, a fantastically rich archive from the Australian toy manufacturer Lindsay's Leichhardt. During the acquisition, Andrew Lindsay advised the State Library that his mother, Hilarie 'was very passionate about ensuring there were as many costumes for girls as for boys, and Hilarie routinely devised outfits accordingly... It was a

company ahead of its time in demonstrating equality'.

Hilarie was a prolific writer of prose and poetry with over 20 published books. An early non-fiction work, *Teenage Survival Kit – You're On Your Own* (1976), was written in response to her son leaving home at the age of 17. In an

She was 'very passionate about ensuring there were as many costumes for girls as for boys, and Hilarie routinely devised outfits accordingly'.

interview with the Sydney Morning Herald in 1985, Hilarie said: 'He asked me to tell him what he should know about keeping house – what it would cost and so on. At the end of three weeks I had written the manuscript. It dealt with the drug scene, first aid, mending shoes, changing light globes, shopping lists, washing and keeping house.' Together with *101 Toys to Make* (1972), these books were not only best sellers but are seen now as groundbreaking, with prototypes Hilarie made for *101 Toys to Make* held in the Power House Museum. She has written cookbooks, including *The Naked Gourmet* with illustrations by her long-time friend, Paul Delprat, principal of the Julian Ashton Art School founded by his great-grandfather.

Hilarie's best-known work, *The Washerwoman's*



Hilarie Lindsay in conversation with Sarah Pope, winner of the 2020 Abbie Clancy Award, March 2020 (Photo Credit: Rita Shaw)

Dream, published by Simon and Schuster in 2002, has become an Australian classic. The subject of her PhD undertaken late in life, it tells the true story of Winifred Stegar, an unheralded Australian writer whose life was an astonishing and unknown chapter of Australian history. Wander through the Australian Stockman's Hall of Fame and Outback Heritage Centre at Longreach, Queensland and you'll find a copy of *Washerwoman* displayed on a stand. The book, still in print, is available in braille and as an audiobook.

Hilarie didn't set out to seek recognition for herself. Nevertheless, her tireless work on behalf of others, often behind the scenes, has been acknowledged. Awarded Life Memberships of six different organisations, among them the Fellowship of Australian Writers, Youngstreet Poets and the Society of Women Writers NSW, she was also Patron of the Grenfell Henry Lawson Festival of Arts and the Terrey Hills Public Library – which she founded with her sister in 1957 to provide young mothers and their children a place to enjoy. She is an inductee into the Australian Toy Association Hall of Fame and the National Pioneer Women's Hall of Fame. She began a monthly writing group for the Fellowship of Australian Writers Sydney Central branch in 1985, which continues to this day.

In 1974 Hilarie received an MBE for services to literature, followed by the Queen's Jubilee Medal, and in 2006 the Medal of the Order of Australia, for service to literature and mentoring aspiring writers through a range of professional organisations. Aged 99, when reminded she'd soon be getting a card from the Queen, Hilarie replied she had no need for that – she'd already met the Queen.

Of course, Hilarie was not just a writer. She loved words, she loved people, she loved to participate, she wore her hats with flair. One of her treasures was a book of Thomas Moore's *Irish Melodies* – a gift she received at the age of 13 from her grandmother. In later life she delighted in reciting the poem she'd written as a seven-year old, encouraging and inspiring her grandchildren and great grandchildren to write and perform. On

a trip to London, Hilarie stood on Westminster Bridge and recited her favourite poem, William Wordsworth's sonnet *Composed upon Westminster Bridge*. In 2019, she joined a ballet class for seniors, dancing at the Sydney Opera House. Hilarie, on her favourite topic, was hard to stop. She was passionate, funny, generous, informative.

Lunches and parties for family, writers, friends and colleagues were eagerly attended. Hilarie's insistence that the humble potato was always on the table became something of a legend. Pip Griffin, a long-time member of Hilarie's Fellowship of Australian Writers group and the Society of Women Writers, remembers Hilarie's generosity to her guests at these events, as well as the wonderful artwork on the walls, and the readings. To Pip and many others, Hilarie was a mentor and role model.

When Hilarie's family asked me to speak at her funeral on behalf of the Society of Women Writers NSW I asked myself what story could I tell that typified Hilarie. Among the papers and photos I inherited as President I found within a crudely

carved timber case a glass bird, simple in style, a vibrant blue and

described underneath in handwriting 'President's bird'. Who would know its story, I wondered. One day during lively conversation around a literary luncheon table in the Dixson Room, I asked Hilarie what she knew of it. She told me she presided over some heated and feisty exchanges during her committee meetings. She'd bought the bird and sat it in the middle of the table as a reminder to be kind and to respect each other's differences. She called it her Blue Bird of Harmony. That sense of harmony, drawing people together, fierce in advocating for what was right, typified Hilarie.

At the time of her passing in May 2021, Hilarie was the Society of Women Writers NSW Public Officer, and a Trustee of the Abbie Clancy Award. Hilarie was preparing to release her latest work *How Women Cherish Women*, a book of poems that her family plan to publish posthumously. Hilarie was the Society of Women Writers NSW nominee for the 2020 Alice Award, which recognises a woman who has made a distinguished, long-term

contribution to Australian literature.

With a wealth of ideas, knowledge, an intense sense of social justice and a passion to share, Dr Hilarie Lindsay MBE OAM PhD (Syd) – 'has, quite simply, lived the extraordinary life of an extraordinary woman.' (Andrew Lindsay).

Hilarie remained a powerful advocate for women, championing their voices and celebrating the place of women in the cultural landscape. Standing beside the young women advocating for change today, Hilarie's voice would have been loud and strong.

She was an inspiration to many.



Playing Golf on Monday

by Hilarie Lindsay

My father saw me on the green.
I waved my golf club from the seventh hole
while he stood waiting by the fence.

I heard him say, 'You ought to be ashamed.
Your mother always washed on Mondays.'

I was supposed to be at home
tending the copper as my mother did
and all the generations of my clan,
like witches at their cauldrons,
stirring the potion with a wooden stick,
muttering incantations over steam
and smell of boiling linen.
Then stumbling to the line
bowed from the heavy basket.
By afternoon a row
of starched white shirts
hung in the master wardrobe,
clean underpants and vests,
neatly folded handkerchiefs and socks.

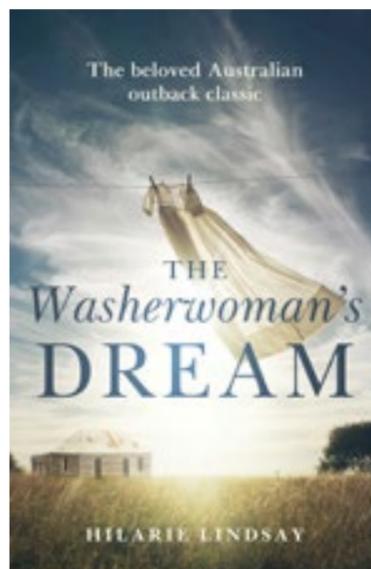
Monday a special day for men
who'd read the rule
in some unwritten text –
security of women safe at home
washing flapping in the wind,
flat irons heating on the stove.
And at the close of day
a meal of shepherd's pie
with a rice pudding.

My partner called me to the green
to come and make my putt.
My father walked away,
head bowed and shoulders stooped,
still reeling from the shock
that breached his comfort zone.

BRIDGET MCKERN

Reading *The Washerwoman's Dream*

I have just finished reading *The Washerwoman's Dream* written by Hilarie Lindsay who was our revered SWW Public Officer. It is an amazing story based on the true life of an Australian woman pioneer, Winifred Steger who, despite terrible deprivations, lived an unusual life in the outback, marrying an Indian man who lived in Oodnadatta with the Ghan camel drivers. Later, after his death, Winifred married another Indian man and went to Mecca on the Hadj. In spite of a very sparse education, she managed to write and publish serialised stories based on her experiences for the South Australian *Northern Argus* and then later published her story *Always Bells: Life with Ali* with Angus & Robertson (1969).



Knowing that Hilarie always encouraged women writers, and with her long association with the Society of Women Writers as President and matriarch, I was excited to find her book on the shelves of the retirement village I have just moved to at Taren Point. Seeing her name on the cover made me pick it up in a trice, and I found I couldn't put it down.

The Washerwoman's Dream is a book of immense scholarly research and gripping interest. Hilarie based her PhD on Winifred Steger's life, and so resurrected one who would have been consigned to an unknown history, as so many women before her. Over these weeks of Covid lockdown it has been a boon to be transported into another world of courageous women of a former age. Thanks to authors like Hilarie, we can rejoice at the courage and hardiness of women like her.

Hilarie's regular attendance at meetings, always dressed in her immaculate hats and suits, impressed me when I was the new and very green President in the years 2010 - 2013. Hilarie *always* encouraged me in my role.

BRIDGET MCKERN finds her voice through writing about her greatest passions - the dynamics of healing and change in people's lives, and the environment and earth caring. Bridget's first self-published book was an autobiographical memoir, *Seasons of My Soul - A woman's journey of healing* (2005). In 2007 she published *Living the Journey - Everyday Heroes Tell Their Story*, a collection of 14 life stories. Since then she has published two poetry collections: *Five Seasons - Poetry of the Soul* (2008) and *Jewel in the Hands* (2015). In 2017 she published a satirical look at educating for ecology: *ANT THOLOGY - allegorical ant tales. Stories for the Re-generation* (2019).

Bridget is a former president of the Society of Women Writers NSW.

Congratulations

We're delighted to share the winners of the 2021 National Writing Competition

FICTION

WINNER:

The Artist by Cindy Broadbent

Contrasting itinerant pavement artist's life with that of former veteran soldier, judge Hazel Edwards OAM praised *The Artist* as one with memorable characterisation with real dilemma of Art versus Life, orchestrated emotions about loss, and genuine tone.

HIGHLY COMMENDED: **What Remains by Mo Duggan**

COMMENDED: **Gilbert and Esme by Chloe Hillary**

CREATIVE NON-FICTION

WINNER

The Real Social Pioneers by Kathy Sharpe

The Real Social Pioneers pays homage to three women pioneers of rural journalism - worthy descendants of the first generation of Society of Women Writers members. The judge, Dr Susan Steggall, stated that with so many country newspapers closed or threatened with closure, this entry contributes significantly to the social history of Australia.

HIGHLY COMMENDED: **The Posh Bitch from The Big Smoke by Melissa Bruce**

COMMENDED: **The Forgotten First-Way Feminist by Cate Whittaker**

POETRY

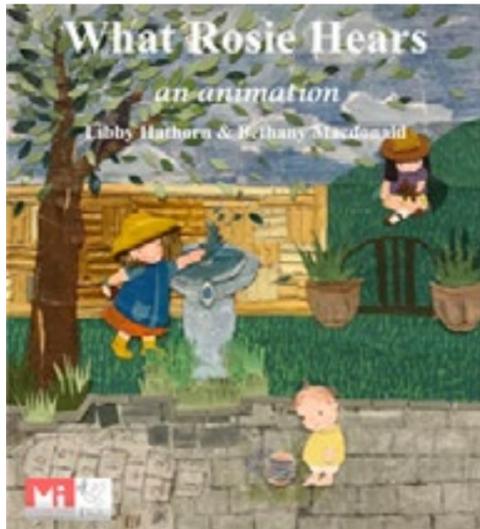
WINNER

Object Permanence by Natalie Cooke

The central figure in *Object Permanence* is a larger-than-life and slightly threatening pet cockatoo, who belonged to the speaker's grandfather, whose nature and spirit is closely tied to that of the cockatoo. The judge, Amanda Lucas-Frith, described this winning poem as creating its own unique reality by expressing a memory and experience mediated by the poet's craft and use of poetic language.

Highly Commended: **Doing Their Sums by Julie Thorndyke**

Commended: **New Water by Samantha Johnson**



What Rosie Hears: The story of a story that became an animation

How a writer of children's books turned her hand to all the intricacies (and expense) of the production of a five-minute video of her story. And how Pax Productions came into play.

BY LIBBY HATHORN

A Story is Born

A grandchild with hearing problems, a miracle for hearing-impaired children, and the struggle to get the story out into the world, this way or that...

I wanted to explore the wonder of the sense of hearing and gaining the sense of hearing. The project began after an idea of writing a text for a picture storybook about the miraculous transition of a child to the hearing world, and with the preciousness of the five senses in mind.



But I had to research the story I'd planned.

Near to hand was cherished granddaughter Isabel Hathorn, who has a cochlear implant, and access to the work of the Sydney based Shepherd Centre she attended. It was through the Centre I met Rosie Gallen, who'd been born profoundly deaf, with very clear memories of moving from the non-hearing to the hearing world as a child. Talking in depth to both of them the story flowed.

What Rosie Hears was completed over time with a 32 page picturebook in mind.

To Publication?

It was submitted to my usual publishers who loved it, so they said, but felt it was somehow too niche for such a big publishing house. At this point the idea to make an animation of this story was born.

A Lot to Learn for Pax Productions

At first I sought a grant from Create NSW but was unsuccessful. I hoped for funding from Shepherd Centre as I imagined it could be sold for a profit for the Centre. But picture book production is expensive. They referred me to Cochlear Australia, who for legal reasons said they could not fund it, but would be willing to help distribute it world-wide.

Undeterred about production I decided to take matters into my own hands.

Covid again, a planned overseas trip cancelled, (so some money to hand) and the drive to see the story out in the world, spurred me on.

In the usual way, I sought out the artist for this work first. **Beth Macdonald**, whose latest picturebook *Paper Boy* with such sensitive artistic work in paper, was appealing. Beth was an ideal fine artist to discuss the 'feel' of this new work with. She was keen

to try images for Rosie and little brother Archie, and Isabel. And she was willing to accept a one-off payment, as it was a not-for-profit venture. I developed a shot list, dividing the story in terms of scenes.

As luck would have it, two further things played into my court. The animator **Hamish Gilbert** (who'd worked with the ABC among other things), was willing to be paid at the lower rates for



this not-for-profit venture; and my friendship with amazing composer **Elena Kats Chernin**.

As Hamish Gilbert developed the storyboard for the animation, Beth Macdonald worked on the outdoor scenes, then the indoor scenes, the hospital scene, the piano scene, the cooking kitchen scene and various other bibs and bobs needed, like the flushing toilet, the gas stove. They worked very amicably together.



Elena Kats Chernin had composed a five part *Isolation Suite* during the first Covid lockdown which she sent to me. Hamish and I chose the most suitable for the theme of the work, and again Elena and her agent were willing to receive lower rates as it was a not-for-profit project for children.

The Launch

I have a small book production house, Pax Press, which has in the past published poetry (*Vietnam Reflections*), and after several visits to Kathmandu working for Mitrataa there, a picturebook set in Nepal (*Sangita's Singing*). So why not try an animation, renaming the house Pax Productions? Hamish joined me with his house, Mental Image, and his sensitivity to the subject. His own young kids even lent their voices.

Prior to the second Covid lockdown, the Shepherd Centre had asked me to present Rosie at the launch of their new library at Macquarie University and *What Rosie Hears* had its first airing.

What Rosie Hears was launched on 1st September, 2021 on Youtube to wonderful reviews.

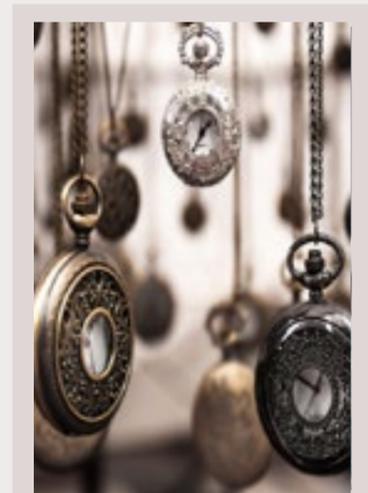
It is yet to be distributed by Cochlear Australia but should happen in the next month. Suffice to say there is also now a publisher very interested in a picturebook version.

Maybe for me as well as books, another animation, this time about poetry!

Midnight Ink

The heaviness of dreams
curled round my head, that
fantasy doona, snuggling
or smothering.
Waking, I try
to catch the images,
but they roll away and hide,
snug as peas under
the quiet pod of pillow.
To write a poem as assured
as the weird shaped worlds,
the particoloured mismatches
of the night, would be
something more than mere bliss.
Mundane words intervene,
as they tend to do.
Little alarms clocks measuring,
ticking through a vocabulary
of necessary limitation.

by PS Cottier



Our book review segment is
e x p a n d i n g !

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Book Review

Attachments by Antoinette M Diorio

Published by Arcadia

REVIEWED BY BEATRIZ COPELLO

Attachments is Antoinette M Diorio's first published poetry book. She is a multi-talented poet with qualification in law, teaching and counselling. Diorio also writes for children. *Attachments* is in two sections, People and Place.

With sadness, joy and nostalgia Diorio tells stories about people close to her and those not so close. With vivid descriptions she expresses suffering whether about a person or a situation. Sometimes her tales are coloured by mythology and religion. Her family and their traditions bring a cultural flavour to her poems, as in this excerpt from 'My Grandfather's Blessing':

My grandfather's fisherman-skin was feathered
like mother of pearl, his lips the colour
of a rose too long in the sun, the blue
of his eyes, milky from a life lived at sea.
His needle, bone grey, flitted like sail-fins-sea-flying,
his net-making strewn on the mackerel floor
dotted with float lines and sinkers,
its pattern in his head, miraculously cast.
Sometimes he'd call me in to sit near his stool,
pass me apple slices on his pocket knife's blade.
He'd listen to my dreams and I lived what he did at sea
And he'd call me *sangue di tuo nonno*.
(*'Blood of your grandfather'*, my translation)

The feeling embedded in most of Diorio's poems is one of attachment as the book's title alerts us. The poet understands people, their reactions, their needs and their pain.

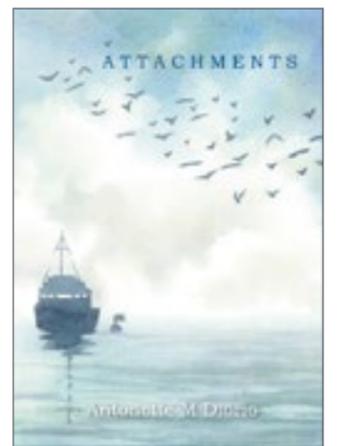
Feminism, power and control, reproduction and motherhood are amongst the many issues that emerge in Diorio's poetry. She treats the realities of some women's misfortune with gentleness and sensibility. A pragmatic idealism is also present in some of her poems where the romantic idealism flowers alongside the cruel reality of life. She tells stories of disappointed women, defeated women but also, she brings light to the female strength. In the section of the book titled Place, Diorio takes

the reader to many places, whether these are real or imaginary, she describes, she paints a picture, she becomes the place, like in the following poem Song of Dreams:

Oh blessed gift of sleep
to die a little
to be immune from time and memory
a pretence of images
amid petals of light on velvet-dark tapestry
watches mosaics of meaning
listen to angelic flutes
feels warmth and belonging
reaches for jasper walls and pearl gates
Michael turns me back
I sigh
and then a crepuscular morning greets me
the dream forgotten.

In this section there is also a poem titled The Country Pub, a long narrative telling of events and people around a country pub. The characters are interesting, real and well-drawn, the place is described with vivid imagery. The narrative is intense and full of life and at times raw. Some poems in the collection have religious overtones, but the poet reflects on issues, she does not preach. The poems are spiritual and deep without any sentimentality.

Attachments contains a collection of poems that speak about life, the good the bad, the real and the imaginary. One of Diorio's life concerns is the protection of animals and this is also evident in some of her poems. This is a collection to savour slowly with a cup of tea and your feet up.



Dr Beatriz Copello is a former member of NSW Writers Centre Management Committee, and writes poetry, reviews, fiction and plays. Her poetry books are: *Women Souls and Shadows*, *Meditations At the Edge of a Dream*, *Under the Gums Long Shade*, and *Lo Irrevocable del Halcon* (in Spanish). Her fiction books are: *A Call to the Star* and *Forbidden Steps Under the Wisteria*.

5

WRITE

What do you do to keep

ANSWERS

going when writing gets tough?

One Question.

Five Answers.

Every Issue.

Got a burning question? Something you're keen to know? Want to know how other writers do it, don't do it, or what their secrets are?

Please submit your questions to the editor: jacqui.brown@panachecat.com

And if you'd like to be asked a question, don't be shy, my email is just there, right above this paragraph! I'm very friendly, so why not put your hand up?

Sophie Masson

I take a break, a refreshing mini-holiday. I walk away from the computer, take a walk up the road or down the paddock, go to town, read or listen to a book... And most especially, not think about the problem. The point is not to write when you're feeling like that. Let your mind relax, even if just for a few hours. Always, after that short break, not only do I feel refreshed, but somehow in the background my subconscious has been working on the knotty problem that made the writing tough. And when next I sit at the computer, there it is, the solution emerging from under my fingers.



Sophie Masson: Born in Indonesia of French parents, brought up in France and Australia, Dr Sophie Masson AM is the award-winning author of over 70 books, for readers of all ages. She is Chair of the New England Writers' Centre and President of the Small Press Network.

www.sophiemasson.org

Elizabeth Cummings

Writing feels tough? Then I change my focus - literally - I stand up, stretch, do some yoga, go outside and look at the horizon, go for a run, jump in the ocean and swim around the reef; anything to change the energy! If I am losing sight of my characters or setting I create mood boards or listen to music. I create playlists for works in progress, listening to these on repeat when I am writing. I begin each writing session re-reading what I last wrote... it helps centre my thoughts. I also notice I am more creative at certain times so writing in those periods helps me to stay on track.



Elizabeth Mary Cummings writes picture books and contemporary fiction as well as poetry. With a background in education and psychology, Elizabeth's writing often tackles social and mental health issues, as well as including themes of resilience, equality, the natural environment, kindness, empowerment, and anti-bullying.

www.elizabethmarycummings.com

Margaret Ruckert

Recently I ordered a lamb curry, but the pieces were tough as any challenging writing. The aroma meant action. Breaking up the stringy cubes helped them absorb the excellent sauce. Crisis averted.

Toughness is treatable. After an initial draft of a poem not working, I read through line by line. I look for dried-out phrases, passive voices. I revitalise with strong verbs, unusual phrasing or a pairing of opposites.

I often think of 'savage gardens' and 'sweet sorrows' to help me break through toughness. Apply the resources of creative writing to cut through hard bits to give you a story with the works.

Or leave things to simmer. Tomorrow could be another chapter.



Margaret Owen Ruckert is a widely published poet, having won an IP Poetry Book of the Year for *Musefood* and a SWW National Poetry Award.

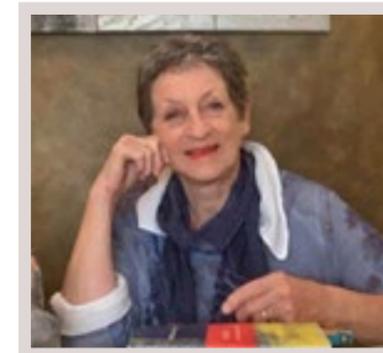
Her latest book, *Sky on Sea* explores Sydney's waterways through the form of tanka. She presents workshops as Facilitator of Hurstville's Discovery Writers.

Susan Steggall

I re-read what I have recently written, stare out the window, watch the birds and try to visualise scenes in my head. Keeping the body busy (walking, swimming or skiing) allows my mind to meander, creatively - ideas and connections flow.

If I am stuck in a manuscript, I turn to shorter art-related pieces I am writing concurrently. It helps to have different projects on the go to avoid that panic-inducing blank page. Concentrating solely on one big project might mean I finish it quicker, but life doesn't work like that!

Charlotte Wood's *The Luminous Solution. Creativity, Resilience and the Inner Life* (2021) is proving instructive in this year of Covid.



Susan Steggall has published: *Alpine Beach: A Family Adventure* (1999); novels including *'Tis the Doing Not the Deed* (2019) and *The Heritage You Leave Behind* (2021); art-related articles, reviews and a biography of art historian, Joan Kerr (2013). Susan has edited anthologies for SWW NSW.

www.steggalls.com

Janine Dickinson

When the going gets tough I read and sleep.

Writing literary historical fiction, there is always research to be done, so I lie on the sofa reading a research paper, which means inspiration strikes and soon I must stagger to my feet and start writing again even if I don't want to!

Otherwise I read one of four books I usually have on the go: one novel, one research tome, one unrelated non-fiction and usually an essay of some sort.

An hour or so of reading great writing almost always sets me off again.

Or if the reading bores me into a coma, I go to sleep. A complete reboot.



Janine Dickinson lives between Florence and Sydney. She worked as editor and translator. Now retired and writing literary historical fiction. Her last book *The Sweet Hills of Florence* dealt with the Italian Civil War during WWII. The current manuscript is set in the 1400s: a story of the early Medici.

www.convivioapartment.com.au

Looking Back at our recent events!



SEPTEMBER 2021

WRITING SPECULATIVE FICTION

WITH CAT SPARKS

What is Speculative Fiction?

Speculative fiction is an umbrella term, encompassing genres including science fiction, fantasy and horror.

Does writing speculative fiction require a different set of skills than writing about the real world?

The answer is yes and no...

Speculative fiction requires all the regular skills of mimetic fiction (fiction set in the present day), plus more. Because while mimetic fiction relies on things everybody knows or think they know, speculative fiction has to sculpt believable environments, ecosystems, economics in order for readers to suspend disbelief.

The general distinction between science fiction and fantasy is that science fiction is expected to be plausible, whereas fantasy is not.

Opening Paragraphs...

In speculative fiction, opening lines and paragraphs are crucial for setting the tone and orienting your reader as to where they are – because they literally could be anywhere.

Your setting is not a story in itself, and don't confuse your gimmick with your plot.

On Worldbuilding

When worldbuilding, ensure you understand and utilise basic principles of geography.

Worldbuilding should be quick and merciless –hang your scenery as quick as possible. Add details to encourage readers to believe there's a world beyond the immediate action of the story.

Where to get ideas?

Extrapolate speculative fiction from the everyday: news headlines, podcasts, history, fairy tales recast and reset. Details and procedures from your work or your hobby can make your story unique. Nothing should ever be generic.

Take detailed notes in your daily life you might want to use in a story later. Because you never know...

Initial ideas should be kick off points from which to ascend to the next level. Unpack, enhance and reorganise ideas through 'Writing off the page', by which I mean experiment with monologue, dialogue, discussion between characters, just the speaking bits, no scene description. Let the voices out and run with them. Don't be in such a hurry to produce a finished piece.

Collect headings and articles that might make good jumping off points for speculative fiction stories. Give your imagination room to expand.

A Word on Story Titles

And finally, avoid boring story titles, watch out for filter words, read outside your comfort zone, and avoid stereotypes!



You are invited to our Christmas Celebration!



with

Carolyn Eldridge-Alfonzetti: Writing with Humour

Maria McDougall & Olga Chaplin: A Collaborative Exercise in Self-publishing

Pip Griffin: Three poetry books published in the time of COVID

Poets Anne Casey, Kelly van Nelson, Colleen Keating, Beverley George and Helen Lyne

Donna Abela: Making Stories Now

Wednesday 8 December 2021

Dixson Room, State Library of NSW

Find out all the exciting details and book your spot at our
website www.womenwritersnsw.org

Don't miss out!



By the Stars

MARGARET ZANARDO

There is no compass to navigate
the movements of the heart,
to measure the many settings of desire;
no clock to count the missing heartbeats
for hours we spend apart;
but when we look up
to the evening sky
and see the first star glow,
we both unfailingly know,
though there may be thousands
of miles between us,
in the vast expanse of the firmament
the first and brightest star
is Venus.

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