

# Southern Write

## Southern Write

## New Look, New Program, New Faces ...

Welcome to our new look quarterly and to the launch of our July-September workshop program. We're particularly excited about our Writing Australia Masterclasses coming up over the next couple of months. It's an incredible opportunity for emerging and developing writers to hone their skills with Andrea Goldsmith (fiction), Cate Kennedy (short stories) and Lee Gutkind (nonfiction). Book early. We're also excited to be running a series of workshops in conjunction with the Australia Society of Authors, helping SA writers to develop skills in digital media, marketing and promotions.

**Susan Errington** has a Bachelor of Laws, a PhD in Creative Writing and is a founding board member of the South Australian literary magazine *Wet Ink*. A published novelist, she has been a co-editor of a short story collection and awarded and short-listed for several literary prizes. Currently, she is employed by the SA Legal Services Commission and her skills and experience will be of benefit to the SA Writers' Centre in what are particularly difficult times for arts organisations. She will seek to increase membership, especially of younger writers, lift the Centre's public profile, explore new avenues for funding and partnerships and identify new technological opportunities.

Alongside our workshop program, we'll be running regular spoken word events, readings and panels, including an Emerging Writers' Forum in late June. We're even cooking up a series of pop-up literary dinners in venues around town. To keep up to date, you'll need to keep your eye on our fortnightly enews (see inside for how to register if you don't already get it) and on our website, or for the most regular updates, join us on Facebook and Twitter.

There are some new faces around the Centre. We have added two new fabulous staff members to the team: Stephanie Thomson, who is our new Office Manager; and Vanessa Jones, who is working to develop networks, ideas and projects for our Emerging Writers' Program.

I'd also like to welcome new Board members Susan Errington and Michelle Prak, appointed at our AGM in May. We all look forward to working with them. For those of you who missed the AGM, our Annual Report is available in hard copy from the office or for download from our website.

**Sarah Tooth**  
Director

**Michelle Prak** is a social media consultant with more than 20 years' experience in the communications industry. She produces a lot of content for the social media world she occupies. She writes a regular blog on social media called *Prakkylopedia*, is a happy Twitterholic and has a weekly segment on 891 ABC Adelaide. Michelle lectures in Public Relations at the University of South Australia. She was a member of the SA Writers' Centre in 1998-1999 and is excited to be returning. She is keen to share her public relations and social media skills with the SAWC to help it connect with members, raise its profile and compete for grants.

### 2012 BOARD

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# Bylines

Bylines

You've waited since March and finally here's our new quarterly edition of *Southern Write*. We hope you like what you find between its pages, because there are a number of new features we'd like to draw your attention to.

We have an ISSN (International Standard Serial Number) for the first time in the publication's history. The ISSN system provides booksellers, publishers, researchers and librarians with a simple and accurate method of identifying your magazine but, more importantly, it gives you as a contributor the right to claim any articles, whether they're nonfiction or fiction, as legitimately published.

We have a new page – the **Barbara Wiesner Fiction Page** – for stories under 750 words. There were a fair few entries for the new page. We picked two pieces and you'll find **Izzy Williams'** short story '**Oodnadatta Cadence**' towards the back of the magazine, with a piece entitled '**Satisfied**' by **Caroline Reid** ready to go in our September issue. But we'd like to thank all of the entrants and encourage members to submit more short pieces when we open up another round towards the latter part of the year.

In the spirit of our new fiction page and not wanting to leave our poets high and dry, we're in the process of discussing and putting together some guidelines for a **Poetry Page**. The new spot will almost certainly be guest edited – we have an editor for the inaugural page – so watch this space in September when we announce the guidelines and ask for contributors.

While we shall be continuing with our interview format, there's a new spot called **Author-2-Author** in which we'll be asking published writers – these can be essayists, journalists, short fiction writers, playwrights or screenwriters – to talk about an author whose writing has been influential in guiding their own practice. *Southern Write* editor Malcolm Walker has

kicked off the first of the series with a piece on Russell Hoban.

Rather like Labradors, magazines require feeding. They're content hungry, which means we're on the lookout for nonfiction – articles on writing and publishing, both from a personal and an industry perspective – so if you have an idea please email us and we'll have a look at them.

The design layout is slightly different, particularly on the front page. We're hoping to create a new masthead designed to match but as always time and money stick their ugly heads around the door and tell us to be patient.

Don't forget that all our old listings – 'Book Donations' (which used to be in this column), 'Competitions', 'Opportunities', 'What's On' and 'Member Achievements' – can now be accessed on our website.

We're always interested in your views and we'd love to hear from you about our 'new look'. Tell us what you think – don't hold back. You can email the editor at [malcolm@sawriters.org.au](mailto:malcolm@sawriters.org.au)

## September issue *Southern Write* Copy deadlines are as follows:

For fiction (750 words max.)

**We're not taking  
submissions for the  
September edition;  
December date to be  
advised later in the year**

For commissioned articles  
**5pm, Wednesday  
15 August, 2012**

email:

[malcolm@sawriters.org.au](mailto:malcolm@sawriters.org.au)

post to:

**'Attention Editor', PO Box 43,  
Rundle Mall, Adelaide 5000.**

# Centre Info

## Life Members

- Max Fatchen
- Gillian Rubinstein
- Sean Williams

## Our Thanks

Thanks to Julia Archer, Connie M. Berg, Lyn and Tony Brooks, Coie and John Dikkenberg, Barbara Fraser, John Gilbert, Rob de Kok, Gay Sanderson and Joel Shayer for their assistance in mailing the March edition to all our members.

## Disclaimer

The information in this publication is presented in good faith as a service to SA Writers' Centre members. While the information is believed to be correct, the Centre takes no responsibility for its accuracy. No liability is accepted for any statements of opinion or any error or omission. Advertising material is accepted for this newsletter but such acceptance does not imply endorsement by the Centre.

## Access to SAWC

Wheelchair access to the SA Writers' Centre is available at the 26 York Street rear entrance. Alternatively, come in from Rundle Street via Caffe Brunelli, proceed towards the toilets and take the door to your left at the end of the passage to reach the lift. SAWC events/workshops free for a carer or companion.



# Author-2-Author

Southern Write editor **Malcolm Walker** looks at how some of **Russell Hoban's** fiction has influenced his own writing.

Like many writers there are numerous authors who have influenced, excited and entertained me. But there is one who runs a little ahead of the field. I first came across Russell Hoban when reading *A Mouse and His Child*, a dark Bildungsroman for older children about the adventures of a clockwork mouse and his quest to become self-winding. Hoban, an American who settled in London, wrote some sixteen adult novels and numerous children's books, one of which won the prestigious Whitbread Award. I have read the first six of his adult novels, more or less in order of publication, and his deep engagement with metaphysical themes, particularly in the novels *Riddley Walker* and *Pilgermann*, has had a profound affect on me and my writing. It is hard to describe what it is about these books that so deeply moves me – but move me they do – and this article is, in part, an attempt to explore these questions in miniature.

Often described as a science-fiction or fantasy writer and a magic realist, and while these elements are there, for me Hoban's narratives stand too far outside such confining labels. If he writes fantasy, then it has no location within the generic meaning of the term. His novels resist such classification.

I've read *Pilgermann* three times and it still resonates. Hoban's eponymous disembodied narrator, an 11th century Jew, tells us of his castration at the hands of Christians and subsequent journey – I hesitate to call it a pilgrimage – to Jerusalem. The novel opens with what was, for me at this first reading, an entirely distinctive narrative register:

*'Pilgermann here. I call myself Pilgermann, it's a convenience. What my name was when I was walking around in the shape of a man ... I simply can't remember. What I am now is waves and particles ...'* For an historical novel the language is at once strangely scientific and yet poetic, as what follows shows. *'I don't know what I am now. A whispering out of the dust. Dried blood on a sword and the sword has crumbled into rust and the wind has blown the rust away but still I am, still*

*I am of the world, still I have something to say, how could it be otherwise, nothing comes to an end, the action never stops, it only changes, the ringing of the steel is sung in the stillness of the stone.'*

Hoban is much concerned with issues of time and death, and our perception of and philosophical stance in the face of the fleeting passage that is our existence. Even though I write for teenagers, who despite their bluster are not immune from such questions, I try to grapple with these issues in my own writing. *Pilgermann*, particularly its narrative point-of-view, gave me an insight into how to manage



the long-dead Celtic warrior, Cei, also disembodied, whose first person narration punctuates the contemporary action in my young adult novel, *The Stone Crown*. Hoban's language, his gift if you like, author to yet-to-be-author, gave me the confidence to attempt this.

The voice of the eponymous narrator in *Riddley Walker* is as distinctive and unforgettable as the debased language that Hoban has him write in, and this dark parable of the nuclear age has drawn me back to its pages half-a-dozen times. Set roughly 2,000 years in the future in a post-apocalyptic Kent, the 12 year-old hero becomes an 'outsider' – a consistent theme of Hoban's – when he leaves the safety of his family's 'fents' (literally fence: a stockaded camp) and begins the circular journey that will bring him back to his birthplace. Hoban's landscape – outside of the scrag-end of humanity huddled in their primitive stockades – is populated by killer dogs, such as the Bernt Arse Pack, which means the singular act of walking alone and weaponless is tantamount to

a death sentence. Riddley walks a long road, filled with enigmas out of a past that cannot be recalled nor interpreted either collectively or individually – hence his name. These unsolvable riddles, such as the debased vestige of the Punch and Judy showman that is central to the novel, shape the questions that haunt Riddley's journey: *'Why is Punch crookit? Why will he all ways kil the babby if he can? Parbly I wont ever know its jus on me to think on it.'* And think on it – and his other novels – we do. Hoban said that all his work 'was about looking at the world and finding it strange.'

But it is Hoban's language to which I continually return, that and his theme of life's journey and its accompanying uncertainties. In *Riddley Walker* his exquisite use of language to describe landscape, somehow accentuated by the very misshapeness of the words themselves, and to illustrate the outward trepidation that change brings into our lives is both mystical and highly moving:

*'Raining agen it wer nex morning. Theres rains and rains. This 1 were coming down in a way as took the hart and hoap out of you there were a kind of brilyants in the grey it wer too hard it wer too else it made you feal like all the tracks in the worl wer out paths nor not a 1 to bring you back.'*

But it is this inward journey in both novels, reflected in the main characters' choices and actions, that so engages and inspires me. Hoban's action, and there's plenty of it, is never empty; his characters never

... continued on page 8

## Author-2-Author

We're hoping this article will kick-start what will become a regular column, where South Australian writers can 'soapbox' a favourite author who has helped shape their view of books and their own writing practice. If you're interested in making a submission please email [malcolm@sawriters.org.au](mailto:malcolm@sawriters.org.au)

# Preoccupations With

Hannah Kent looks at the development of

## PART I

Ideas for novels arrive in unpredictable ways.

Ten years ago, when I was fresh out of high school and yearning to do something different, I left Adelaide for Sauðárkrúkur, an isolated fishing village in the north of Iceland, on a twelve-month Rotary exchange. This small town lies snug in the side of a fjord: a clutch of little buildings facing an iron-grey sea, the mountains looming behind. When I arrived it was January, and dark. There were no trees. The town's houses were hostage to snow, and in the distance the north sea met the north sky in a suggestion of oblivion. It felt like the edge of the world.

I soon became intensely lonely. The community was small and tightly knit and I was an outsider. I was the exchange student. Everyone knew who I was – cars would slow to a crawl as passengers gawked out of the window to stare at my foreign face – but few people approached me. For the first time in my life I felt socially isolated, and my feelings of alienation were compounded by the claustrophobic winter darkness and the constant confinement indoors. I turned to writing for company; to fill the black hours.

It was during these first difficult months of my exchange that I travelled through a place called Vatndalshólar. Returning northwards after a visit in the south, my host family and I drove through an unusual tract of landscape: a valley mouth pimpled with hillocks of earth. When asked if the area was significant, my host parents pointed to three small hills, nestled closely together. Over one hundred years ago, a woman called Agnes had been beheaded there, they said. She was the last person to be executed in Iceland.

I was immediately intrigued. What had she done? What had happened? Over that year I discovered that Agnes was a 34-year-old servant woman who had been beheaded on January 12, 1830 for her role in the 1828 murders of two men, and the arson attack that attempted to

destroy their bodies. It seemed a tragic tale. Agnes had been thought an 'inhumane witch, stirring up murder', and been unequivocally condemned. Yet, for reasons that I cannot rationally explain, I felt an uncanny kinship with this dead, convicted murderess. Retrospectively, I can only speculate that the strange, isolated place of her death resonated with my own feelings of loneliness; that I thought of Agnes as a fellow outsider in a remote Icelandic community.

A compulsion to tell the story of the execution, or more specifically, Agnes's story, began to grow during that year of my exchange. Surely there was more to her character than the stereotypical 'monster' spoken of in the records of the murder. I felt increasingly haunted by Agnes, feelings heightened by my lack of knowledge and understanding about her life. When I returned to Australia and began a Bachelor of Creative Arts, thoughts of Agnes continued to seep through the layers of my consciousness. I dreamt of her frequently. This quiet preoccupation with a ghost, a figure about whom I knew very little, was in part the most private, irrational and idiosyncratic reason why I decided to write about her life. I needed to reach into the dark and grasp the thing that was haunting me: to exorcise her presence from my subconscious.

Of course, it's one thing to be haunted by a ghost, or an idea, or something similarly indistinct, and another thing entirely to set in down in ink. For four years I dabbled with my project, sketching down poems, ideas and sentences. I was completely directionless. 'I'll write a verse novel!' I thought to myself. 'That sounds like fun.' It wasn't until 2008, when I began my Honours (and a year later, my PhD) in Creative Writing under author Ruth Starke's careful supervision, that the magnitude of what I aspired to do struck me. Write a novel about Iceland? On a person about whom you know nothing, except their name and date of death? What about research? Translation? Ruth kindly, explicitly, told me to give up the idea of a verse novel. The story was too big. How to convey the alien social landscape of nineteenth-century Iceland in a few

clumsy haikus? I turned my attention to the historical record and attempted to find more information on the crime and on Agnes. I would honour the facts, I thought to myself – thus sidestepping the ethical quagmire of writing about the dead. I would write a novel.

In 2010 I travelled to Iceland to continue my research into Agnes's background, the murders, and her execution. Over six weeks I visited the National Archives, the Arni Magnusson Institute, and as many museums and libraries as possible. I was able to visit the sites of both the murders and the execution in person. Through a combination of perseverance, lateral thinking and sheer synchronicity, I came across ministerial records, parish archives, letters and books that enabled me to attain a better understanding of the life Agnes had led, and the reasons why she was beheaded. She was a pauper and a bastard, I discovered. Abandoned by her mother at six years old; a poet; an intelligent dark-haired girl who preferred to read than attend to farm chores. The ambiguity of her character was striking.

When I returned to Australia I was paralysed by the task in front of me. Prior to my research trip I had written 40,000 words, but I had also promised to 'honour the facts'. I understood that I would need to write the novel from scratch. Had I not been committed to a PhD, of which this would be part, I might have abandoned the project altogether. Ruth understood: 'Start by writing the scenes you want to write,' she said. 'Come to the rest later.'

January 2011 marked the beginning of what would ultimately be five months of intensive work. I wrote from home, making sure I was in front of my computer by eight o'clock and staying there, with a break or two for coffee and lunch, until I had written 1,000 words a day. Occasionally I completed my quota, or even exceeded it, and was free to do other work or read; other days I remained gawping at my computer screen, infuriated by my incapacity to write anything, until late afternoon. Eventually, having gone through a keyboard (quite literally), I had my first complete draft.

# Ghosts

her manuscript, 'Burial Rites', and the benefits of mentorships ...

## PART II

**M**y decision to enter my manuscript in the 2011 Writing Australia Unpublished Manuscript Award (WAUMA) came out of a conversation I had with a friend. We were discussing how busy we both were, and how difficult it was to devote attention to personal projects when money had to be made, and deadlines had to be appeased. I was concerned that I wasn't prioritising my own writing – possibly out of fear of failure – and I mentioned, by way of example, that I had heard of the Writing Australia Unpublished Manuscript Award and was considering entering my novel it, but that I had a review due for a Victorian publication. I had no time to redraft my novel. How to negotiate the battle between a manuscript and paid freelance work? My friend sagely suggested that I ought to contact the editor expecting the review, and blankly announce that it would come in late. 'It's time to take advantage of the bigger opportunities out there,' she said. I took her advice. I renegotiated my deadline and sat down to expediently redraft my manuscript. Not having looked at it for five months gave me the necessary objectivity I required to slash and burn as necessary. In three days I cut 20,000 words to bring the manuscript down to 90,000. The WAUMA deadline gave me clarity; made me deliciously ruthless with my own work. There wasn't time to pine for cut paragraphs, abandoned characters – I needed to finish the bloody thing.

I entered the manuscript and its synopsis a few hours before the WAUMA deadline closed. I was exhausted. At that stage I had no expectations of it even being shortlisted, but I was thrilled that I had managed to complete so much work on my novel in such a short amount of time. 'At the very least,' I told myself, 'you've got another draft done and dusted.'

One month later I received a phone call from Barbara Wiesner, then-Director of the SA Writers' Centre. She had some news. Not only had I been shortlisted for the Award, but I had won the \$10,000 and a

mentorship worth \$2,000. To say I was thrilled is a drastic understatement. I recall asking someone to slap me in the face out of sheer disbelief.

The day the award was announced I was completely unprepared for the attention I received. I spent most of the day receiving calls from media, kind wishes from those I knew and those I didn't, and advice from published friends regarding foreign rights, agents and the mentorship. My fellow editors at *Kill Your Darlings* also contacted me, saying that people had asked them for my details – could they pass my email along? Before the day's end I had been contacted by publishers offering their congratulations: 'I'd love to consider the novel for publication if you were willing to show it to me'. I was heady with possibility and yet felt out of my depth and ill-equipped to negotiate such sudden interest. Fortunately, after being contacted by a publisher friend of mine, Sydney-based literary agency, Curtis Brown, invited me to send my manuscript to them. They would read it over the Christmas break and decide whether to offer me representation.

In January, after a few weeks of anxious waiting, I received a response from the agent saying that she hadn't finished the book yet, but that she was 'still very interested'. It sounded promising, but as when I entered the award, I tried to limit my expectations. 'It would be enough just to get her feedback,' I told myself, preparing for disappointment.

I needn't have. Curtis Brown called me by the end of January, offering representation. They asked me to keep them in the loop regarding my mentorship (which had not yet been confirmed) and suggested a few changes to my manuscript in the meantime – feedback I happily took on board.

The thrill continued. Following the award's announcement in November 2011, I had discussed possible mentors with Barbara Wiesner and Peter Bishop, one of the WAUMA judges. It seemed a bizarre and amusingly unreal task; naming authors I had revered for so long, entertaining the possibility of their direct assistance. Thinking of the historical milieu of my



manuscript, I suggested some Australian historical novelists I admired terribly, among them Pulitzer Prize-winner, Geraldine Brooks, author of *Year of Wonders* (2001), *March* (2005), and, most recently, *Caleb's Crossing* (2011).

In March 2012, I received an email from an unrecognised address that my computer had labelled 'junk'. Just before I deleted it from cyberspace, I saw the subject: 'Burial Rites'. It was from Geraldine Brooks: 'Thank you for the opportunity to be one of the first readers of your remarkable novel ...' Her comments were kind, considered and complimentary: 'I have very few suggestions, and most are tweaks, only'. She suggested that my novel, despite its tragic subject, was perhaps a little too 'bleak', and whether I might let 'in a little more light at the end', and went on to express other comments on one or

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**Hannah Kent** won the 2011 Writing Australia Unpublished Manuscript Award for her manuscript, 'Burial Rites', which tells the story of Agnes Magnúsdóttir, the last woman to be executed in Iceland. She is a co-founder and deputy editor of Australian literary journal *Kill Your Darlings*, and teaches Creative Writing and English at Flinders University, where she is also completing her PhD. In 2011 she was a judge of Melbourne University/The Australian Centre's Peter Blazey Fellowship for Life Writing. She has written for *The Big Issue*, *Australian Book Review* and The Wheeler Centre, amongst others.

# Australia Council Grants

David Sornig reflects on his recent success as an Australia Council grant applicant.

In 2011 I successfully applied to the Literature Board of the Australia Council for the Arts for a \$25,000 New Work grant in the Emerging Writer category. While it's not a huge amount of money, relatively speaking, winning the grant came as a huge boost. It allowed me to take a significant amount of time off work as a full-time lecturer to devote unfettered time to writing my second novel.

Applying for a grant from the Australia Council is a pretty straightforward process in terms of its logistics. Applications are due in mid-May, they're lodged online, and results are announced in September. That means trying to keep a lid on your hopes and expectations for six months. Not an easy thing to do if you're an obsessive type like me.

What takes the most time is making sure that you've got the details right: that you've done your proverbial homework to make sure you have done everything you can to get the application to communicate exactly what it should.

The first bit of advice I'd offer here gets straight to the most important part of the application – the project description. The project you are proposing should be an actual one. While a passing idea might be a good one, it's difficult to articulate something about it when there's no cake to sink your teeth into when you're describing it to the board. If you put in an application for a passing idea it will show.

You've got about 1500 words in your application to sell your proposal. It's your chance to really demonstrate your intellectual and artistic passion for the project you're proposing. It's okay to use the first person. I began the summary of my project with a story about how I came to the project, a novel about protest, transparency and exclusion during a trip to Spain. I wrote about how the experience suggested the idea for the novel, and why it was important that I write this novel now, how it fitted into the contemporary political and literary landscape. I showed I understood what I wanted to do with the novel and why it was important.

I also wrote about how far I'd already progressed with the novel. I had a fairly substantial draft version of the novel that I'd been working on out-of-hours. This enabled me to provide some fairly well-polished writing samples with my application.

It's a requirement now for any category of New Work grant application that the applicant has had at least a full-length work (or equivalent) published. For each category, Emerging, Developing, and Established, the number of full-length works you need to have published is greater than was previously required. In the last few years the eligibility requirements for each of these categories has tended to change with each application round, so be sure to check them out on the Australia Council website.

Even if you have had a full-length book published be sure to list every relevant publication and every award you've received. Track record and reputation do count. If you're in a position to get a letter of support from a publisher, then get it.

The important point here is that you are not only selling the idea you have, but also you are capable of getting it done.

Take advice on your application from people whose opinions you value. I asked a couple of friends and colleagues, all writers or people versed in grant application procedures, to look over the application for ridiculous typos and to suggest ways they thought the application might be better developed.

It's also really, really worthwhile getting in contact with the relevant Literature program officer at the Australia Council. I started taking notes and developing my application late in 2010 for the May application date and I came up with a bunch of questions that I emailed to them. I got some very friendly and useful replies. I also took the opportunity to make an appointment to meet one-on-one with those same Australia Council program officers I'd been emailing when they came along to the SAWC in March 2011.



On that score take the time to have a look at the board's reports. The September 2011 report notes the following for the emerging category:

'Board members and advisers noticed in many instances that project descriptions were often long and rambling, with insufficient evidence to convince assessors that the project could be achieved. Applicants are encouraged to think carefully about their project description and to present a coherent description of what they intend to write.'

There is perhaps no more direct advice than this. Be clear. Be real.

The clearer you are about what it is the members of the literature board usually look for (the membership changes from year-to-year) the more realistic your chance of getting a successful application in.

This leads me to the final caution: don't be under any illusions. The success rate last year in the Emerging Writers category was just 11%. It is difficult to get an Australia Council grant. But don't let that dishearten you. It took me three tries to win a grant. I'm glad I didn't give up.

David Sornig's novel *Spiel* was published by UWAP in 2009. He is a fiction editor for *Wet Ink Magazine*, reviewer for *The Melbourne Review* and regular contributor to *Griffith Review*. His most recent short story 'Your Voice is Lead' was published in *Harvard Review 41*. In 2011 David was awarded an Australia Council Grant and an Arts SA Project Grant to continue work on a new novel. [www.davidsornig.com](http://www.davidsornig.com)

# A Word from the Literature Board

**Joanne Simpson**, manager of the Literature Board's grant programs for writers, looks at the nuts and bolts.

The Literature Board offers a range of grants to Australian writers to create new work. We offer new work grants to emerging, developing and established writers; Creative Fellowship Book2 grants to writers working on their second book; Fellowships for writers who have made a significant contribution to Australian literature and the Australia Council Award for Lifetime Achievement in Literature. There are also overseas studio residencies available for writers who have published at least two books.

Like all grants, they are very competitive. Last year we received 425 eligible applications to the new work category alone. Of these, 56 were funded. It is very important to submit a strong application. Here are some simple steps to help you along the way.

**1. Go to our website:** You must go to our website [www.australiacouncil.gov.au](http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au) and click through to the Literature grants page.

**2. Read the online guidelines:** Check out the eligibility requirements. For example, you'll need at least one full-length literary publication or performance to apply for a new work grant. If you're not yet eligible to apply for Literature Board funding, don't be discouraged; it can be

useful for future reference to know what our requirements are and what funding we have available. Pay particular attention to the selection criteria, as this is what the Literature Board members will be using to assess your application. Consult the frequently asked questions if anything is unclear and contact a program officer for more information.

**3. Write your detailed project description:** Remember that the assessors are your peers – they'll be interested in your process and progress as a writer. You can find a list of current Board members on the Australia Council website. Be as clear and succinct as possible. Make the nature of your project clear, and indicate how you intend to carry it out. Choose language that conveys your passion for the project, as well as its literary *raison d'être*. Applications which contain overly academic language or bureaucratic jargon will not create a good impression. A brief plot synopsis can be included but the project outline must go beyond this. The Board is interested in the literary context of your project and the evolution of your project idea. Make sure your project outline is as reader-friendly as possible. We show your outline to a trusted friend with a critical eye for grammar, style and typos. Remember, you're applying to the Literature Board. Spelling mistakes are noticed!

**4. Prepare your support material:** This is no more than 10 pages of your best writing in the genre of your project and can be from a variety of sources, including published work, manuscripts or illustrated work. Select the work which best represents the literary merit of your writing. Relevance of support material to your intended project is also a consideration. Applications that do not include support material in the genre of the nominated project will not be eligible.

**5. Apply online:** You can apply for most Literature Board grants on the Australia Council website. Use the 'Apply online' button on the right-hand side of the guidelines to access the form. Refer to the guidelines as you complete the form. This will help you to get details like the start and end dates and the requested amount right. Check your application thoroughly before submitting it and don't leave anything to the last minute, or to chance. Remember that there is a program officer ready to answer your questions, so please get in touch. But we're not there at midnight.

Applicants can contact **Joanne** at [j.simpson@australiacouncil.gov.au](mailto:j.simpson@australiacouncil.gov.au) for more information..

## Writers Journey Annual Retreats

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See  
Make  
Think  
Create  
Be one.

## Author-2-Author ... continued from page 3

without their own unique philosophy. Here he describes how the novel *Pilgermann* came to him, saying: '*Riddley Walker* left me in a place where there was further action pending and this further action was waiting for the element that would precipitate it into the time and place of its own story.' Precipitation came during a trip to the Holy Land. Describing the star-studded sky and the looming Crusader stronghold of Montfort, he goes on: '... the hooded eagleness of the stronghold ... precipitated *Pilgermann* into his time and place and me into a place I hadn't even known was there.' Is that not precisely what we want the best fiction to do – to precipitate us, the reader: to show us something afresh; to speak to us of long-forgotten memories, of things half hinted at somewhere in the deeper recesses of our thinking?

Hoban has a dedicated worldwide fan base, so much so that on the anniversary of his birthday fans post yellow A4 sheets bearing quotes from his writing in cities across the world. But he is not for everybody: the

post-apocalyptic English of *Riddley Walker* dissuades many from reading past the first few pages; *Pilgermann*, with its discursive and sometimes philosophical take on the Abrahamic faiths does not entertain in the same way a John Grisham or a Catherine Cookson does. But for me, as a writer, Hoban gets to the heart of the human condition and does not shirk the difficult questions, asking us to walk alongside his protagonists in their quest to find their place in a dangerous and chaotic world. It is a journey we are all on, an expedition that we cannot escape. Give me books that illuminate our passage into the unknown. Give me authors like Hoban, because his was not a lone talent.

It was with some sadness and sense of loss, while researching for this article, I discovered he would pen no more of his distinctive metaphysical fiction: Hoban died in December 2011. But, I have several slices of him that I shall no doubt return to in time.

## More donations - so many thanks to the following:

Kate Simpson, Dorothy Cormack,  
Stanley Sim, Rosanne Hawke,  
Vikki Wakefield, Maureen Whetton,  
James Conrick, Anthony Brown,  
Graham and Meg Roberts.

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# The Barbara Wiesner Fiction Page

The first in our short fiction: 'Oodnadatta Cadence' by Izzy Williams.

Seeing Willie in Departures took me back to the plague in the barn when this colossus, spectacles and all, was engulfed in dapple-grey, softly dripping mice.

He clutched his luggage like at last he'd found those nuggets – when she ambushed him, this flight attendant, grabbed the bags and bunged them in the rack; said it was regulations, slammed it shut, 'That's regulations too,' she said.

'What's in the bags?' I asked him. 'Nuth'n,' he replied, as a pair of senior

city slickers parked across the aisle, him with his raincoat and his Union Jack hat, with his duty free bottles; and her with bags that bulged with jars and souvenirs and wearing bangles; feral wind chimes in a cyclone as they rummaged in the rack, unconcerned that behind them was a queue, this scrum about to buckle; even less aware of

Willie, looking dazed, a touch demented there awhile, who had removed his glasses and had set about squinting at the rack, until the plane had taken off, when Willie had a mind to stand to get a better look, and Flinty barking, 'Sir, resume your seat and do attach your seatbelt if you please.'

The plane went nearly vertical as Willie turned a shade of wet cement and gripped the arm rests like he'd sat on broken barnacles, till the aircraft levelled off, when he headed for the rack, forgetting he was buckled in and almost ripped the floor out. He reached inside the rack but couldn't find his gear so he knelt on the old bloke's arm rest. 'Do you mind?' he growled, a 'Bloody cheek!' from his missus, and these howls that fairly echoed down the plane, when all at once this hat, an orange cherry/grape affair with tail, leapt from the rack, and Willie – galvanised – dived beneath the seat. Angry buckles clattered, letting loose a mob of sticky beaks, all milling round and asking what was up, when Flinty galloped over with this sacrificial lamb – a little guy with mince pie eyes, whose fate was sealed, because no-one ever taps on Willie's hacienda (if you're seeing what I mean).

Willie crawled out backwards looking filthy at The Pies who gulped and, begging pardons, said he felt a little wan. Flinty, crazy angry now, made a kind of snorting

sound at Willie which translated loosely into, 'Sir, what is the problem?' as if problems was her business; that she'd die for; better yet, that Willie would, and Willie, mumbling that his Rugs had been mislaid, did a much improved dive between the skinny bowed legs and reappeared to mention that he may have seen it but it might have been a shoe or someone's foot. 'Rugs?' barked Flinty, trying very hard not to look aghast. 'Ruggles,' countered Willie. 'He's my carpet snake.' Then there's this silence. A stultifying hush.



'Oh Gaaaawd!' said Lady Bangles (Pop having lost the faculty of speech), as a 'Snake! Snaaaaake!' echoed down the plane. 'It won't hurt you,' Willie said, too philosophical by half, adding that the rats were prone to bite you more than snakes were,

unless a snake was really peckish, and the taipan was the one that had her fangs pulled, at which point we did the headless-hen-on-spit routine because there's absolutely nowhere you can run to when you're flying at forty thousand feet. Then a 'Rats? Raaaats?' echoed even faster down the plane as Willie went to ground yet again. 'It's Ruggles' food supply,' he yelled across his shoulder. 'Ruggles should be closing in on them by now,' then a muffled, 'in confined space like this;' information we could well have done without.

'Them?' said Pies, behind me now and standing mighty close. 'How many rats has he let loose?' How many taipans more's the point is what I thought, when there were screams from the flight deck and the aircraft chucked a right, hurling me and little Pies to the floor, wondering what, exactly, Willie fed his rats on.

## E-Bulletin

As a member you should be receiving our e-bulletin every fortnight. If you're **not** getting it in your inbox we probably don't have your current email details. Please contact [admin@sawriters.org.au](mailto:admin@sawriters.org.au) and let our staff know so they can change your details on our database.

**Izzy Williams** has had work published for all ages: short stories, novellas and some poetry. He picks a voice, a single scene, then diving blindly in creates a draft with endless updates, archives for months, resurrects, ensuring a consistent theme and seamless plot, then polishes it. When it works ... Aaagh.

## Preoccupations With Ghosts ... continued from page 5

two of my characters, some anachronistic dialogue (annoyingly insidious for the writer of historical fiction), and other 'less significant' points. Most amusing was her sign-off: 'I hope these comments are of some use. Please feel free to drop kick them into the void if you want ...'

Naturally, I have not 'drop-kicked' any of Geraldine Brooks's comments anywhere in the months since. Her criticisms have given me renewed clarity – many of them mirroring my own (often repressed) anxieties and uncertainties about aspects of my novel – and her reassurances have given me the motivation and determination to persevere with the trickier aspects of redrafting. Due to her residence in the US, our mentorship, which is still ongoing, has been conducted via email, with me sending her questions and selections of new and drafted writing, and her responding – always with the same generosity of spirit and critical consideration.

It remains difficult to fully comprehend the advantages and opportunities Writing Australia and the SA Writers' Centre, through facilitating this award, have procured for me. What if I, on the false pretence of honouring a deadline, had neglected to prioritise my own work? Had succumbed to the inevitable, often crippling self-criticism that arises during the writing, drafting and editing processes? I'm now completing another draft of my manuscript before it is sent to my agent for the next round of readers. Perhaps it will be published, perhaps not, but the confidence this award and mentorship have given me cannot be undervalued.

# The Years Spent Waiting

**Diane Hester** reflects on having her suspense novel accepted by Random House Australia after years of being rejected.

Strange things have been happening to me lately. I feel I'm living someone else's life. After ten years of beating my head against editors' doors, one finally opened. And as I reel in shock I find myself wondering, what did I do differently this time? Why this novel and not any of the seven that went before it?

When I first started writing fourteen years ago I knew only that I wanted to write; I didn't know in what form or genre. One of the first things someone told me was that I should write what I liked to read. The problem was I liked many genres, so in the end I had no choice but to try them all to see which I enjoyed the most.

After I'd been writing a number of years (and had written, in order, a fantasy novel, two fantasy romances, a paranormal romance and a romantic comedy) I heard that same saying – write what you read – put in a slightly different way: write the book you'd love to be reading.

The first time I heard this I thought, how obvious? Who would write a book they wouldn't enjoy reading? So I really didn't give it much more thought and went on with my trial and error approach.

Fast forward two years (and two romantic suspense novels) later and I again heard or read that same phrase – write the book you'd love to be reading. Maybe it was the long string of rejections I then had behind me, but the question pulled me up this time and I sat down and gave it some serious thought.

I imagined myself walking into a bookstore and seeing my most recent creation there on the shelf beside the books of my favourite authors. And I asked myself, which one would I buy? Now keep in mind I wasn't comparing author style or skill with words, I was simply looking at the story itself. Which one would I enjoy reading most – the one I had written, or the one some total stranger had written?

The answer stunned me. I wasn't sure.

The fact I even hesitated blew me away. I'm a writer. When I write a story I'm in

control of every aspect of it: the setting, the characters, what happens to them, how it all ends. With that much power, how could I fail to create a story I loved more than any other?

The answer that came to me seemed a bit crazy: maybe I didn't know what I loved. I could obviously recognize it when I saw it in someone else's work, but maybe I needed to clarify those elements before I could incorporate them into my own.

I sat down and wrote out lists of 'my favourites' – novels, films, protagonists, villains, settings, dramatic situations, etc. – and defined exactly what I loved about each. Then I looked for recurring elements, clues that might lead me to even deeper levels of personal meaning. In some cases I had to look closely. (*Aliens* and *The Client* might not seem to have much in common but I assure you, for me, they do.)

What I ended up with after doing this exercise was a trove of treasures. These at last were my loves defined. These were the elements of theme, character, plot and place that had deep and personal meaning for me.

Looking back at my earlier novels, I could see I'd incorporated some of these elements into each one. But never had I combined them all in one story. I started plotting that story at once. The result, twelve months later, was *Believe In Me*.

So was that the reason *Believe In Me* sold when my other novels didn't? I don't know. Maybe after twelve years of serious writing I'd simply finally honed my craft. All I can say is, once I started writing that story I couldn't stay away from it. I loved writing *Believe In Me* more than any novel I have ever written.

The moral for me? To find the next story that'll set me on fire, one I'm prepared to revise countless times, I will write up my lists of current favourites and incorporate those elements into the plot. Even if the end result doesn't sell, I know I'll enjoy my time spent writing it!



Born in New York, **Diane Hester** came to Australia in 1978 as a violinist with the Adelaide Symphony. In 1980 she moved to Port Lincoln with husband Michael and since discovering writing has done little else. *Believe In Me*, her debut novel, combines a love of Hitchcock-style suspense with memories of summer vacations in New England, her favourite place on earth.

## Haiga Art Exhibition and Artprize

The Haiga exhibition is part of the 2012 Salisbury Writers' Festival.

### What is Haiga?

Haiga is the combination of haiku and visual art. This competition defines haiga as a haiku/senryu poem (not tanka) in conjunction with a 2-dimensional work.

### What are the prizes?

- First Prize: \$500
- Second Prize: \$250
- Third Prize: \$150

Exhibited works will be displayed in the John Harvey Gallery from 24 August - 2 September and again presented at the Matsuri on Mobarra Festival at Mawson Lakes on 28 October. The prizes will be announced and awarded at the opening of the Festival on 24 August, 2012.

### How do I enter?

For entry forms and other enquiries contact Niki Vouis on 8406 8469 or email [nvouis@salisbury.sa.gov.au](mailto:nvouis@salisbury.sa.gov.au)

### What is the closing date?

Delivery by **4pm, 10 August, 2012** via email only. Details at: <http://www.sawc.org.au/whats-on/news>

# Embracing E-publishing

**Ashley MacGregor** looks into the growing trend towards e-publishing.

**S**o you've beaten the path to many book publishers and drawn a blank with all of them. You review your book again, have more friends read it, fine-tune it, get more knock-backs and more dust settles on that celebratory champagne. What next? It's probably not your book so much as the book market. Publishers are not seeing growth in book sales; book stores are closing. It's the big name authors that traditional publishers are staying with to see them through these tough times. But some publishers are joining the e-book band wagon. It's the e-book after all that has disrupted the traditional book market. So the answer to 'What next' for the independent author could be to consider electronic publishing.

E-books are growing dramatically: according to the Association of American Publishers, in 2010 e-books accounted for over 8% of trade book sales in the U.S., up from about 3% in 2009 and 1% in 2008. It is estimated the share of profits from e-books is a lot higher. I'm also surprised by the number of people I meet who have e-readers like Kindle, Nook, Kobo or Sony. The e-ink technology makes for a great reading experience and I think these devices are responsible for a lot of the success of e-books.

I took the plunge into e-publishing (after throwing the idea around at the SAWC of course.) There are a number of providers to check out like Writers Exchange, Smashwords and Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing. I went for Smashwords and found e-publishing is quite a different world.

Probably the first thing you need to do is reformat your whole manuscript to enable the various e-book formats to be produced. The document needs to be just text: no page numbers, or fancy formatting, and Times New Roman 12 point is best. This is because the e-reader allows resetting of fonts and font sizes by the reader. Achieving a 'clean' document is surprisingly difficult, but persevere with it. You will also get to know the different file types for the different e-readers; Kindle uses .mobi exclusively, most other e-readers use .epub, then there is .pdf, .doc and .html for

reading on computers and phones. Now for the book cover. The saying 'you can't judge a book by its cover' is even less true for e-books. It is a major marketing tool in the very busy online shop that prospective buyers browse through. The cover is prepared separately from the manuscript and is probably best professionally produced. Being of Scottish descent, I made my own using a good quality picture with blank space for title and author which I added using Microsoft Paint.

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Another reason for the popularity of e-books is the price. They range from free to \$6 for something like Agatha Christie and around \$15 for latest releases. You will need to set a price for your book and the best way is to research what others are charging for something similar. I have some short stories which are \$1 to \$2 (one is free for promotional purposes.) My short story collection is \$3 and my novel is \$5, and I offer a free sample of 20% of the book. The prices may not sound much, but it's what the e-market is paying. My royalty is 70%. It is such a large marketplace with so many people looking through what is available, it doesn't take long to get some downloads of free samples (worth another glass.)

A major difference from traditional publishers is that you are responsible for marketing, and this requires a strategic approach to your prospective readers. There is a handy marketing guide at the Smashwords site, plus plenty is being written on the new field of e-book marketing. When your first sales are made and the royalties show up in your account, it's a great feeling (you'll be getting tippy now).

Perhaps the best thing about e-publishing is you have like-minded people reading your work and making comments. That is really the test of your writing. And if reviews are good, then you have some excellent promotional material to try traditional publishing again.

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