



Writing in Education

Issue 90
Winter 2023

Shakespeare at the Castle

National Association of Writers in Education



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Welcome to issue 90

It was the best of terms, it was the worst of terms. That's a joke from Alan Plater's *The Beiderbecke Tapes* that I have waited about forty years to repeat — so thank you for the opportunity, but also please look at what just happened. A single line of someone's writing has lived in my head for four decades.

This is what writing does and I think we know that for everyone we teach or lecture or just discuss writing with, but I think we forget that writing gets into us, too. Writing is a tool to teach with, but it's a tool that also shapes us.

Writing in Education has always been a practical magazine about techniques and finding the tools to do the many different types of work we do. The magazine will never change from that, but as its new editor, I'm as interested in the writers as the writing.

So we'll go in deep on practically philosophical issues such as the whole culture of poetry in the UK and abroad, as in Joanne Nissel's article on [page 25](#) of this issue. We will celebrate writing as in Liz Cashdan's report from the Windsor Castle Shakespeare event — and also Liz's encapsulating of the event in poetry, both beginning on [page 12](#).

But we will also face up to how as writers, as people, there are times when we get things wrong. Usually I'm quite happy asking you to do something I wouldn't do myself, but in this case our new *Gone Wrong* series starts with a calamitous day I spent in a school. I was a visiting author and it could not have gone worse – but now the bleeding has stopped, I can tell you what I believe I learned from that day and what, for good and bad, I've taken with me to every school since.

In your case, I would like to know, please, about the lesson, lecture or workshop that still makes you feel queasy. I can promise you, from recent experience, that writing about it is cathartic and I do believe it can help us all avoid similar bad days. Plus I can promise you that you can avoid naming names if you need.

But writing in education is not easy and as well as you and I getting to benefit from lessons learned, I think the *Gone Wrong* series will also let us know that we are in this together. For all our different approaches and different situations, we know that writing is the answer — and that writing is who we are.

It's always exciting starting on a magazine, but I think NAWE has a particularly special place and I'm looking forward to hearing from you on publications@nawe.co.uk

William Gallagher

Publications & Editorial Manager



Shakespeare at the Castle
Cover photo of Windsor Castle by Lorena Kelly via [Unsplash](#)

Interested in contributing?

We invite NAWE members to write on the subject of creative writing in education - in schools, adult education and community settings. We encourage you to think broadly on this topic and address any issue relating to the development of a space for creative writing in the education system, in care homes, libraries or wherever you are using writing in your work. Please note, it is developmental work that we wish to highlight, not self-promotion. It may be useful to think about the kinds of articles most useful to your teaching and practice.

Submission deadlines:

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For submission guidelines please refer to:

www.nawe.co.uk/writing-in-education/nawe-magazine/submissions.html

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Book reviews

<https://www.nawe.org>

COMMUNITY WRITERS SUB-COMMITTEE

Jane Moss and Jonathan Davidson (joint-Convenors of NAWE’s Community Writers Sub-Committee) would like to hear from writers from across the British Isles who would be willing to share their thoughts on issues affecting freelance creative writing tutors and similar. They are looking, ideally, for one writer from each English region (South West, West Midlands, etc.) and from Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and Ireland to speak – informally – on behalf of their fellow writers.

If you are working in various community settings (i.e. not universities exclusively) and are happy to spend a bit of time gathering the views of your fellow writers, Jane and Jonathan would love to hear from you. The Community Writers Sub-Committee will meet online a few times a year, and will feedback views and suggestions to NAWE’s Board of Trustees.

Our next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 31st October 2023 from 18:00 to 19:00 GMT, so they would appreciate knowing who might be interested by Tuesday 24th October 2023. Contact: Jane Moss janeemoss@outlook.com or Jonathan Davidson jonathan@midlandcreative.co.uk

NAWE 2023 AGM

This year’s NAWE AGM will take place on Thursday 9th November 2023, 18:30 – 19:30 GMT on Zoom. All members are very welcome to attend. Please save the date! Further details to follow.

NAWE MEMBER MEET-UP DECEMBER 2023 (ONLINE)

The third in what is proving to be a very successful series of online NAWE Member Meet-Ups takes place on Wednesday 6 December 2023 at 18:00-19.00 GMT.

It’s free and a fantastic opportunity to meet fellow NAWE members and hear about the extraordinary range of work they’re doing.

Registration via Eventbrite will open shortly. If you can’t manage to come along in December, we’ll be holding further online Meet-Ups on 13th March and 12th June 2024.

GET THE LATEST JOBS AND EVENTS FROM “WRITER’S COMPASS”

Edited by Philippa Johnston, *Writer’s Compass* is NAWE’s free email newsletter with jobs, opportunities and events.

It’s sent biweekly and is exclusive to members.

Join the National Association of Writers in Education to get your copy.

Or [email Philippa](mailto:philippa@nawe.org) with your news and job openings.

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writers in education

Acting Co Chair's Report

Since the last issue of *Writing in Education*, NAWE has enjoyed a period of gradual consolidation. The Board of Trustees are continuing to pull together financial plans that will put us in a sound position going forward.

As detailed in Issue 89, we have undergone rapid change so far in 2023 in an attempt to re-establish our core business - serving our membership. And things are starting to look brighter.

We have recently established quarterly online network meetings, the most recent of these being on September 11th which was convened by Jonathan Davidson and enthusiastically attended.

Learning of the vast number of community venues, situations and collaborations our members are involved in was both fascinating and inspiring.

All members are welcome to attend. Look out for news of the next one via email and *The Writer's Compass*. We are also looking to establish regional face to face meetings and would welcome contact from volunteers around the UK to help organize these, especially members who might have access to a free venue. Please contact admin@nawe.co.uk if you're interested.

Recent developments to report include a change of publications manager. Lisa Koning has moved to Australia. We would like to wish her well and thank her for her work on NAWE's journals over the past four years.

We are delighted to welcome William Gallagher who as you can see has edited and produced this issue. William has vast experience of journal publication and we are all looking forward to working with him. You can get in touch with him directly via publications@nawe.co.uk

Another change concerns the annual conference. You will notice there hasn't been a call for conference presentation proposals landing in your inboxes this September. That's because we've made the decision to revert to a November conference date in 2024. Planning is still in process, but we'll let you know as soon as we have more detail.

Because of the continuing financial risk associated with live events, the conference will continue to be online, as it has been for the past few years. We are aware that many mourn the loss of networking opportunities and meeting people over lunch or at the bar. We fully appreciate and share those sentiments and are continuing to think of new ways to solve the problem, one idea being the regional events mentioned earlier.

We are thrilled to announce that another [Maxliteracy project](#) has been set up for 2023-2024, involving three art galleries and several schools in Plymouth and across Shropshire and the East Midlands. The Awards are run in partnership with the Max Reinhardt Charitable Trust and Engage, the National Association for Gallery Education. A trustee, Anne Caldwell, has long been associated with this collaboration and helped set up this new venture. NAWE member Claire Collison is leading on the management of the project.

Several members have inquired about the possibility of getting more involved in various aspects of NAWE's activities. We are currently looking to add one or two active members to the Board of Trustees to ensure its diversity and capabilities.

We would be especially interested to hear from members with skillsets, experience or backgrounds that might be useful to the Board's activities and general business.

The HE sub-committee (see below) has a three-year cycle where members put themselves forward and are elected, though on occasions members offering something not currently represented on the committee can be co-opted midterm. Similarly, the Writing and Community sub-committee would welcome members who can offer something different and want to be actively involved. The other area that always seeks members' involvement is the PhD Network. If you have an interest in any of these possibilities, please get in touch: admin@nawe.co.uk

Derek Neale (Acting Co-Chair), jointly on behalf of Jonathan Davidson (Acting Co-Chair) and the NAWE Board of Trustees.



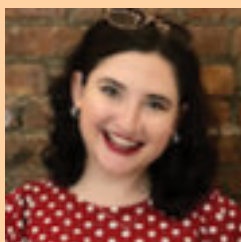
HE Committee Report

The HE Committee has been working to the plans for the year that it outlined back in April. That includes an ambition to run a series of regional events to be hosted around the country at various universities.

Elena Traina, a PhD student on the committee, has been working to revitalise the PhD network.

Also the HE Committee's attention has been on the QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for Creative Writing, where committee members are in the working group. It's aimed to be a truly positive next step in creative writing guidance, particularly as it includes sections on accessibility, equality diversity and inclusivity, enterprise and entrepreneurship and education for sustainable development.

AWP Report (US)



The [Association of Writers & Writing Programs](#) is hard at work getting ready for the 2024 AWP Conference & Bookfair. #AWP24 will take place in Kansas City, Missouri, February 7–10, 2024. With so many wonderful events and programs occurring at #AWP24, it can feel daunting not knowing where to start. Here are a few of our favorite parts of the conference that you should be sure to add to your agenda.

The AWP HBCU Fellowship Program is back for the second year! The purpose of the program is to invite strong HBCU participation within AWP and will award faculty and student fellowships to attend and participate in the annual AWP Conference & Bookfair. Rion Amilcar Scott is the creative advisor for #AWP24. In addition to assisting with the selection of the two HBCU faculty fellows (to be announced alongside student fellows late fall 2023), Scott will give a lecture at the conference titled *Many Moseses, Many Promised Lands Unseen* on the indelible mark HBCUs have left on the face of literature and what it means to be a part of that legacy. Attendees can also connect with Rion and other program participants at the AWP HBCU Fellowship Program Celebration at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, February 8.

For our #WritersServe program, we're proud to partner with Pride Haven, who will be featured at a table near the entrance of the bookfair. To aid Pride Haven in its mission to provide a safe and welcoming overnight shelter for all Kansas City LGBTQIA+ youth aged 18–24, we will be collecting journals, books, and cold weather essentials like hats, gloves scarves, and handwarmers for Pride Haven residents. Journals and books from Pride Haven's wish list will be available for purchase at the #AWP24 official bookseller on-site. For those attending virtually or who prefer to buy online, you can purchase books or supplies through the Pride Haven book wish list or their Amazon wish list, and items will be shipped directly to the shelter.

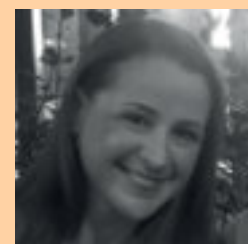
AWP will celebrate the winners of the 2022 AWP Award Series at a reading and celebration on Friday, February 9, featuring Sahar Muradi, winner of the Donald Hall Prize for Poetry for *Octobers*; Jessica Hendry Nelson, winner of the Sue William Silverman Prize for Creative Nonfiction for *Joy Rides Through the Tunnel of Grief: A Memoir*; Parul Kapur, winner of the AWP Prize for the Novel for *Inside the Mirror*; and E.P. Tuazon, winner of the Grace Paley Prize for Short Fiction for *Professional Lola*. Hear them read from their work and pick up a signed copy of any of these winning selections.

Stay tuned for more exciting news regarding #AWP24, and we can't wait to see you in Kansas City, Missouri!

Rachel Balzano, Communications Manager, [Association of Writers & Writing Programs](#)

AAWP Report (Australasia)

My name is Julia Prendergast. It is my privilege and pleasure to serve the Australasian Association of Writing Programs (AAWP) as the current President/Chair. I oversee the Prizes and Partnerships portfolio. I am inordinately passionate about this portfolio, not only because of the opportunities we provide for writers and translators, but also for the partnerships we have forged with publishers and writing communities in Australasia, and beyond. I am supported in managing the activities of this portfolio by the AAWP Executive Committee of Management, broadly speaking, but in particular by the prizes and partnerships team: Dr Katrina Finlayson and Dr Daniel Jukes. This portfolio abounds in positive energy generated by outreach and engagement. We provide publication pathways and networking avenues for writers and translators, with a particular focus on facilitating opportunities for emerging writers and under-represented voices.



We are on the cusp of announcing the results of our 2023 prizes (30 September 2023), and we will soon launch our 2024 suite of prizes. With this in mind, I take this opportunity to share stories from some of our previous winners, in particular, winners of the prizes AAWP offers in partnership with Ubud Writers and Readers Festival (UWRF): a prize for emerging writers and a prize for translators. In October 2022, the following emerging writers and translators attended Ubud Writers and Readers Festival (UWRF): Alison Entrekin, Karen McKnight, Lilit Thwaites, and Soudhamini. I had the deep pleasure of facilitating a panel focusing the work and thinking of these deft practitioners. I've asked Alison, Karen, Lilit and Soudhamini to share what the experience of winning, and attending UWRF as guests of AAWP | UWRF, means to them.

Full details of all of our prizes are available at: <https://www.aawp.org.au/news/opportunities/>

*AAWP Report (Australasia)
continued*

The AAWP community wishes our NAWE friends good health and positive energy. We warmly welcome submissions to our suite of prizes from the NAWE community.

Julia Prendergast

*Alison Entrekin (Winner:
Translators' Prize)*

I am working on a translation of Brazilian author João Guimarães Rosa's classic, *Grande Sertão: Veredas*. It draws from a regional dialect of the Brazilian backlands. Rosa used this vernacular patterning as the matrix for his narrator Riobaldo's own half-real, half-imagined dialect, full of neologisms, strange syntax and incredible poetry. Recreating Riobaldo's voice in English has been my obsession for the better part of a decade.

After so much time down this crazy rabbit-hole, I have been terrified that readers won't be convinced or captivated enough to suspend their disbelief and buy into the story. So winning the AAWP Translators' prize brought me tremendous reassurance that my Riobaldo has managed to win over readers. I cannot overstate how much it means to me.

It is also wonderful to be able to show the book to prospective publishers having already won an award. Oh, and I loved the Ubud Readers and Writers Festival! Karen McKnight (Winner: Emerging Writers' Prize) After a long stint of Covid lockdowns in Melbourne, receiving Julia's call to say I'd won the AAWP | UWRP Short Story prize, AND I was off to the Writer's Festival in Bali, was unbelievable. Had the prize been money, it would no doubt have gone on a gas bill!

As an emerging writer, to win this prize was validating both personally and professionally as my story submission was a fictionalized account of a very challenging time in my life.

"Had the prize been money, it would no doubt have gone on a gas bill!"

Furthermore, sharing my creative process with an audience on a writers' festival panel was incredibly meaningful—it's given me the courage to develop the piece into a novel-length manuscript. The festival itself was brilliant creative development.

I met many published authors, including a two-time Pulitzer nominee. I bought their books, took notes, and listened to their words of wisdom. Spending time with Julia and fellow prize-winners alone, however, was like attending a beautiful writers' masterclass every day.

Soudhamini (Winner: Emerging Writers' Prize)
I remember UWRP 2022 as a wonderfully intimate,



L-R: Julia Prendergast, Soudhamini, Lilit Žekulin Thwaites, Karen McKnight, Alison Entrekin

intrinsically multi-cultural and inclusive space, like AAWP itself. I couldn't have asked for better environs and hospitality to emerge as a writer.

Lilit Thwaites (Winner: Translators' Prize)

I'd always wanted to attend the Ubud Writers and Readers Festival (URWF)—the program looked intriguing, and offered speakers, sessions and writing focused on a region and topics rarely covered at Australian festivals.

So I was thrilled to win the 2020 AAWP | UWRP Translators' prize which gave me the chance to participate in the Festival, only to be deeply disappointed when COVID intervened.

Picture my joy in 2022 when told that the original invitation to take part in a session with other AAWP prize-winners still stood.

Ubud and its festival proved to be much more than I had hoped for. It provided me with the means of meeting and talking with other translators, comparing techniques and approaches, and acquiring insight into intricate aspects of literary translation.

All this, plus listening to writers speaking about their expertise, and learning about, and getting a feel for the country, the peoples, cultures and traditions, and food of Ubud, Bali and Indonesia.

Gracias, AAWP and URWF.

Julia Prendergast at [Swinburne University](#), Melbourne.
Alison Entrekin on her [official site](#)
Karen McKnight on [her blog](#)
Soudhamini via [Chapman University](#)
Lilit Žekulin Thwaites on her [official site](#)

European Association of Creative Writing Programmes



*Dennis Gaens presents Listening in Practice
November 14-16, 2023 for EACWP*

From the 14th to the 16th of November, 2023, the EACWP launches its seventh Premium Virtual Edition of its European Course for Teachers of Creative Writing.

In this occasion, we'll count on the participation of Dennis Gaens (The Netherlands) as the only teacher imparting the three sessions and diving over the three consecutive days into the same topic: Listening practice.

The sessions will be celebrated through Zoom. Worldwide participants are welcome to join us. Enrolments are already open until November, 10th, 2023.

Stealing (from) Sounds | Course description

Brian Eno once commented in an interview that most of his artistic practice can be summarized in the phrase 'Import/Export': taking ideas from one place and putting them into another place and seeing what happens when you do that.

Understanding something that's happening in painting, say, and then seeing how that applies to music.

That is exactly what we will do in this series. To make it more manageable, we'll focus on audio, from podcasts and radio plays to the field of recordings, music, soundscape and most importantly: listening.

**"In the last session,
we'll go out with a jam."**

Oftentimes in our writing, we let the visual predominate, now we will tune our ears to the world around us. And we will see what we can steal from disciplines that work with that sense.

The series will be 50/50 lecture and workshop, so active participation is preferred.

We'll focus on creating one or more sound pieces (no prior recording or editing skills required) and see how it can influence our writing. In the last session, we'll go out with a jam.

Session 1 | Narrative Audio

After a general introduction we will focus on narrative audio. We will discuss both fiction and non-fiction podcasts. We will look at its building blocks (spoken word, voiceovers, tape, sound design, music and effects) and discuss writing for the medium.

There will be a lot of listening this day, but of course we will also practice some of the techniques. And: there will be a short homework assignment.

Session 2 | Soundscapes and Listening

In the secondary session we'll let go of the narrative part of sound and explore the world of field recording,

soundscapes and deep listening(tm) practices. We will cover how to read the soundscape, how to think about distance and how to use field recordings in writing (both as prompts and as decor). This session will take us into the poetry of sound. And: there is another homework assignment, optional this time.

"Apply before November 6, 2023."

Session 3 | New Vocabulary (and Jam!)

In the third session we will synthesize lessons learned and see how we can not only work with audio, but also think about applying conceptstore from audio to writing.

This will be mostly an open discussion and Q&A but will also feature some example assignments for students.

We will close off with an audio/writing jam in which anyone can join.

How to apply

Candidates interested must send their CV plus a motivation letter to info@eacwp.org and do so before November, 6th.

The subject of the message must be "Course scholarship / Premium Virtual Edition 2023".

Results will be announced on November, 10th.

For more information, please, visit www.eacwp.org or contact Lorena Briedis: info@eacwp.org

Course Fee

200€ (EACWP + NAWÉ members)
250€ (other participants)

Scholarships

Additionally, five scholarships of 80% will be offered this year for participants not funded by an institution. The selected candidates will be charged 50€.

Lapidus

Writing this, still in the glow of the Lapidus International conference Creative Bridges 2023 (CB23 16th-17th September 2023) reminds me what a wonderful, educative, and uplifting global community experience it was. Mohsin Mohi Ud Din and Connor Allen (keynote speakers at CB23) reminded us that... our stories... live in our bodies and in our body language.

Where else might you find writing workshop sessions covering themes such as the impact of climate change, personal awareness and empowerment, socio-political inequalities and injustice, physical and mental health issues, the legacy of loss, creative writing in prisons, the significance of punctuation, journalling reflexivity, creative writing research, practitioner exploration of ethics and facilitating trauma sensitive writing?

Keynote speakers and workshop facilitators highlighted the universality of our experiences affirming the personal and political importance of collecting, sharing, re-framing and re-storying our stories; the benefits of empathy and the cost to us all of silencing our stories.

“Don’t miss Creative Bridges 2025 (CB25) – you have been warned.”

Don’t miss Creative Bridges 2025 (CB25) – you have been warned. There is something both solitary and collaborative about participating in writing workshops.

Spending the best part of two days online with other conference participants sounds a lot, but with spaces for rest, the conference, with its multiplicity of invitations to write relate and discover proved to be a refresher.

Knowing that we were engaged in the same exercise counties or, countries away working in different time zones was intriguing.

Playing with my words alone in my home with the shaping of a facilitator calling time on activities was liberating.

With facilitators, presenters and participants offering stimulus support feedback and inspiration at every turn.

I found myself enjoying writing, experimenting with the ways in which I voice and shape my experiencing. Accepting the non-judgemental, pressure free space offered, I began to believe in my writing and am interested in the prospect of crafting and editing what I have produced.

For experienced and aspiring professional writers this feeling of excitement and belief in your work, your writing may come more naturally.

For some, it is what they believe they were born to do; it’s their life’s purpose. For the professional writer, they can and often do, claim that the ‘who’ in their writing is not about them but has come from their imagination or a composite of their observations, immersion in an environment, or their research.

Not so for those who write for personal therapeutic purposes.

We cannot shelter behind the label of fiction. Those of us



Val Watson

Writing for therapeutic purposes groups- what they offer

In a writing for therapeutic purposes group, you might see and hear the voice and experience of the writer and how they have chosen to reflect on their experience.

We collectively marvel at the fluidity and courage of our varied voices and the ways in which they have dealt life events that have been encountered. Those funny, bruising, bitter, perplexing, tragic, distasteful, irritating, tedious, shocking, hilarious, beautiful, profound, life altering, rare, common, strange, events stirring empathy within us.

As a writing community with our wellbeing in mind, we edit out the parts we are not ready to share. We recognize ourselves as compassionate commentators with common experiences, and views on life, loving the wisdom we have gained as our words hit the page again and again.

We can respect our learning and willingness to ‘fail better’ in our lives; writing to rebel, to protest about wrong doings, to chart our varied histories.

Like marks on a wall marking the heights and depths of our feelings over and over. We can celebrate our achievements, our resilience our existence and the lives of those we love and cherish as well as those who have left us or have died.

“I began to believe in my writing”

Having an interest in writing but no ambition to become a professional writer, my drive and interest in writing is from a place of curiosity. Writing helps me to find out what I think I might know about myself, others, and the situations I have find myself in.

Its also about logging events and experiences, holiday journalling is a favourite, capturing memories of places, conversations that can instantly transport me to a past time, the sights sounds, smells.

When and where possible I know that writing it out is a

release and helps me to feel better.

A recent review of the writing I had produced through attending a monthly writing group I attend and was astonished by the intensity, honesty, dark humour, and volume of rageful ranting about all manner of personal and political things that have irked me I managed to pack into this two-hour session.

I also remembered, how after each group my gratitude, empathy, and motivation to act increases and the negative edges of my anger is dulled, my breathing changes.

Writing and words are meant to stir us up

In writing, reading and performing our words, together or separately, we know the power of words and what words can do.

Writing and expressing our experiences verbally, non-verbally on paper and through movement as part of a community reminds us of this.

I think it is our job as humans to protect and re-produce our stories.

To leave a mark.

To raise our 'voices' in song, dance, music and through images, to share, celebrate, disrupt, protest, debate, inform and alert each other.

Val Watson, [Lapidus chair](#)

About Lapidus

Lapidus International is an expressive arts organisation that believes in the power of words, both spoken and written, to provide benefits to wellbeing and professional development. The organisation supports its members internationally by giving them opportunities to connect, develop and share in the Lapidus community

Lapidus Research (LIRIC and LLRC)

Lapidus International Research and Innovation Community (LIRIC) is a strong community of writers with an interest in research and supporting the work of experienced researchers and those new to research into writing for wellbeing. LIRIC produces a peer-reviewed journal and hosts a monthly online discussion/ seminar forum Lapidus Living Research Community (LLRC) for Lapidus members to meet, share ideas and learn from each other.

For our latest monthly events and news, please see the [Lapidus website](#)



Presenters of Creative Bridges 2023

Lapidus presented its International Conference Creative Bridges 2023 in September 2023

Lapidus Board Member call-out

Would you be interested in helping to shape the future of Lapidus International and the field of writing for wellbeing? Do you want to help promote the values of Lapidus and support our goal to build a community of writing for wellbeing facilitators and researchers? Then why not join the Lapidus board as a voluntary board member?

If this sounds like something you would be interested in, please send a CV and short covering letter explaining why you would like to join the board to info@lapidus.org.uk. We look forward to hearing from you.



Get the most from your NAWE membership

You'll know about our advocacy work for Creative Writing, and, at the individual level, how we provide public liability insurance cover if you're a professional member, but are you aware of all the other ways we can support you and your work?

For instance, we can help to spread the word about any workshops or competitions you're running (or any jobs you're recruiting for if you're an organisation) through our weekly e-bulletin *The Writer's Compass* and our website listings.

We give priority to including member listings. All we ask is that it has a professional development element. You can find submissions guidance [online here](#).

We also try, if space permits, to give a mention to any special news you may have of interest to members that falls outside our listing categories within the feature part of the bulletin. Our Information Manager Philippa Johnston pjohnston@nawe.co.uk is the person to contact about anything relating to the bulletin or website. She's also very happy to share member news via social media.

Or perhaps you have a book that you would like considered for review in the magazine. Do contact our Reviews Manager, Matthew Tett (reviews@nawe.co.uk) if you have a new book coming out that you think would be of interest to your fellow members. You'll find details of submission windows [online here](#).

Finally, we have a Professional Directory on the website which lists professional members who are available for projects, author visits and other events. This acts as a valuable resource for organisations looking to work with a creative writer so it's worth revisiting your entry every now and again to check that it's up to date. You can [manage your own entry online](#).

National Association of Writers in Education

If you have any problems doing this, our Membership Coordinator Sophie Flood will be happy to help. Contact her on 0330 3335 909 / admin@nawe.co.uk

We look forward to hearing from you!'

Writing in Practice Vol 10 Submissions

Ends on Friday, January 19, 2024 11:59 PM

Submissions for Volume 10 are [currently invited](#), with a deadline of Midnight (GMT) 19th January 2024.

We are looking for articles that explore the art of imaginative writing of all kinds, from an authorial perspective, highlighting and evolving current academic thinking and practice.

Creative Writing itself is welcomed when integral to an article.

We are looking for academically rigorous research into creative writing, appropriately referenced and engagingly written.

We are happy to receive articles that reflect on practice and process, explore writing research in interdisciplinary contexts, engage in critical analysis of writing pedagogy, explore cultural and global challenges such as diversity and inclusion and ecological sustainability through creative writing.

Submissions should be in the region of 4,000–10,000 words, and include an abstract of up to 200 words. A biographical note of up to 200 words should be provided [via Submittable](#), but not included in the document that is the submitted article.

All submissions will be peer reviewed, with feedback given by in Spring 2024. A document giving full submission guidelines, together with a style guide, is [available online](#).

Please note: submissions that ignore these guidelines may not be considered.

[Submit to Writing in Practice](#)



Shakespeare at the Castle

LIZ CASHDAN represented NAWE as King Charles led a celebration of William Shakespeare. Join her at Windsor Castle in prose – and poetry.

This is about the King and I, but my name is not Anna and I'm not writing about the King of Siam. It's Charles III of the here and now and me at Windsor Castle in July 2023, honouring Shakespeare and NAWE and teaching and writing and learning poetry and plays by heart.

Being a left-wing historian and writer and not a believer in monarchy, you can imagine my surprise when an envelope stamped 'Buckingham Palace' was posted through my letter box in June 2023. Inside was a card from the Master of the King's Household inviting me to a performance at Windsor Castle in honour of the 400th anniversary of the printing of the first and second folio of Shakespeare's plays, and the fact that these are held in Windsor Castle Library.

You have to be nominated for such an invitation, your name is not picked out of a hat, but the invitation doesn't tell you what or who prompted it. Yet NAWE has an association with Poetry By Heart, with learning of Shakespeare's plays, plus there's a link to teaching and writing play scripts, and it was NAWE who put my name forward. Thank you, NAWE.

"I hadn't a clue how you could unsay things"

In my case, my first introduction to Shakespeare came from my fifteen year old sister having to learn Helena's "Call you me fair? That fair again unsay" from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the play she was studying for Matric (GCSE), when I was in the first year at my grammar school in 1939. I hadn't a clue what the play was about or how you could "unsay" things, but the rhythm of iambic pentameters got into my head. I've

always failed to understand how so many students, from secondary school through to University level and beyond, struggle with being able to recognize and reproduce those five limping beats. Incidentally, my sister went on to become a paediatrician — and to write poetry.

"Yes, Shakespeare is great"

Jump to my eighties in 2017 and something I'll never forget is acting in The People's Theatre group at The Crucible in Sheffield — it does do Shakespeare as well as snooker — representing senators and crowd in Robert Hastie's production of *Julius Caesar* with Samuel West as Brutus. So there I was on a real stage doing real Shakespeare with real actors, my senator's outfit (modern dress) splashed with real stage blood.

I didn't get a chance to say all of this to King Charles at Windsor Castle, partly because his minder hustled him on to the next guest in line. However, we did have time to say, yes Shakespeare is great, and thank goodness the folios are well looked after, and thank you for staging the extracts by present members of the RSC.

We were ushered into our seats by a royal footman: only the footman was a woman dressed up to look like a man (another unexpected theatrical trick and indeed her official title was footman in spite of being female.)

We watched others come in, including Judi Dench, Helena Bonham Carter and Vanessa Redgrave, and found ourselves sitting next to a couple who work with Shakespeare for Children at the RSC, and people from

the British Library: (this was another link to my distant past as the British Library used to be in St James Square in London, when I worked in the Square at Chatham House, sorting press cuttings on, amongst other things. the Korean War.)

The other show pieces apart from the folios were some of the daydresses worn by the women guests, and then the equerries in royal uniforms with lots of twisted rope across their chests (all male) and the Scots equerries in kilts, another theatrical trick and a neat contrast to the women footmen in trousers.

"I didn't bother with Camilla"

It didn't seem like Camilla had any female equerries. Maybe there were ladies in waiting but if there were, they were indistinguishable from the general hoi polloi.

I have to say, unfortunately, the King and his organisers had not done their homework all that well acoustically, as the audience was spread widthwise, the length of the Waterloo Hall (hence the portraits of George III and his contemporary ally in 1815, the Emperor of Austria.) But the layout meant the actors were difficult to hear when they turned to face the opposite end of the hall.

However, we were treated to extracts from *Macbeth*, *Julius Caesar*, *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night* (two songs, lovely modern settings) *Timon of Athens* (that's one play that's escaped me all my teaching, theatre-going and writing life) *Measure for Measure*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *The Tempest*. As always the signer signing for deaf people added another theatrical delight to the performance.

The audience stood up when Charles and Camilla and some other Royals entered but that was the only protocol and at the end of the performance everybody moved from the Waterloo Hall into St George's Hall where there were lots of drinks and canapes brought round by a host of footmen and women pretending to be men.

I didn't bother with Camilla: well there is never time to get round all the royals all the time, so who better to miss out than Camilla? And Queens, and Kings and other heads of state, for that matter, don't get the best press in Shakespeare. I mean we'd just heard Dame Harriet Walter, as Lady Macbeth, egging on Sir Simon Russell Beale, as Macbeth, to be more of a mensch as they say in Yiddish. "But screw your courage to the sticking place, and we'll not fail."

The final Shakespeare showpiece was a display of the two volumes of the first and second folios now housed in the Windsor Castle library. And we wouldn't have a reliable record of those plays without the folios, as Gregory Doran, Artistic Director Emeritus of the RSC, had reminded us in introducing the performance earlier in the evening.

Of course, we all know that Shakespeare didn't actually write the plays himself anyway. They were the work of Aemelia Lanyer, the daughter of a Venetian Jewish musician by the name of Bassano, who came to play at the court of Henry VIII and who herself lived at the court of Queen Elizabeth, and was a published poet anyway.

She would have known all about music and musical instruments and have had a good knowledge of Venice and Italy, and had more than likely travelled to Denmark, and of course known English and Italian with probably some Hebrew as well. Compare that with the likely knowledge of a grammar-school-educated lad from Stratford-upon-Avon.

The Drag Kings of Windsor Castle

"I'm a footman," she says. There's been some dressing up here but then we're at Windsor Castle to celebrate Shakespeare, the 400 hundredth anniversary of the printing of the first folio back in 1623, so it's all about theatre. And things theatrical.

Hair tied back, black tie, navy trousers, waistcoat and jacket with red lapels: "Your seats are here." We sit down. I'm lost. "Aren't you a footwoman?" I ask, but she says, "No: footman." Oh well, have it your way, I think. Our Will would have understood.

The women were all played by men in his day but wait a moment that's the wrong way round: these are women playing men. And now we all stand because the foot(wo)men are opening the door of the Waterloo Hall for King Charles and Queen Camilla.

Twenty-first century actors, men and women from the RSC come on the special stage to give us extracts: Jacques' Seven Ages, Lady Macbeth taunting her husband, Rosalind teasing Orlando, Mark Antony asking his countrymen to lend him their ears.

They're reading from scripts because we're celebrating the folios of the plays kept at Windsor Castle Library, now on display for us, as the foot(wo)men pass round glasses of champagne and miniscule canapes. And there is King Charles ready to chat

protected by his Scottish equerries, more theatrical dressing up, with ropes across their chests, in kilts, knee socks and brogues. The King and I exchange pleasantries about Shakespeare and then it's time to go: the foot(wo)men form a chain

across the hall and move us towards the doorway, we know our exits from our entrances, and the many parts we have to play. Well, it's more fun talking Shakespeare than corgis and horses but I couldn't help wondering if Camilla was a drag Queen.

Liz Cashdan

Aemelia Lanyer versus William Shakespeare:
[Amelia Bassano Lanier: A New Paradigm](#)
[Amelia Lanyer as Shakespeare's Co-Author](#)

Liz Cashdan [official site](#)

Why We Should Take Poetry Out into the World.

Poet and publisher JANE COMMANE says we need to engage audiences – and you can win Nine Arches Press’s new book on exactly how to do it

Picture the scene – it’s 2008 and I am at an outdoor summer festival in a city in the midlands. Bands are playing on the main stage, the atmosphere is buzzing. The clouds are darkening though, and suddenly the heavens open and crowds start making for the indoor stages. I’m near the entrance to one big-top tent as one stream of soaked festival-goers make their way in for shelter.

But as they do, there’s a pause in the flow – and within a few minutes, the torrent of people in becomes a steady flow back out again. One man stops another on his way in to say, “I wouldn’t go in there if I were you. They’re doing ‘poetry’.” Accompanied by groans of dismay, a steady stream of festival-goers head back out into the rain.

**“I wouldn’t go in there if I were you.
They’re doing ‘poetry’”**

It’s a moment I often think back to; and I share it not to be judgemental of that audience or their reaction, but just to remind myself that poetry, no matter how immersed I have been in it and all the magic it holds for me, is still sometimes trapped by its own stereotypes for some: dull, worthy, boring – annoying even – worth avoiding, worse than getting a soaking.

And also to remind myself that poetry can also be anything but – it can be invigorating, deeply moving, unforgettable, laugh-out-loud funny, heartbreaking, unifying and powerful. And for me, how much it matters to be a lightning conductor for this transference of energy as a poet – to share that sort of poetry reaction with more people in the hope that they too might experience poetry in all its electrifying wonder for themselves.

Much has changed since that day in the early 2000s. Poetry now possesses a great deal more hybridity, diversity, and innovation than ever before as an artform. There’s much more for everyone to find something which they enjoy, or which might speak to them. There’s also a deeper crossover between page and performance, and so much more cross-pollination between poetry and digital, spoken, film, visual and music artforms. But still, many



Jane Commane (Photo: Lee Townsend)

people will not yet have encountered this, and may still feel put off by the idea of poetry.

Perhaps these misgivings we have, when we think poetry isn’t for us, is something to do with where we first encounter poetry formally. For many, this may well be in secondary school, where a little like algebra or chemical equations, it becomes something we have to learn to analyse and solve, find the answers for, and be tested on. We may end up only learning to detest it, unless we’re fortunate enough to have teachers who love poetry and put their enthusiasm into teaching it well and breaking down our resistance to it and some of poetry’s innate resistance to us.

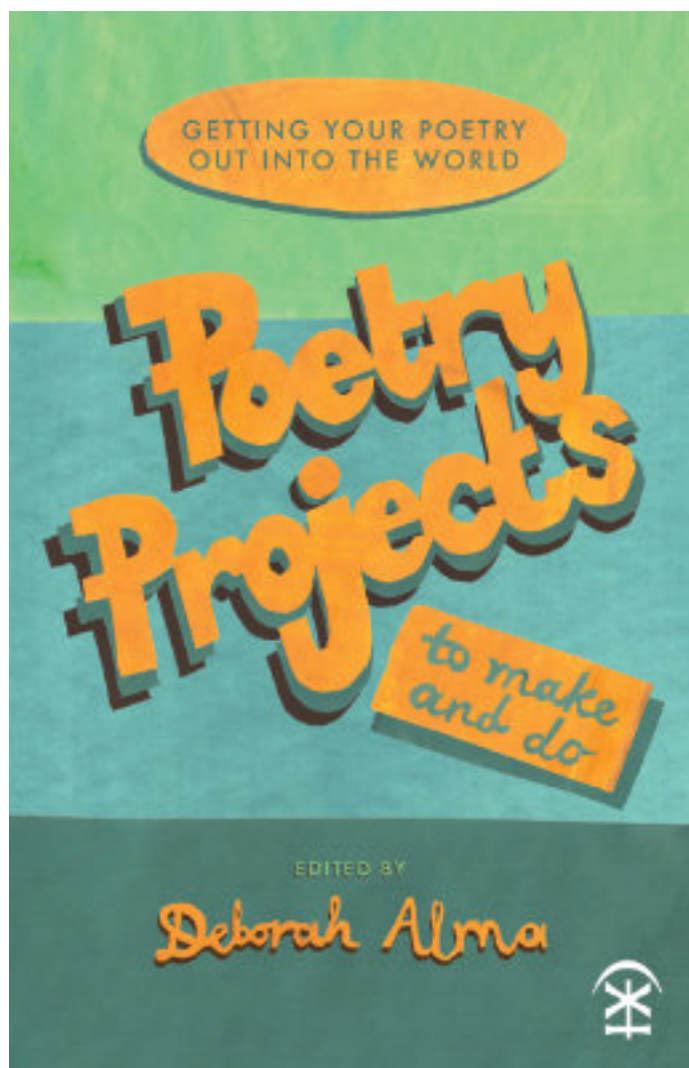
There is in that idea of resistance the suggestion of a kind of ‘mysterious’ knowledge being required to understand poetry – a knowledge that is perhaps withheld and which requires a specific key to unlock. Believing we don’t have this – or permission for it – we may well feel locked out of what poetry is meant to do for us.

For some, there may still be the trappings of class and privilege that hangs over poetry – the idea that like much of what is sometimes regarded ‘high’ art rather than popular culture, it ‘belongs’ to a set of people with a certain educational background, who have the key to understanding it. We may think that it’s not for the likes of us. It isn’t ours.

**“We may feel locked out of
what poetry is meant to do for us”**

And so, disenfranchised from the culture of poetic language, we come to believe that it belongs in that rarefied place. Or perhaps that it is, like that mouldering bottle of sherry in the sideboard, for special occasions or emergency use only; in births, deaths and marriages – or exam papers. Out of reach, in its special little box. Informally, however, we really encounter poetry well before that: in the chime of names and words, then the nursery rhymes we hear when tucked in at night, the fairy stories and counting songs we learn from the parquet floors of reception class, words of spells,

WIN



To celebrate publication, NAWE have two copies to give away of *Poetry Projects to Make and Do* (Nine Arches Press). An essential handbook for poets working in educational settings, the essay collection is edited by Deborah Alma and inspires readers to take poetry to unexpected places.

To enter, email marketing@ninearchespress.com with Giveaway in the Subject Field and include your name and address by 31 October, 2023.

Christmas isn't far away, though, and if any writer has earned a present, it's you. [Buy the book now](#) on Nine Arches Press for £16.99.

blessing or prayer, the old pop ballads our parents might sing over the washing up. Into our ears all those lovely looping rhythmic language sounds – precious and part of us as we grow, imbibed into our blood and bones.

The words we ask for again and again, the ones that make us feel at home, that we belong.

We will remember much of it all our lives. Here, the language and work of poetry is innately all around us.

So let me propose this: what if we awaken and attune

ourselves to language and the work of poetry again; begin to notice the experience of it as part of our everyday, just as naturally as we did when we were young, without drawing for ourselves the borders of special knowledge or permission?

What if we start to fall back in love with it all – from the accidental poetry of speech and rhythm, through to lyrics we overhear, the snippets of text and accidental poetry in signs, posters and found texts, to the little silent lines of thought as we go out into the world and, language itself translates our senses and perception?

Suddenly poetry breaks free from its box on a high shelf. It becomes everywhere, belonging to everybody, and no one, all at once.

And what if we seek to awaken and kindle that love of words in others, too?

What if we find ways to make poetry appear in our day-to-day lives, and no more shrink from it than we would a beautiful hand-drawn card or an irresistibly catchy song? And in taking poetry out of its box, you create the chance meeting, where poetry might just meet its new biggest fan.

And I realise this is why taking poetry out into the world for new encounters – through a whole host of surprising, fun, and innovative ways, really matters.

For poets, I think the question of how and why we could take poetry out into the world, and how we encourage others to access read and return to poetry is a fundamentally fascinating and multifaceted one. I have no single answer as to how to do this – there are so many possible ways to for poetry to find its way into our common shared culture, and I will suggest a few ways to begin approaching the how in just a moment. But for now, let's just consider a few of the whys.

Why? I want for more people to find what I have found in poetry, from childhood and all my days since: connection, the process that anchors something felt into words, the sensation of still reaching towards something not yet quite fully understood. A burning fuse. An impelling force like life itself. As quoted in *Detectorists*: "My heart has followed all my days— Something I cannot name!" (Don Marquis).

Why? Not that poetry can be fully analysed and understood and put away, but rather that it cannot – and it holds for yet so much more for us to unravel. Why? Because we live in age where, as writer Elif Shafak observes, "in which there is too much information, less knowledge and even less wisdom. That ratio needs to be reversed" (*How to Stay Sane in an Age of Division*). Whilst we absorb huge amounts of information, we are also drained, exhausted, and battered by much of it. Language is often twisted and abused by those with power. It can be manipulated to make us feel sad, worthless, envious, or divided. And yet poetry has the power to restore for us that which is valuable about language: that something wise, precious, solace-giving or thought-provoking we may find in it.

Why? Because poetry can give us the words for things we may not yet have processed or been able to approach. It makes us feel less alone. It gives us new ways to see and understand. It creates a radical space of empathy. It can start conversations, bridge gaps. A poem has potential to make a common ground in the four walls of its words. But let me come back down to earth from my giddiness about poetry's possibilities for a moment, to be practicalities of how to take poetry out into the world

and share it with others.

I also feel it's important to add we should be conscious, in all our excitement, not to force poetry onto people who may not want, need or feel ready for poems yet, and not be judgemental of anyone who says No thank you – not for me. We don't have to enjoy everything and we shouldn't expect others to either.

Perhaps the best way we approach this as poets is to see our situation more as envoys, ambassadors to poetry – whose role is sharing and opening poetry to the world, rather than trying to make the world pay attention to poetry. If we change our perspective and think about poetry as a gift we can invite people to partake from if they'd like to, it becomes less focused on the 'musts' and 'shoulds' of reaction, and more on the possibility of encounters.

“Gentle, curious, and open sharing”

For us as poets, this may mean saying less – ‘I will now read you a poem and you must stand here and look like it did something for you’ and more ‘oh look, here's a poem someone printed and displayed instead of an advert on the bus’, or ‘here's a poem someone read aloud on a podcast and I wasn't expecting it there, but actually really enjoyed it’ or ‘I saw this poem on the pinboard at work. I read it whilst eating my Pot Noodle. It wasn't too bad. I'd do that again’ (the poem, maybe, as well as the Pot Noodle).

It may involve less expectation of ‘Poems’ with a capital P to be produced or read or heard and certified as enjoyed - and all the pressure that may entail. And instead, more about having fun with language that builds into one big communal poem which turns into something unexpectedly moving as everyone recognizes their own words as part of the whole at the end. It may involve asking questions. It'll definitely involve listening, scribing, highlighting – finding the sparkle of gold in our everyday experiences and words.

And by this gentle, curious, and open sharing, and holding up to the light, we as writers can play a role of embedding poetry into the fabric of our culture more intrinsically, of making the language of poetry something we are more likely to encounter ordinarily rather than exceptionally. That maybe it no longer becomes something we'd stand in the rain to avoid.

If you're keen to take poetry into the world, there are many cheap and simple ways you can do it yourself, by yourself and without permission or special training. For instance, you might decide to handmake a mini poetry pamphlet to leave in waiting rooms or leave with a ‘Take Me’ note on. You might design some poster poems to cheer up noticeboards and hallways.

You could even approach a local bookshop or library and ask if you could make poems as bookmarks for visitors or customers to pick up. Are there local community spaces, cafes or charities that may like a poem to cheer up their walls? It doesn't have to be your poems you share; it could be an old favourite which is out of copyright. You could even ask a poet or publisher if they will allow you to share a poem in this way, if you make clear how you intend to share it.

If you do leave a little trail of poems behind you, take care not to litter anywhere or use plastics or other materials that won't biodegrade.

If you're into technology or have other strings to your creative bow like film, visual arts or music, then poetry is a perfect partner. Interesting things happen when we start to mix things up and it also creates the possibility of new audiences finding poetry in a new context. Live performance and creating poetry in theatre or performance spaces is also another way to spread the word of poetry – and create chance-meetings with new audiences as a result.

Or you may find yourself doing the active and direct work of being a poet in public, and working with groups, communities or organisations, and using poetry as a way to connect, create space and forge new conversations or experiences. It's a great way to share poems and make new ones together.

Think about how those poems your group make can be further shared and transmitted – can they be broadcast or printed, filmed – could they even go on a billboard or on posters with the help of local train or bus companies, or printed onto a local shop's paper bags or made into badges or T shirts and become wearable poems?

What matters most is that you don't have to do all of these things to take poetry out into the world – we all have different confidence and comfort levels, and specific skills that may lend themselves to different areas and approaches.

Give some consideration to what feels right for you – and what you have experience in. Don't be afraid to ask to shadow someone and get some first-hand experience if you'd like to know more about how others take poetry out into the world in various ways. And more than anything, the best way is to remind yourself what first made you love poetry, and to find a way you can continue to honour and share that love.

To end where we began, come back with me to that same Midlands city. It's now November 2019 and it's (inevitably) raining again.

Over three nights, 15,000 people come out into the drizzle to stand in the ruins of Coventry Cathedral and watch and listen to the sound and light installation which features the poem I've been commissioned to write collaboratively with school children and community groups from the city. It's for a project with Historic England and the Poetry Society – Where Light Falls – which tells the story of those who risked their lives to protect the cathedral during the war, its destruction and subsequent postwar reconstruction.

An evocative music score, composed for the poem, swells to fill the night air. A light show moves from the galaxy of medieval stained glass to red flames and ruins, to shades of Coventry blue, projected 284 metres high onto the spire of St Michaels. Crowds fill the open-air ruins and gaze upwards to watch the performances throughout the evening. Some have come across it by accident on the way home from work or study; others return the next night to share the experience with family and friends. It's an intense and often very moving experience to watch people watching it.

Even if I never write another poem, I'll always be proud of this one – written as a gift for the city I was born in, and for its people – that found so many who were willing to receive it.

This time, we're standing in the rain together – and all around us is poetry.

Poet and publisher Jane Commans runs [Nine Arches Press](#)

Writing in Education Interview: Sarah Hosking, Open House



WILLIAM GALLAGHER talks with SARAH HOSKING about the lessons learned from applying decades of writing residency work to a new project that gave each of ten writers “a room of their own” for a very special week.

There’s no drama here, there were no calamities, but there is a lot of passion and a lifetime of care. When Sarah Hosking and her team launched the Open House writing residency project for 2023, they did so with immense experience and all of it proved essential regardless of how different the project was.

For ultimately, Open House’s plan to give women writers space to work had a different form to everything the Hosking Houses Trust had done before — but its aim was fundamentally identical.

“When I was about 20 years old, I read Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own* and was absolutely bowled over,” says Sarah Hosking. It’s the essay with Woolf’s famous line “A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction.”

“Why has no one made it happen?”

“I loved Virginia Woolf,” continues Hosking, “but the people who bring out books about Virginia Woolf, they talk about the servants, they talk about her letters, why has no one ever made it happen? I went off and had

a career in the arts, and throughout my life I told friends that when I retire, if I’m still well, I will make Virginia Woolf’s idea of a room of one’s own come true. So I got to 60, and I did it. It was as simple as that.”

For over 20 years, Hosking Houses Trust has welcomed women writers to its 18th-century cottage in Clifford Chambers village, just south of Stratford-upon-Avon. “I thought near Stratford would be lovely,” says Hosking. “I found a house [for myself] and then the little cottage down there.”

With getting together friends to form the Trust, and getting all the correct charitable status, it took over five years to welcome its first writer. “By 1999, I started fundraising, and we first appointed in 2002.”

Since then, more than 160 writers have stayed in the cottage for weeks or sometimes months at a time.

For this primary role of the Cottage, the writers who stay are all women writers who have achieved publication and some recognition, but for whatever reason now need a helping hand.

Sarah Hosking has a stark term for the writers they usually invite to stay in the cottage: she says they are all “shattered women”.

“We do one thing,” she said. “One thing. We invite older women, we have one cottage and there are twelve months in the year, that is all we have. So we go for shattered women of high ability and achievement.”

Or rather, they did, and will again. But for one, brief, ten-week season across summer 2023, Hosking Houses Trust partnered with Writing West Midlands — “a splendid organization” — to create something new.

Through event producer and artistic director Sarah Mullen, the organization created the Open House project. It would still be for writers, it would still be for women, but they no longer needed to have been published. They also didn’t have to be shattered women, they just had to be disadvantaged writers who would benefit from a room of their own.

“It was addressing people who needed promotion and advice and so on,” says Hosking.

So alongside one of the ten weeks in the cottage, each writer also had the option of a mentor in a field of their choosing, to help them with writing issues they identified. Each writer had six hours with a mentor, and the hours were spread across months but chiefly spent so that the writer could make the most of their week in the cottage.

“it ran beautifully”

Each week, then, a new writer would arrive and be welcomed into the cottage by Sarah Hosking. They’d be shown how everything works, they’d be shown the village and shops, and after a day or so, Sarah would return to check that all was going well. Otherwise, the writers were left alone in this cottage with a studio.

“It ran beautifully,” says Hosking. “The writers were complete charmers, they were wonderful.”

Hosking makes it sound simple, and repeatedly stresses how much of the work of the project was done by her fellow trustees and Mullen, the producer. You’re expecting a “but” now, yet if she were sitting next to you, she would cross out any sentence beginning with “but”, she is so pleased with how it went.

Perhaps she’d allow a “yet”, though.

Yet there were differences from the regular work of Hosking Houses Trust, and there were lessons learned from the Open House project. Most specifically, Hosking now doesn’t think that a week is long enough. “A lot of our [usual] residencies are two months,” she says, and she thinks that extended period is important.

However — she might allow a “however” because it’s important — what it took to do the new Open House project is what it takes to do Hosking Houses Trust’s regular residencies. It’s also what is currently proving to be an increasingly hard issue, and it’s the very centre of what she would say you need to think about before creating any residency, of any duration.



Sarah Hosking

“Money,” she says flatly “If you’re not personally wealthy, do you like raising it? If you don’t like money, don’t do it. Secondly, law. Every action has a legal element, an implication. If you’re going to host people, for instance, you need a gas certificate, you need all sorts of other things.”

“Thirdly, passion, which is a funny word,” she continues. “You simply do not count the hours you spend doing whatever it is. And fourthly, I think flexibility. So really those things, but money first, you have to chase money.”

Emma Thompson is its patron

Compressing Open House into ten weeks did not make chasing money easy. But Hosking says that one thing that came out of it all that has been a boon is Sarah Mullen. “I think she’s exceptional,” she says. “People as good as that coming out of the woodwork in the arts administration are rare.”

Hosking hopes to continue working with Mullen and there are plans for more projects, although “I don’t want to lose our core direction.”

Where the Open House project welcomed ten writers, the Trust’s core direction has seen over 160 writers. Salley Vickers wrote *The Boy Who Could See Death* there in 2012. Joan Bakewell worked on her autobiography *Stop the Clocks: Thoughts on What I Leave Behind* in the cottage in 2014. It’s a quiet space that has helped writers of “high ability”. Emma Thompson is its patron, and Sarah Hosking herself has been made an honorary fellow of the Royal Society of Literature.



Sign outside the cottage in Clifford Chambers village, near Stratford-upon-Avon

Yet Hosking, now 82, says there is so very much more that needs to be done — and no shortage of women writers who need the Trust's help. "You see, I don't want to be any better known," she says. "I'm booked up till this time next year."

In her typically practical, pragmatic way, Hosking says simply that "We want money."

Specifically, the Trust is working to raise enough money to buy another cottage. That's what it needs, that's what the shattered women writers and the disadvantaged ones of future Open House projects need.

And that is where you can help. The Trust has a JustGiving page where you can donate, and where you can read vividly absorbing comments from women who've directly benefited from the cottage, as well as those of us who want to support such a special place.

[Donate to Hosking Houses](#)

The impact of Hosking Houses Trust

Books by Hosking Houses Trust residents are to be found in public libraries, prestigious universities – e.g. Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard, Yale and Princeton – and major art institutions, e.g. Victoria and Albert Museum, The Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

Of the 22 residents we could fully research in the World Catalogue, we discovered that on average, each of the authors is represented in 193 libraries worldwide.

From residency to publication of their books, authors took anywhere from one year to 12 years,

with the average being just over three years. Nearly one quarter of these books have either been winners or shortlisted literary prizes.

Amanda Smyth's *Fortune* was shortlisted in 2022 for the Walter Scott Prize for Historical Fiction and Sarah Burton's *The Strange Adventures of H* was shortlisted for HWA (The Historical Writers Association) 2021 Debut Crown Award.

Louise Foxcroft's *Hot Flushes, Cold Science: A History of the Modern Menopause* won the Longman-History Today Prize in 2009 and Quincy Whitney's *American Luthier, The Art and Science of Carleen Hutchins* – was recognised by Pen America as one of the 10 best biographies of 2017. It won the Acoustical Society of America's 2019 Science Communication Award.

Carole Manship, chair of the trust

NAWE Guide to Writing Residencies

Novelist Sarah Butler has written a [comprehensive guide](#) to getting the most from a writing residency – whether you are the writer, or you are the organiser.

It's a practical guide concentrates on the subject from the perspective of a writer aiming to get a residency. It's also replete, though, with comprehensive advice for the creator and organizer of a residency – whether it's in a cottage, or on a ship.

Butler's guide also has case studies that show how a well-defined residency can be the making of the project.

"[Writing Residencies](#)" is just one of the many NAWA guides to the broad issues affecting us all. Check out the [full list](#) to see advice on mentoring, time management,

Philosophy of Teaching Creative Writing

JENNIFER SCHNEIDER reconciles legal and creative writing – and says far from being opposites, the two forms can benefit from each other's disciplines

As a legal educator, writer, and poet, I used to wonder when, where, how, and especially whether creative writing might fit within a legal studies curriculum. On the surface, the two disciplines often seem more distinct than similar. Legal writing, which is often constrained by applicable court rules and specialized citation requirements, can sometimes feel prescriptive and in sharp contrast to the free-form generative nature of creative writing.

However, as Davis (2015) writes, “[b]oth law and poetry require a fluid grasp of language and a critical need for precision and economy with words; possessing these skills can be the key to making one person successful in both endeavours” (para. 1). Over time, I’ve grown to appreciate the truths in this perspective and have learned that not only is there space for creative writing in legal studies, but also that incorporating creative writing activities into a legal studies curriculum can help empower student success.

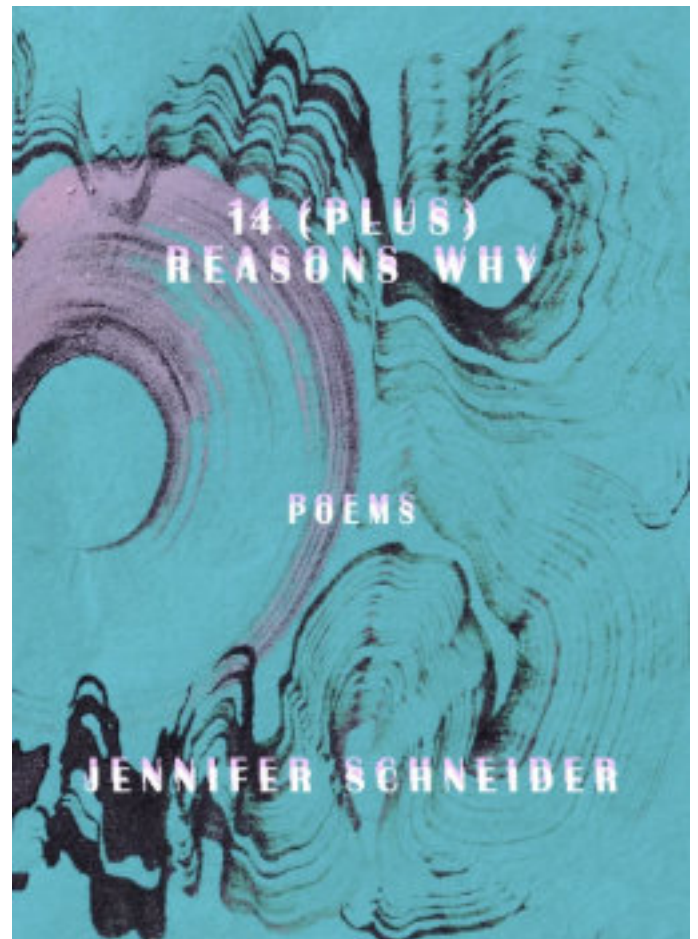
In my teaching practice and legal studies courses, I often work with students from wide-ranging backgrounds and varying majors and for whom legal terminology is new and unfamiliar. Legalese describes writing that relies not on plain language but on an often-confusing mix of redundancies, archaic language, complicated sentence structures, and legal jargon (Kimble & Prokop, 2014; Schwartz, 2017b) and as Schwartz (2017a) explains, “when it comes to drafting legal documents, the rule seems to be “legalese, please!” (p 55).

The combination of complex legal writing and students’ typically limited background with legal terminology often poses a challenge that can feel very much like learning a new language. Many students, like the character in the popular *Amelia Bedelia* book series, regularly confuse newly learned and unfamiliar terms and, as a result, often feel discouraged. Further, the unfamiliarity of legal texts, combined with the irregularity of life, often breeds fears of falling skies, not unlike those explored in the also-popular *Henny Penny* children’s book.

As a teacher, not only do I encounter student confusion when first introducing legal terms, I also see fears similar to those expressed by *Henny Penny* in my students, many of whom have not only imagined sky-falling scenarios but have lived through them. I regularly field questions and concerns tangled with panic. I’m not getting what these documents mean. What will happen if I can’t figure it out?

As I’ve reflect on my teaching practice and considered ways to diffuse the fear of falling skies for my students and support student growth, I’ve returned to basic principles of social constructivism and its emphasis on the important role of individual learners in creating,

exploring, constructing knowledge, and socializing within challenging learning environments (Bohlin, Durwin, & Reese-Weber, 2012; May, 2014; Mergel, 1998) where students and teachers work collaboratively in ways that support active dialogue, discovery, and learning (Bruner, 1966; Huang & Yang, 2015; Mergel,



Jennifer Schneider's "14 (Plus) Reasons Why" is published by [Free Line Press](#)

1998). In my legal studies courses, I also began to explore creative writing activities that offered low stakes and scaffolded introductions to legal terms and documents.

These activities provided opportunities for students to construct and create knowledge in non-restrictive ways that supported learning and built confidence. My students reacted positively and in ways not dissimilar to my own experiences with creative writing. I’ve long known that creative writing helps me process complex

ideas. In my experiences, the more I read, the more I write, and the more I write, the better I understand. Incorporating creative writing activities in my legal courses created similar opportunities for students to experiment, explore, and construct knowledge.

Moreover, engaging in creative writing activities mitigated the fears my students previously manifested in connection with complex legal materials. I saw my students become more confident and more fully engaged in the construction of substantive legal knowledge.

As I've continued to think about the relationship between creative writing and student success, I don't know if it's a chicken and egg story or, perhaps, simply a game of collaborative play.

When reflecting on my students' increased comfort reading as they engaged in more creative writing, I can't say for certain which came first, though I'm not sure it matters.

What matters is that creative writing has offered an opportunity to support student success in unexpected ways. In the coming year, I'll revisit with increasing frequency some favorite creative writing activities as a tool to remind and rewind.

For now, I reflect on the relationship between writing and education. I think of Henny Penny, falling skies, teaching, and learning, I document what I've learned.

Mostly, I've learned that by incorporating opportunities for creative writing in my legal studies courses, I can eliminate some of the discipline-specific fears that students new to legal studies often encounter and open up space for students to experiment, increase their comfort levels, and begin to see themselves in legal spaces.

Elizabeth Gilbert, in writing on the relationship between fear and creativity, has said that "Your fear will always be triggered by your creativity, because creativity asks you to enter into the realms of uncertain outcome, and fear hates uncertain outcome." (Goodreads 2023).

In this vein, I too have found that incorporating creative writing activities into legal courses can help both demystify the often-mystifying nature of legalese and make more accessible complex legal documents.

"Erasure poems"

I use an [online erasure poem](#) tool to create found poems in judicial opinions. To create an erasure poem, student writers erase or cross out existing text (words and phrases), keeping only words and phrases that will eventually be a part of a newly created poem.

Erasure poems offer opportunities for students (either individually or in groups) to read and interact with complex texts such as judicial opinions in creative and low-stress ways (Schneider, 2023).

Similarly, I introduce legal testimony to students via [Charles Reznikoff's collection](#) of found poems and his book *Testimony*, Reznikoff created poetry (found poems) from law reports and his work provides an opportunity for students to engage with often complex legal documents in less dense formats.

In classes with students of varied background and/or questioning their place in the legal field, I introduce lawyers who began their careers as poets.

I also introduce students to activists who have used poetry to promote social change.

For example, [Francis Scott Key](#) and [Alice Duer Miller](#).

These same strategies and activities are well-suited for any classroom and any type of content.

What I've found is that by intentionally reserving time and space for creative endeavors in my classrooms, students develop increasing confidence with complex course content and begin to think of themselves more as co-creators of knowledge.

Creative writing offers both an outlet and an opening to their studies.

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In Memoriam

FRANCIS GILBERT on NAWE trustee, SUE DYMOKE who died in July 2023.

'I was very shocked to read that Sue Dymoke died recently; she died way, way before her time.

My connection with Sue was not huge, but it was significant. I had long admired her research before I actually met her. For anyone who teaches English or creative writing (which I did/ do) she was a trail-blazer in promoting creative ways of teaching the subject of English, and poetry in particular. What distinguished Sue from many others was her research-informed approaches, the clarity and sometimes beauty of her writing, and her democratic passion for promoting writing. Her work includes:

Dymoke, S. (2003) *Drafting and assessing poetry: a guide for teachers*. London: P.C.P.

Dymoke, S. (2009) *Teaching English texts 11-18*. London: Continuum.

Dymoke, S., Lambirth, A. and Wilson, A. (2013) *Making poetry matter?: international research on poetry pedagogy*. London?; New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Dymoke, S. (2017) "Poetry is not a special club': how has an introduction to the secondary Discourse of Spoken Word made poetry a memorable learning experience for young people?', *Oxford review of education*, 43(2), pp. 225-241. doi:10.1080/03054985.2016.1270200.



She wrote much, much else and was a beautiful poet herself.

For me, it is this last cited article 'Poetry is not a special club' which embodies Sue. For it, she conducted some very thorough qualitative research into the Spoken Word Education programme which used to run at Goldsmiths (now disbanded), observing and interviewing young performance poets working in inner-city schools.

She shows in this article vividly that poetry can transform young people's lives if taught in a creative fashion. Her work couldn't be timelier now when creativity in education is under such attack.

I met her a few times at conferences and at Goldsmiths (where she was the first External Examiner for the MA in Creative Writing and Education which I run).

She was so generous with her time and expertise. The last thing she did for NAWE's *Writing in Practice* was typically magnanimous: a very detailed peer review for an article which needed quite a bit of work.

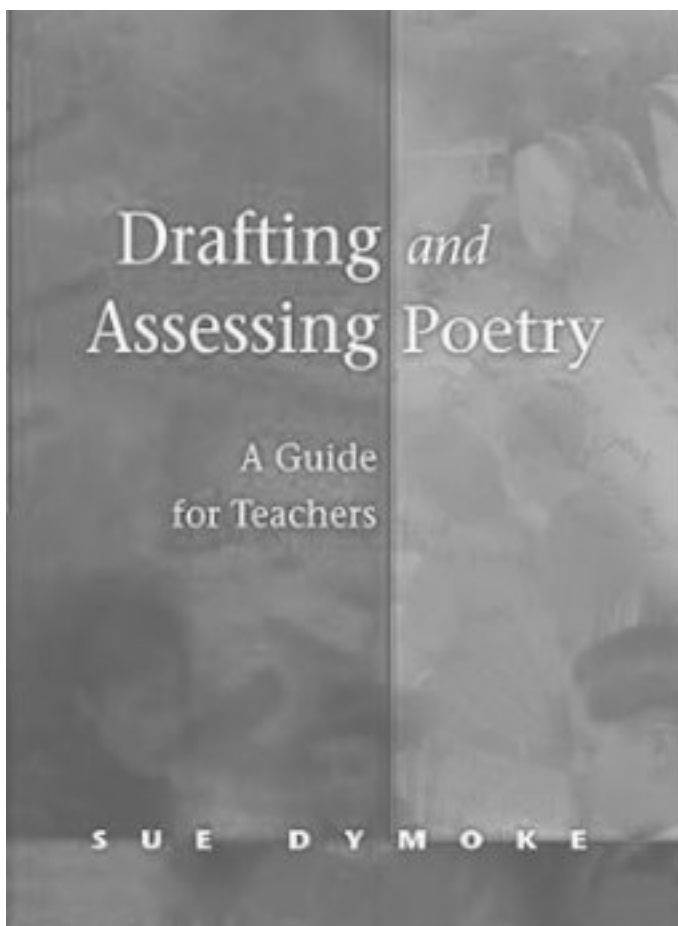
Sue took up the challenge with scholarly kind-heartedness and itemized both clearly and rigorously what needed to be done. She did this for no payment.

I will miss her a lot because she was such a rare voice: a genuinely imaginative academic and poet who made time for everyone.

Her premature death is a great loss to the academic community; she potentially could have written many more important books and articles.

Her untimely death is, of course, an even greater loss to those who knew her; her compassionate presence is irreplaceable.'

Francis Gilbert's [official site](#)



Meeting Ourselves

LAURA TANSLEY on self-reflection and skills development in Higher Education

Autofiction, as slippery as it is to define or contain, can be understood as having a focus on “the written text’s status as a remaking, rather than a straight recount, of remembered (thus already remade) people, places and events” (Walker 2018: 109).

With this focus in mind, autofictional writing acknowledges and experiments with the structures and patterns of stories of life, and the narrative expectations and assumptions that are in place when we consider a life story and stories from life. Placing autofiction in the context of work around graduate attributes and professional skills where students are asked to consider, identify, and articulate skills developed during their time at university, would mean not only asking students to creatively explore ideas of themselves as a way to identify personal, professional and/or community needs and wants, but also to critically engage with narratives of graduate attributes, and the effect of this on self-development, in both negative, positive and mixed terms.

In Summer 2019 I began preparing to convene an Honours course for students in the School of Critical Studies at the University of Glasgow called ‘Applying Arts: Professional Skills’. The course was open to any Honours student in the School, which included the subjects English Language and Linguistics, English Literature, Scottish Literature, and Theology and

Religious Studies. I was aware that developing non-academic writing skills might be a specific aim for students taking this course (depending on their goals both for the course and for life after university), and so I began looking for ways to offer exercises and assessment options that would support this through material around self-development and creative writing.

“Reflective practice”

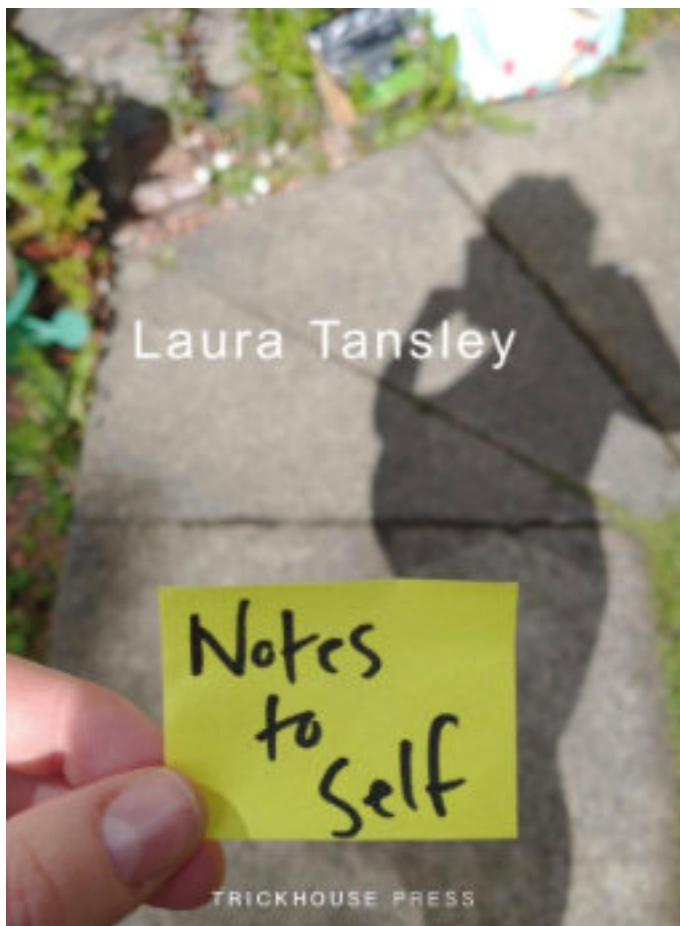
In the first iteration of the course (which, incidentally, ended in full lockdown in March 2020 and had a considerable impact on the concerns and priorities of students), and since then, when introducing autofiction as a mode of reflective practice to support self-development, we discuss, among other things, expectational narratives within cultures, communities, industries, practices, and even the student experience itself: what might be typically expected of a student graduating, and what, as students, they are expected to want, and whether that is matched with what they actually want, after they have completed their degrees.

We also look at reflective structures and practices which are designed to support processes of self-development and query their “over emphasis on the on the individual’s self-awareness at the expense of developing the individual’s social awareness and critical consciousness” (Roche 2022: 30). For example, STARL, the acronym which describes a way to helpfully structure responses to competency-based interview questions; it stands for situation, task, action, result, and learning (it also happens to mirror a traditional five act story structure too).

When reflective structures are focused on the individual, as opposed to communities and the many collaborations that might occur during an experience, and are often lacking explicit space in which to consider the ecology and environment of an experience, questions of how to sustain and maintain a reflective practice, as opposed to ceaselessly grow and develop, are raised. In class we discuss if autofiction, as a method of reflective practice, with its open and explorative nature, might offer an alternative to these structures and their limitations and discriminations.

In *Autofiction as a Reflexive Mode of Thought: Implications for Personal Development*, Hunt writes that an autofictional approach to exploring experiences facilitates “the subversion of existing self-narratives or self-perceptions, and [allows] other, sometimes hidden, ways of feeling or thinking about oneself to emerge indirectly through the writing” (2018: 181). Hunt created space for this in the MA she convened in Creative Writing and Personal Development at the University of Sussex, with the tutor team, by devising exercises that “[operated] in a similar way to free association in psychoanalysis” (2018: 181).

In this way, autofiction could support an exploration of experiences by employing fiction techniques to establish alternative understandings or awareness. She offers examples of such exercises in the chapter *Autofiction as a Reflexive Mode of Thought*, which is listed as essential



Laura Tansley's [latest collection](#)

reading for the Applying Arts course, and as part of our discussion on creative writing, reflexivity, and self-development, I offer these exercises to students as way to support their own experimentations with reflective practice.

Overwhelmingly, those students who are interested in exploring a creative form of self-development (and not every student was or is), are drawn to an exercise where they are tasked with “creating two different characters out of oneself and placing them in a story where they meet and exchange something of mutual value” (Moskowitz 2018: 44).

The pieces of writing produced in the first year, and in the two subsequent iterations of the course, often involve the author meeting a future self who has met specific, or general goals the younger self is interested in or concerned with. In their writing, these future selves are calmer, unhurried, are described in antithesis to the spiky, anxious, and confused younger self who, it becomes apparent in reading, hope they can someday achieve the peace of mind a future self seems to have secured.

These future versions of themselves are very often confident, detangled of the insecurities and unsurety that the present self is described as experiencing as they bump into themselves in cafes, or bars, in a park or at the beach, and engage in a conversation. A theme across these pieces, if we wanted to establish one, could be ‘it’s going to be alright’.

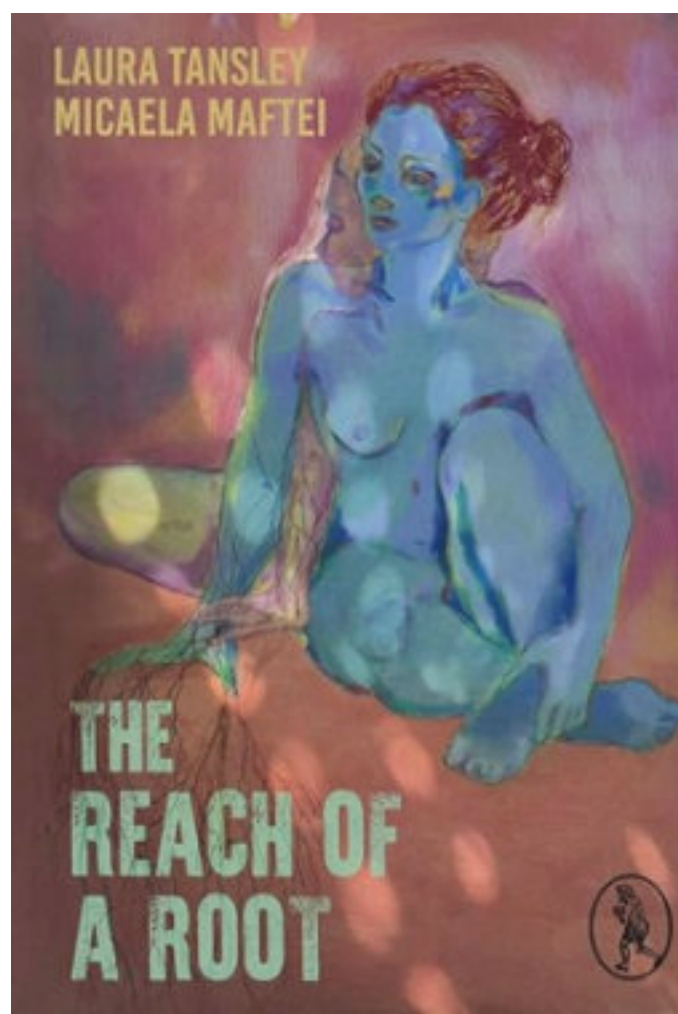
Autofiction is where we can meet ourselves to understand, and to also query the narrative trajectories we place, and that are placed upon us, offering alternative pathways that allow us to prioritize or reprioritize what might be important to us by reflecting on life moments or ideas.

In the context of a course concerned with self-development and developing professional skills, the impact this seems to have had on students is an opportunity to play, and for some specifically, to project themselves into a satisfying future, perhaps as a way of manifesting that future.

As I continue to explore the potential of autofiction as a form to support self-development, I grow increasingly interested in how it might form part of a reflective practice that actively questions self-development narratives that promote particularly unhelpful, unsustainable, narratives of continual growth which can be linked notions of extractoralism, where constantly striving and working to achieve the next goal and the next target becomes exploitative.

What if, as Rachel Cusk describes about her own autofiction, we write to explore what happens “if the self is less”, and how “other things change their proportions and relationships to each other and to [the self]” when the self is less in this writing (Cusk 2018)? In fiction we inhabit the perspectives of others. In autofiction, can we safely, appropriately, do this in order to expand our awareness of the interconnectedness and plurality of experience in relation to self-development?

As Hunt suggests, by fictionalizing life events, and “when people relinquish conscious control over their self-representations, they open up the possibility of thinking about, and experiencing, themselves differently”, allowing for and creating a multiplicity of selves (Hunt: 2016, 234). What might a pluralised, autofictional self-development narrative look like? How might autofiction support an interdependent, intra-



Laura Tansley and Micaela Maftei's [short stories](#)

actional reflexivity, and create space for embodied, emotional, rooted understandings of self, and subsequently of self-development? With this in mind, autofiction might support a sustainable, decolonial, reflexive practice which is, in this author's mind, an essential professional skill.

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Laura Tansley [on Twitter/X](#)

Solitary Poets in Germany and the UK

JOANNA NISSEL compares the rather different working life and culture of poets in the two countries.

My PhD research explores mentorship for adult poets in the UK, asking, essentially, how are poets taught to write poetry, how does the teaching shape them both as poets and individuals, and how does that shaping go on to affect the wider ecology of poetry. I am halfway through my PhD as I write this, and, so far, one of the main concepts I have explored is this idea of individualist and isolationist approaches to poetry and the myriad ways it can manifest. For instance, rather than looking at mentoring as an isolated activity, I argue that you cannot truly understand the significance of any mentoring without taking into account its effect on the wider systems of poetry.

My research focuses on the UK poetry ecology. But this summer, I was lucky enough to undertake a three month-placement at the Lyrik Kabinett poetry library in Munich, exploring the similarities and differences between the UK and German poetry ecologies. I interviewed a group of poets who, between them, covered poetry organizations and education initiatives from individual mentoring to poetry festivals, reading series, workshops, and more. I also conducted a small-scale mapping project to scope out the kinds of poetry organizations, initiatives, events, and educational practices common in Germany, with a focus on Munich.

Similarities between the countries

Like the UK, there is a thriving community of small poetry publishers in Germany. The Netzwerk Lyrik describes around thirty publishers producing over one hundred volumes of poetry per year in the German-speaking world (2023a). If one wanted to familiarise oneself with German poetry publishers (Verlage), you could start with edition AZUR, parasitenpresse, kookbooks, Elif, hochroth, or Black Ink.

Poetry is, sadly, still not well-represented in bookshops. As in the UK, you will mostly find the classics.

Funding, too, is not particularly conducive to poetry writing in that individual funding is not long-term and many organizations supporting poetry have to reapply for funding annually, if not more often (2023a). Still, local area councils often get involved in poetry initiatives and provide funding for them, much like some UK councils.

In more dour news, there is no creative writing in the school curriculum, only analysis of poems (Traustch 2023). In response, a number of individual and organization-led initiatives have happily created poetry



[Joanna Nissel](#)

workshop series for young people that prioritize fun in order to inspire a passion in poetry that the school system currently does not instil (Fellner 2023; Montasser 2023). Examples include workshops by Marquardt, the Lyrik Kabinett, and LyrikLab, which brings together expertise from over fifteen organizations.

Also similarly to the UK, there are a number of organizations who produce innovative, digital, and multimodal approaches to poetry or resources to support poetry. Like the UK literary magazines, such as Iamb, Fruit, and Propel, who include recordings of the selected poems to go alongside the text, there are several digital archives of recorded material in Germany.

In terms of the type of poetry readings on offer, there are similar open mic nights that garner a blend of spoken word, and new and mid-stage page poets. One such example in Munich is at the [Lost Weekend café](#), incidentally performed in English. The evening I attended was wonderfully supportive of nervous performers and under-represented writers voicing difficult experiences.

Differences between the UK and Germany

Perhaps one of the most significant differences is the concept of a Literaturhaus. This is a publicly-funded institution that programmes year-round literature events. Fifteen Literaturhäuser exist across Germany, Austria, and Switzerland (Literaturhaus 2023). It is worth interjecting, here, that some have criticized these institutions for their lack of poetry representation (Netzwerk Lyrik 2023b). In recent years, it has been common practice for both more established institutions, such as the Literaturhäuser, and for funded independent reading series and festivals to pay poets a fee of around €300-500 plus travel (Anonymous 2023).

Another large difference is the library provision in Germany. Despite being both larger geographically and in terms of population size, there are only two dedicated poetry libraries, compared to six in the UK. A seventh is under development in Wales (Price 2023).

Additionally, unlike Creative Scotland, or Arts Council England, Northern Ireland, or Wales, there is no national



Lyrik Kabinett poetry library in Munich (Photo: Amrei-Marie)

arts funding body. Instead, because poetry organizations and individuals apply to smaller, often local funding institutions, poetry provision becomes far more fragmented and regionalized.

In our interview, Karla Montasser, a poetry education expert at the Haus für Poesie, raised that this was especially true in the context of poetry education for children and teenagers (2023).

In education for adults, while “there are over eighty-three Higher Education Institutions in the UK that offer undergraduate courses in creative writing” (Jaillant 2022: 9), there are only a few institutions in Germany offering modules in Creative Writing, notably, Ludwig Maximilian Universität in Munich, the Literatur Institut in Hildesheim, and the Deutsches Literaturinstitut Leipzig. Likewise, the kinds of week-long, termly, or year-long courses and mentoring initiatives found at UK institutions like Arvon, the Poetry School, Fawn Press, Outspoken Press, or Poetry London (among many others) rarely exist in Germany. This was described by Marquardt as a lack of opportunities for middle-stage authors (2023). In a June 2023 article, the poet and philosopher, Asmus Trautsch, likewise noted a lack of poetry education provision and called for “[l]arge investments from the public sector [...], perhaps via a poetry fund, which the Netzwerk Lyrik, founded in

2017, advocates.”

“ecology and mentoring”

These are quantifiable differences. Yet, another emerged: the two main terms I use to depict and analyze poetry education in the UK — ecology and mentoring — do not exist in German in the same way. The implications of this shift in language were more interesting to me, but also less tangible, harder to define. To demonstrate its significance, I need to explain more about the term, ecology, and how I use it.

Analysis of Writing Cultures

For me, ecology encapsulates everyone and everything involved in the art of poetry: such as poets, readers, organizations, venues, libraries, publishers, educators, and funding bodies. In the UK, poets and academics have likewise used the term ecology, to the extent that the University of York’s J.T. Welsh labelled it as a “flash word of recent years” (2021: 204). There are subtle differences as to how the term might be conceptualised. Some use it in the environmental sense and others in the sociological. I draw on the sociological, which refers to, “relationships between people, social groups, and their environment” (Oxford English Dictionary 2022). Therefore I use ecology to emphasize that those involved in poetry are connected. Crucially, though, I argue that those in the poetry ecology are not just linked but they also influence each other.

Yet, the term ecology (Ökologie) rarely exists in the sociological sense in Germany, and ecology, in any form, is not applied in the context of the poetry world. Of course, not everyone in the UK who employs the term ecology has an awareness of its properties as described in theoretical texts. Regardless, ecology’s usage is symptomatic of a wider culture of the writing process being understood as interconnected, since UK poets commonly use ecology to demonstrate our ability to affect the larger systems of poetry, such as when Jo Bell used it in the Nine Arches Press guide, *How to Be a Poet* (Bell and Commans 2018: 157). Therefore, the lack of the term ecology in Germany could suggest a sense of interconnectedness is less present in German poetry culture.

Some might argue that the alternative terms German poets use instead of ecology, however, discredit such a conclusion. For instance, the closest two terms are network (Netzwerk) or landscape (Landschaft). Recent readings of Romantic nature poetry emphasize that

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Performance at Munich's Lost Weekend café (Photo: [Lost Weekend](#))

landscape can be a term that encourages ecological interconnection, such as Munich-based American Literature Professor, Hubert Zapf's analysis of Walt Whitman's *Song of Myself* (2016: 163-165).

Additionally, since ANT refers to interconnection in networks, not ecologies, this could imply that the alternative terms also reinforce an interconnected approach to poetic production and development. Nevertheless, evidence more strongly suggests an isolationist approach to poetry in Germany, particularly through the lack of a general term for mentoring or poetry education. For instance, two interviewed poets said mentoring takes place in Germany in a similar manner to how it is traditionally understood in the UK, with one poet providing critique and guidance to another (Anonymous 2023; Fellner 2023).

For instance, the Munich-based poet, Karin Fellner, offers one-to-one coaching (2023) and another poet, who wished to remain anonymous, said that they are regularly asked to provide feedback on individual poems in the manner of a peer-mentor (2023). However, when I spoke to Pia-Elisabeth Leuschner at the Lyrik Kabinett, she strongly doubted that this would be conceived of as mentoring (2023).

She added that "the concept and term of mentoring—as far as I know—is not very prominent in Germany, [perhaps] as a legacy of the long prevailing aesthetic of genius" (Leuschner, 2023). Leuschner, here, connects the genius to the way German language shifts away from recognizing that an educational process is taking place. For me, this called back to the idea of the single author. If mentorship remains nameless, then this prevents influence from being admitted into the process of creation, which maintains the concept of the single author and their original genius.

This hints that the reclusive narratives of the Romantic writer have manifested in an individualist and isolated thread in wider German poetry culture, leaving mentorship nameless and unacknowledged.

The alternative German terms for poetry ecology can also be read as strengthening an isolationist interpretation, since they both imply a sense of separation.

For example, only niche audiences, familiar with ANT, would think networks denote influence. Moreover, landscape is commonly used in the context of a human retreating into nature, which maintains an isolationist narrative that humans and nature are separate entities, rather than being co-produced by one another.

This is the reason ecologists like Morton have had to advocate for the dismantling of the binaries of human and nature and why scholarship like Zapf's is innovative—because historically nature was viewed as separate from humans.

Of course, as I am not a fluent German speaker, there could well be another alternative term I have missed. However, the fact remains that these two commonly used terms discourage interconnection, and, as evidenced above, German vocabulary has shifted away from recognizing educational processes. Together, this keeps the identity of the poet as something separate from external influences, and maintains the integrity of the "myth of single authorship" (Westbrook and Ryan 2020: 95).

I wondered if this myth explained why there are so few university courses, long-term writing courses, and mentorship programmes in Germany. A similar narrative to the one recounted by Sieja-Skrzypulec was playing out: an emphasis on the single author leading to a suspicion of poetry education.

Constrained by the single author effect, poets are now trying to shift the dominant mode of poetic education towards more collaborative models. Marquardt, for example, went on to form the workshopping group, *texttreffen*, (2023) which one participant described as offering critique at both the line-edit level and considering the poem as a whole (Anonymous 2023).

"significant shift"

Poetry collectives performing a similar function are also on the rise, including, *Reimfrei, fährt, das ad hoc*, partners in poem, *die_natur.schreibt*, and *Wepsert*. These collectives, echoing the work of international collectives like Malika's Poetry Kitchen in the UK, represent a significant shift away from the single author and its associated educational models.

However, there is still work to be done, since most of these mentorships happen in hidden and informal ways. Collectives are self-organized and often only made public in author bios. Since there is no agreed term for mentoring in German, poets cannot quickly do an online search for a poetry mentor. Instead, one-to-one mentorships are advertised on individual author websites, which you will only discover if you already know the poet. Furthermore, one of my anonymous interviewees commented how news about writing groups can be shared via email lists, which one must be added to by someone already in the circle (2023). They called for more formalized mentoring initiatives, as although they risk a certain professionalization of the learning process, these would be actively public-facing and easier to access (2023).

"narrative of the single author"

Ultimately, the narrative of the single author enables us, as poets, to make sense of how on earth we are supposed to approach writing poetry. To try and imagine all aspects of poetry at once is overwhelming, given that the poetry ecology (for me, at least) encompasses every human and non-human entity involved in poetry production.

Yet, in providing a single focal point, the single author narrative neglects the reality of becoming a poet, and, this has implications for the provision on offer for poets, regardless of the country in which they practice.

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Join NAWE

The National Association of Writers in Education is the only UK wide organization supporting the development of creative writing of all genres and in all educational and community settings.

As a membership organization, we aim to put creativity at the heart of education. Our members include writers, teachers, students, academics, literature professionals, librarians and laureates.

NAWE is about career support, networks, publications, resources, events & services for those teaching or studying Creative Writing. To support their work, members receive:

- 3 editions per year of our magazine, *Writing in Education*, showcasing the very best in creative writing and teaching practice
- Writer's Compass, a weekly e-bulletin including latest jobs, opportunities and events
- Invitations to regional gatherings and the NAWE Conference
- Public liability insurance, processing of Enhanced Disclosures with the DBS
- Career development advice and resources
- The option to join our Professional Directory, for use by any prospective employers

Here to support you

School Visit GONE WRONG

WILLIAM GALLAGHER starts our new series about the lessons or the days where everything went wrong – but maybe we learned something and maybe you can benefit. Do please email NAWE with your tales of disaster and you could be the next *Gone Wrong* writer.

What the school asked for: a visiting author to tell their secondary pupils what it's like being a professional writer. They asked for an author who had practical lessons and could tell pupils about the good and bad of the business, of about what they needed to work in it.

What the school really wanted: someone to discuss subjunctive clauses.

I say this to you and already you know that I think the school was a poor one that wasn't preparing its pupils for the real world. That's exactly what I think and I actually despaired when the word I got back afterwards was that the teachers said it took them weeks to undo the damage I'd done. Despaired and preened a bit.

Yet I did get it wrong. I'm just not going to make it worse by telling you the name of the school.

I like being practical, though, so if you ask me for this, you're going to get it and I stand by every syllable about professionalism that I told these pupils. One example: your work does not get marked when you're a professional writer, there is no passing grade. It's good enough or it's not, it's on time or you're fired.

I can't see how that is anything but accurate and if these pupils deliver writing late, or incomplete, or on a different topic than they were commissioned, they're going to learn. They're just not going to get to put the lesson into practice in whatever magazine or show they've just let down. I think it's criminal that they aren't learning that in school.

But the school did have one specific complaint. They said that I hadn't done my preparation, that I had repeatedly asked each class about what they were doing.

That knifed me. Of course I'd done my preparation, of course I knew precisely what each class had been doing and what they were working toward. But I don't go into a school to show off my research, I go in to engage and the way I do that is I ask questions. It doesn't matter that I know the answers, it matters what answers I am told.

I still do this. But I'm afraid I do it more warily. I caught



[William Gallagher](#)

myself at a recent school explaining what I do to the teacher and I can see her face now, looking at me like I was mansplaining.

Yet I had failed to read the room when I was in this school that went wrong. Everybody was nice to my face, I got some good laughs from the pupils, they did the work I asked them to do and if they weren't great, they weren't awful. I should have recognized that they weren't used to doing what I was asking them, and more importantly I should have recognised that it was a problem for them.

Plus my killer mistake was to treat these pupils as writers. I always do and I've actually been praised for how I seemingly don't patronize them – even if the truth is that I just can't ever hold pupils' ages in my head.

This time it was a secondary school and I rarely go into those because they don't have time for anything but exams. This secondary school didn't have time for anything but exams either, and I failed to see it. You can argue that secondary school exams may prepare pupils for many things, but writing professionally isn't one of them, and I would argue that. But in this moment, in this place, I don't believe the school wanted what it had asked for. I failed to deliver the message that exams are the beginning and end of everything, and if I don't happen to believe they are, I should have turned down the school.

This is what I believe, far and above enthusing about subjunctive clauses or whatever those are being called today.

As I say all this to you, I realize that it sounds as if I should shrug that poor school off and carry on, but I can't do it. More than a year later, that school is on my mind every time I'm asked to go into a new one.

The moment you saw this new Writing in Education series was about when things go wrong, you thought of a time it happened to you. Don't throw a lesson or a workshop deliberately, but do [tell me everything](#).

Author L.R. LAM on moving from being a lecturer to a book coach with writing school [The Novelry](#)

For nearly seven years, I was a lecturer on a Creative Writing MA in one of the few higher educational courses in the UK that had an emphasis on genre fiction. In many ways, it was a dream job — an interesting course, wonderful colleagues I'm still in touch with, many hardworking and talented students, and a lot of autonomy in creating and delivering modules.

For most of my time there, I loved it, even if it was extremely busy. I also wrote a novel a year with major publishers like Pan Macmillan and Hachette.

As time went on, lecturing became increasingly difficult to balance with my writing career. The university workload also increased significantly. I tried to do both as long as I could before I burned out badly, signed off sick, and realized it was time for a change.

For the last six months, I've been a writing coach at The Novelry, which in many ways offers the same rigor as higher education but within a more flexible environment for both writers and book coaches. It has also developed close industry links to best help those seeking to be traditionally published and seeing their books on the shelf.

The Novelry launched in 2017, the brainchild of Louise Dean, a Booker-nominated writer who wanted to foster a writing community, both for her own writing practice and to help others. Since its inception, it's grown massively, and offers several



Buy LR Lam's
Sunday Times
bestseller
[Dragonfall](#)
from the
Dragon Scales
Trilogy

[£16.99](#)

Teaching Writing In and Out of Academia

courses that can be taken at the writer's own pace.

Its pedagogy is strong, pushing students to think deeply about concept, narrative structure, and craft. As part of these courses, much like in higher education, there's the opportunity to work with a mentor.

The coaches at The Novelry are bestsellers, award-winners, or both. Coaches write in a variety of genres: cosy crime, psychological thrillers, science fiction and fantasy, memoir, literary fiction, and more. Adult, young adult, and middle grade—it's all covered.

"Editors worked for the Big 5"

There are also regular, informal group sessions where writers can come in and ask any questions they're wrangling with and others where coaches focus on a particular craft technique.

Once writers finish their drafts and do initial edits, there's an in-house department of editors who have worked for "Big 5" publishers like Penguin Random House. For manuscripts that seem like they have a chance of publishing success, The Novelry will help craft the query letter and has partnerships with over 20 top literary agencies. Of those submitted, over two-thirds have gained representation in 2023. The Novelry regularly offers Q&A sessions with well-known authors, agents, editors, marketers, and more. There is a lively online community with writers from all over the world. In short, I've been consistently impressed.

The main thing I miss about higher education is teaching in person in a classroom—there's a particular buzz when a concept clicks for students right in front of you. There's an energy that can be closely but not exactly replicated in a Zoom room (as we all learned in the pandemic), but this is offset by the convenience and accessibility of online teaching. I also enjoyed academic research—I once went to a vampire conference in Transylvania and delivered a paper on vampires and fairies, which was great fun.

In higher education, things have to be largely one-size-fits all for fairness. Everyone receives the same level of feedback. Everyone takes the same lectures and should, for example, read and engage with the academic theory assigned, even if that's not their primary interest (though I would wonder why some resisted it if they chose to sign up for an academic course!).

Mentoring must happen at the same points in the trimester. A story draft must be submitted by the due date and stories were judged by the same criteria, even though writers wrote radically different stories, had different levels of previous writing experience, or simply needed more time.

“Grades could hamper a writer’s journey”

One of the most difficult parts for me was assigning grades to creative work. While I enjoyed writing feedback, I found the preoccupation with grades could hamper a writer’s journey—they’d be discouraged by a lower mark, or there was sometimes competition and comparison between students.

From a workload perspective, it also meant there were constant pinch points: if I was in a good flow with my own writing, in came an avalanche of marking. Sometimes, the marking would overlap with my writing deadlines, resulting in extreme stress.

The standard capstone project of a creative writing MA is the opening of a novel and an outline rather than the full draft.

Though plenty of students remained motivated, some graduates lost momentum after the support of the programme. There were so many I wanted to help to the finish line but couldn’t, as it was onto the next cohort.

Creative writing in academia can at times feel like a square peg in a round hole. There are blanket institutional policies that make sense for academic contexts but less so in creative ones and yet, despite efforts, there can be limited flexibility. The metrics for prepping a lecture, marking, or reading mentoring packets was often half of the time it took, for example.

This is a wider issue in academia not specific to creative writing. At The Novelry, I largely control my schedule. We are more than adequately staffed. I don’t feel like I’m running on a hamster wheel that keeps speeding up. I can take my time and offer more considered feedback.

As coaches, we focus on larger scale story and hook, with much of the work on the line-level prose left to the editorial department. This leaves coaches more headspace for our own stories while still providing valuable help to writers.

We have a positive coaching method: honest but encouraging. The Novelry also give writers privacy in their first draft, urging them not to show early work so they have the space to experiment and not receive criticism that might halt momentum. In later stages, they can book feedback sessions where we look at prose samples in more detail.

Overall, I feel The Novelry is designed to help writers reach their goals at their own pace, while the role is designed to work alongside my own writing needs. I feel lucky to be a part of it.

To find out more about writing fiction with The Novelry, see thenovelry.com.

[LR Lam](#)

Sample courses from The Novelry

The Novel Kickstarter Course £1,399

Whether you want to improve your storytelling skills or begin the journey towards becoming a published author, The Novel Kickstarter can take you all the way from coming up with an idea to a first draft.

The Novel Development Course £1,550

Take a brave new approach to writing a new draft with expert advice from our team of publishing professionals and get your story signed off before you start writing this time.

The Finished Novel Course £2,799

The Finished Novel Course is our comprehensive 3-stage program towards a completed fiction novel. The course culminates in an in-depth report on your manuscript from Penguin Random House and Big 5 publishing editors to enter the publishing process.

The Ultimate Manuscript Assessment £1,499

Get professional feedback sooner rather than later to prepare for entry into the publishing process.





“The Nets to Catch Words are Made of Words”

JOCELYN PAGE attended EACWP’s International Pedagogical Conference in Madrid in May 2023 and says the energy and synergy present will keep her going in every sense.

We all recognize the synergy that can occur during a conference, when you realize that what you’ve been researching in your little office on campus or at home, surrounded by books and theories and your own fledgling thoughts, resonates with colleagues around the world. There is a joy in the culminating zeitgeist that somehow centres around ideas that are aligned with your own growing sensibilities.

This is precisely what occurred for this participant at the European Association of Creative Writing Programme’s (EACWP) VI International Pedagogical Conference in Madrid from 4 - 6 May 2023, co-hosted by Escuela de Escritores.

The conference was held at Casa Árabe, an architecturally striking cultural centre near the Retiro Park, one that is suitably oriented to, according to its website, ‘building bridges’ and operating as ‘a space for mutual knowledge and shared reflection’. Over its three days, more than 80 writers and teachers from all over Europe and overseas shared a series of presentations, workshops, panel discussions and lectures, centred on the theme of “The Art and the Craft”. As with all the best

Image: EACWP’s conference (Photo: [Jocelyn Page](#))

conferences, there was productive space for exchange and discourse well beyond the official hours of the event, with seeds for future collaboration planted over casual conversation in the halls of Casa Árabe and beyond.

One might best characterize the overarching mood of the weekend as purposefully commemorative: with several panels led by Escuela de Escritores, an organization that observed its 20th anniversary this year, the focus on their achievements was worthy and the scope was generous as they welcomed all participants to their party, which was, in turns, intellectually stimulating, creative, exploratory, emotional, invigorating, and future facing.

Exceptional

With this undercurrent of achievement and multicultural bonhomie fueling the congress, participants were frequently offered a variety of invitations; indeed, the entire weekend seemed to suggest permission or encouragement to contemplate issues and matters that can often be overlooked or postponed at home.

Some of the exceptional invitations, for this lecturer/writer included the chance to learn about and celebrate the reach and depth of Creative Writing as a pedagogical concern, with a keynote on “Multi-workshopping and Creativity” by Ana Merino of Iowa University, USA. There was a rich panel as a “pedagogical dialogue between two continents” including Merino, Alain André (Aleph-Écriture, France), Conceição Garcia (Escrever, Portugal) and Mara Pastor (Sagrado Corazón University, Puerto Rico).

Indeed, to contextualize and understand the history of



Jocelyn Page

writing as a profession was illuminating and somewhat humbling for this poet/lecturer, as it reframed my own quotidian process within a proud trajectory and rich canon.

Similarly, there was the ability to court the freedom and productivity of playfulness, with workshops on narratological positioning (Livia Franchini, Goldsmiths, UK) and freewriting on our own names as an approach toward investigation of the self (Alain André, Aleph-Écriture, France). The focus on play as a necessary element of “surprise” in the session entitled “Master’s Degree in Poetry” (Óscar Curieses and Miguel Ángel Fera, Escuela de Escritores, Spain) supported my own poetic pedagogy that I share with my students, undergraduates and community participants alike.

“enriching and refreshing”

Then I got to think deeply about the role of sound in writing, with ‘The Power of Sound to Evoke Writing’ (Kate North, Cardiff Metropolitan University, UK), the use of playlists and podcasts in the classroom (Ianire Doistua, Escuela de Escritores, Spain), and close reading, listening and watching, with my own “Slow Reading” session and “Serial storytelling as Creative Writing Practice” (Maurizio Amendola, Scuola Holden, Italy). “Silence and Other Strategies in Writing and Reading Short Stories” (Viviane Ferreira, Escrever, Escrever, Portugal) also usefully identified silence as a sonic quality with meaning-making attributes, one that represents sophisticated analysis and a way toward empathy and profound reader engagement.

Next, there was the opportunity to draft work with a sense of humour, involving a “satirical appropriation of grandeur” and an eye toward “success by confusion” as

promoted by Orhan Kipcak (vienna poetry school, Austria) in “Ide Hintzes 7fold poetics”; indeed, Kipcak’s discussion of Hintzes’ ideas on ‘democratising poetry’ braided such eclectic sources as Frank O’Hara and football, an enriching and refreshing sphere of influences that might be welcome in this politically divided era.

Attendees got to reevaluate our own teaching techniques in light of current social and political crises, with a panel including Fritz Ostermeyer (vienna poetry school, Austria), Lucian Georgescu (UNATC, Romania), Endre Lund Eriksen (Norewegian Institut for Children’s Books, Norway), An Leenders (Creatief Schrijve, Belgium) and Laia Fàbregas (Laboratori de Lletres, Spain), with some emphasis on “pataphysics”, or the science of fictional solutions. Our responsibilities with regard to equity in our reading list choices (Elena Traina, Falmouth University, UK) seemed of vital importance and an adjacent talk on “How Teaching on Teams Shook Up my Teaching Routine” (Astrid Delaage, Aleph-Écriture, France) reminded us of our proximity to global emergency and our role as teachers in the process of coping and adaptation.

We also got to examine ourselves in terms of received notions of Aristotelian categories of artistic values and ‘campfires’, all toward the meaningful identification of our reactions toward our own set of esteemed qualities (Frank Tazelaar, ArtEZ, The Netherlands). This practical session interestingly confronted our sense of value systems and provided a template for future class activities that look to chart preconceptions, possibilities and self-perception;

Lastly, the conference led us to re-evaluate the importance of our work as located in the universality of specificity, as suggested by Lorena Briedis and Dennis Gaens (EACWP, Spain and ArtEZ, The Netherlands, respectively) in “Notes from the Cutting Room Floor: On Validation”.

At a time when the government in the UK seems determined to devalue the humanities as a educational pathway, we need these reminders of our shared experience and the critical nature of what we do as crucial.

Of the many quotes provided by the educators, students and participants over the weekend, perhaps that by Octavio Paz could be the most apt for the effect of the gathering:

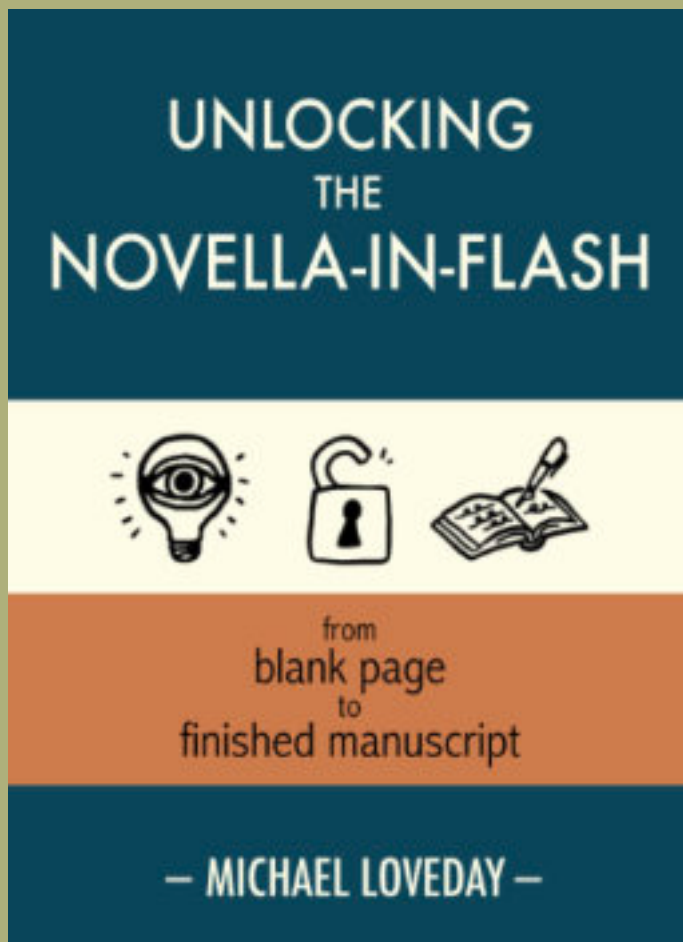
“Las redes de pescar palabras estan hechas de palabras”
– “The nets to catch words are made of words.”



Book Reviews

Edited by MATTHEW TETT

Step by step guide to writing flash fiction



Unlocking the Novella-in-Flash: from Blank Page to Finished Manuscript by Michael Loveday. [£14.99](#)

Writers will be very aware of flash fiction, from collections of very short stories, through to contests offering prizes and publication. Michael Loveday's book is a perfect resource for writers who want a step-by-step guide to writing their own flash fictions, particularly writing a novella composed of a series of very short stories.

Unlocking the Novella-in-Flash: from Blank Page to Finished Manuscript is divided into three parts. Part One is a clear introduction to the novella-in-flash, ranging from what flash fiction is, with helpful definitions and examples, through to a range of categories, such as prose poetry and the polyphonic novella-in-flash.

Here, Loveday helpfully provides readers with examples of this form, such as Jenny Offill's *Weather* (2020) and Richard Brautigan's *Trout Fishing in America* (1967).

Clearly, the novella-in-flash is not a new form—it has been in existence for a long while—and Loveday explores many (in some ways, too many) examples, all great to add to writers' TBR piles.

In the first part of the book, Loveday explores common problem areas—one example is a cast of characters that is too big for the nature of the prose. Even though this section errs on being slightly repetitive, what makes it particularly strong is the references to writers who are successful. One example is Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street* (1984).

There are useful places to visit, such as a novella-in-flash Facebook group – one such resource which is accessible for readers of the book.

The second, and penultimate, part of the book is described as 'a workbook' and is split into various phrases. Very helpfully, Loveday takes readers through different exploration tasks and writing prompts. So, a writer could approach using this book with a clear idea in mind, or if this is not something that appeals, the book will take readers through methods of generating ideas. It is extremely helpful to have prompts and tasks alongside examples from existing books.

So, for example, one of the prompts in the first phase is about developing a character's home territory—and Loveday builds on this with references to how Cisneros does this in the opening of the aforementioned *The House on Mango Street*.

Readers of the book have choices—they can follow the book chronologically, making sure all of the activities are completed, or they can dip in and out to suit their writing needs and interests.

This second part of the book is by far the longest and most involved. Consequently, it is advisable for readers to invest time in this section—but as with any writing craft book, the best way of maximising its effectiveness is to allow the reader to approach it in their own way.

Loveday's final part is a series of appendices, starting with a short essay-type piece of what flash fiction is and how it differs to a novella-in-flash.

“money well spent”

This is followed by a list of publishers (which, obviously, may date with time), further reading, including books focusing more on the craft, and some short, snappy prompts—perfect for when writers' block just won't shift.

There is a list of competitions, some of which are very famous, such as the Bath Flash Fiction Award Novella-in-Flash, and others which readers will be less familiar with.

All in all, though, this final part of the book is a user-friendly reference guide perfect for busy writers.

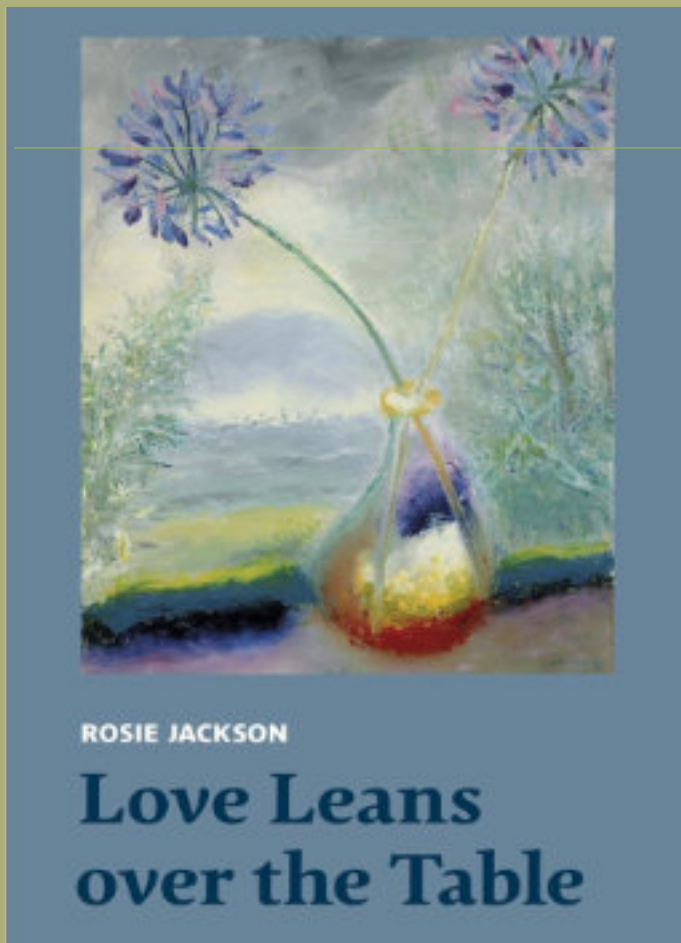
Many books about the writing craft are useful and it can be difficult to know what to choose. With *Unlocking the Novella-in-Flash: from Blank Page to Finished Manuscript*, however, Loveday does something different: here, readers are provided with a complete course which will, hopefully, result in a novella-in-flash being written.

This, I feel, is a very good thing—and for less than £15.00, it is certainly money well spent.

Matthew Tett

[Buy *Unlocking the Novella in a Flash*.](#)

Life-affirming poems by Rosie Jackson



Love Leans over the Table by Rosie Jackson, [£10.99](#)

This collection of passionate, life-affirming poems goes straight to my favourites shelf. It was a pleasure to read this book where every poem is a pure belter from an accomplished and engaging voice. The collection is divided into three sections: Hearken, O Daughter, Better than Angels and Among Mortals.

The poems in Hearken, O Daughter explore the poet's personal relationships in a variety of forms starting with her father and their shared spirituality. The more deeply personal these poems are, the more universal they become, like the poet has broken through an emotional boundary in her writing and has been able to illuminate deep connection and pure love.

We also are introduced to many historic, philosophical and artistic references with further information handily provided in the Notes section.

It is hard to pick stand out poems from this section as they are all so good but *His Heart like Wax* is a meditation on imperfection in couplets which I felt a particular affinity to. I'm sure we all know someone or ourselves feel incompetent in the ways of the world and on the back foot not quite managing.

Also, the playfulness and simplicity of *Coming to Terms* with in juxtaposition with its subject matter stopped me in my tracks. This poem would make a great wall poster but I'd get nothing done; I'd spend all day reading it. Reading this collection has made me feel as if I am in

conversation with the poet and as if she is speaking directly to me. First lines include: *I did that thing you talked about, I don't remember which novel I had on the go and the nearest I can get is that day I locked myself.* This familiarity and confidence from the writer had me hooked and as Kim Moore writes 'There is a restless energy and searching intelligence at work here—creating startling, moving poems that explore the porous, shifting boundary between the historical and the contemporary'.

As someone who doesn't really study history or read history books, I enjoyed all the historical references in this collection and the insights they brought. I had never heard of Anchorites before reading these poems. There are also references to Meher Baba, Dorothea Tanning, Margery Kempe, John Donne and Simone Weil amongst others. The poems seem to capture these historical characters with a curious reverence and with honour and compassion. They were also exciting and urgent poems that made me want to find out more.

The second section, Better than Angels, deals with spiritual struggle through the lens of figures of interest and the use of Ekphrasis. I was particularly drawn in by *Imaginary Prisons after Carceri d'invenzione* by Giovanni Battista Piranesi, 1745. In itself this art is a great metaphor for existence and here the poet adds yet another creative dimension by describing how it would be to be inside the prison.

The third section Among Mortals seems to be hopeful life instructions from learned wisdom. There's a moving poem called *Harvest* which begins *My friend Linda, a poet, died unexpectedly this week* and goes on to explore the poet's relationship with mortality and self-acceptance.

This is a collection that I enjoyed very much and look forward to returning to in the future. I also look forward to reading whatever Rosie Jackson writes next.

Ann Grant

[Buy Love Leans over the Table](#)

Resistance is tense in a new wartime novel

Resist: One Girl's Fight Back Against the Nazis by Tom Palmer, [£7.99](#)

Resist is set in 1943 in wartime Netherlands under the Nazi occupation. We dive into the narrative, almost it seems in mid breath and, such is the immediacy of the story telling, that we find ourselves cycling with teenager Edda when she is forced to stop at a level crossing where German soldiers man a checkpoint.

We quickly learn that Edda is carrying illegal resistance newsletters and that she is becoming involved in the resistance movement.

The incident reflects the almost continual tension of the story—and the precariousness of their existence. A few days later, Edda and her brother Ian are walking through farmland to collect eggs; the next, a truck stops and her brother is seized.

From inside the van someone shouts, in Dutch, 'Run! Arbeitseinsatz!' which is the German word for taking men over the age of 18 and transporting them to Germany to be forced to work in factories.

The story has a filmic quality throughout, intensely visual and flickering between light and dark.



"It had become normal to skulk about in the dark, living beneath the flightpaths of Allied bombers... searchlights criss-crossing the sky. There was nobody about. Nobody at all... Eddie felt like all her senses had been super charged. She thought she heard the click of lock on the inside of a door across the street, an aeroplane buzzing thousands of metres up in the sky"

Although the story is told in the third person, the writing is strongly visual and visceral with an only slightly distanced first person quality. We see—and feel—only through Edda, experiencing her fears, her courage and her dilemmas. This becomes especially intense towards the end of the book, when fighting has become fierce, 'the stench of the rotting carcasses of cattle ... trees stripped of all their branches ... houses with great holes in them, bricks and tiles scattered across gardens and streets.'

The near starvation conditions, when German V1 rockets fly over every night and Edda and her family hide in a single cellar room, are described in intense and telling detail.

All this darkness could become overwhelming were it not for Edda's strong spirit and her love of dancing. One evening, members of the Resistance meet in a blacked-out house, for performance of dance and song in which she takes part, in aid of the resistance movement.

Just occasionally, the language hits a wrong note, perhaps an anachronism. Would Edda have answered 'Good' when asked how she was? Or 'toast' to indicate done for or doomed? But these were tiny jolts in our immersion in Edda's world and could arguably be said to connect the contemporary reader with these times.

I loved the map of Velp where the story takes place which was printed at the start of the book and the strip at the

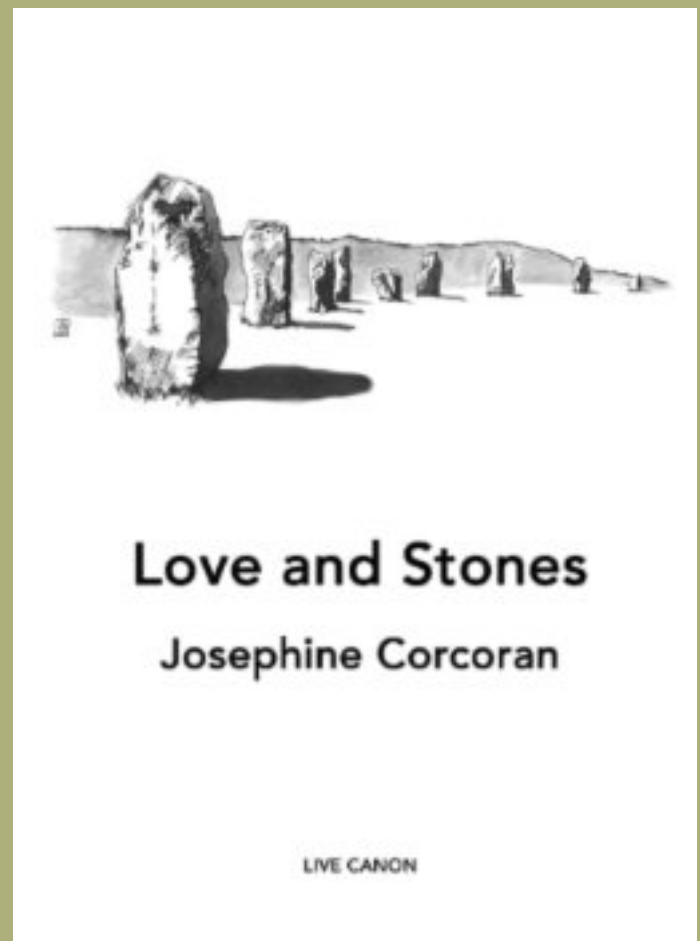
bottom of every page, depicting Edda bent forward cycling along the road by the river and the smoke of distant chimneys or explosions.

This is a book I would definitely recommend if I were still a classroom teacher, for both the sharpness of the writing and for the insight into a young person's experience of the war and the Dutch resistance movement, perhaps, sadly, increasingly relevant now.

Lydia Fulleylove

[Buy Resist: One Girl's Fight Back against the Nazis](#)

Tracing a pattern of yearning



Love and Stones by Josephine Corcoran [£7.00](#)

In Josephine Corcoran's chapbook/pamphlet *Love and Stones*, love is evident in its themes, while the 'stones' of the title refer to the henges and standing stones (including churches) that populate the Wiltshire landscape evoked in the poems. The two themes are linked in the chapbook's title as both indivisible and complementary.

Corcoran's collection is a joy because it provokes a somatic response in the first instance; you feel with your body before those feelings give rise to identifiable emotion. My emotional response traced a pattern of yearning throughout the poems (for children who've left home; for memories past) which is elegiac rather than sentimental. In *Then, said I, Lord, How Long?*,

the narrator kisses their 18-year-old son goodbye, left in 'my childless home,' but not bereft—recalling 'the heat of him' as a suckling infant, sensory memory is tangible and accessible.

In the very next poem, *Stories Are What We Are*, the narrator's companion tells of a chance encounter with a man 'In some kind of trouble' in the Wiltshire landscape, anecdote unspooling into detailed story, the story made real in the present. The poem's last line, 'Stories of death and stories of living' hails that same continuity, echoed in the present tense of the title.

Incidentally, fellow poet Jonathan Edwards, reviewing Corcoran's 2018 debut collection *What Are You After?* for Poetry Wales, remarked on the strength of her poem titles, something I found particularly true of her poems about lockdown in this collection, such as *In Lockdown*, *Solitude Becomes a Flying Lover*, a semi-ekphrastic response to Chagall's *Over the Town*, his famous painting of a couple swooping in flight over rooftops. As the turmoil of lockdown displaces the established order, *Here are the children returning to a childhood/they no longer want*.

A letter from the Prime Minister has gradually displaced the postcard of the Chagall painting (perhaps representing the freedom to take flight), which *slips/behind a long-forgotten clock*.

This poem continues the theme of its predecessor, *Once Upon a Lockdown, 2020*, effectively a prose poem, its subheads charting a sense of dislocated time through seasonal shifts, from "Rosebud" to "Compost", an unfolding and ultimately withering rose becoming a metaphor for the *many falling petals* who are lost loved ones, lost either literally or because they have declined while left alone without stimulation:

*We carry them to compost, remembering their radiance,
refusing to forget.*

Roses, a variety of other flowers and children appear as regularly as the stones of the title, most poignantly in *A Baby Speaks on his Birthday/in an Autumn Garden, 2020*. The narrator addresses the eponymous baby who is 'Fizzing with energy,' yet as the baby crawls in an autumn garden, 'leaves sparking orange,' there's a flipside to the vitality of fizzing and sparking—they are also words associated with the hot and heated language of climate change, so that alongside the beauty, menace creeps into a world

*of flaming creepers, burnt gold berries, scorched
tangle of vines ablaze on fences, roses faded
as if kissed with soot.*

Nor is Corcoran afraid to experiment with poetic structure. The late actor and writer Vanna Bonta declared that 'the true poem rests between the words,' which partly suggests to me that white space around and within a poem is as much a part of what it says and doesn't say as a structural technique. This struck me when reading *Sheep at Avebury Stones*, where the eclectic spacing of words and lines echoes the chant-like chorus of the sheep – 'we move... we gift... we eat...'

But because the stones are also present, one choral voice is an echo of another. The stones too are 'not human' but 'stand next to,' or 'push against' the animal world, just as the sheep recognize that their permanent field companions are 'not giving way... not tumbling... not human.'

I'll leave the final word to the final poem, *Last Chance, Strawberries*, where fields of late-July barley, wheat and

corn share the landscape with both ancient stones and the disposable cardboard of farmers selling roadside fruit, as plant, stone and animal intersect. This late in the day, we face our last chance to save the environment, yet stories persist, along with the landscape that inspires them, and from that, springs hope: *Let's not leave here without tasting a handful of something wild and sweet.*

Gabrielle Mullarkey

[Buy Love and Stones](#) by Josephone Corcoran

Be transported to Rwanda through this poetry collection



Dear Rwanda

Isabella Mead

LIVE CANON

Dear Rwanda by Isabella Mead, £7.00

It is said that, to become a better writer, you should read poetry. Poetry is the most succinct of art forms, capturing the ambiguity in life, raising questions, and drawing out contrasts with brevity and artistry. And in her wonderful collection, *Dear Rwanda*, Isabella Mead evokes all these qualities, effortlessly transporting the reader to a world that she knows and loves.

Dear Rwanda is a collection of twenty-seven poems that transport us to rural Rwanda, to a village called Muganza, where Isabella Mead worked as a volunteer, training teachers in the local primary schools between 2010-2012.

Each of the poems captures a vignette from a life steeped in the natural world, reflected in the simple titles of the poems, such as *Banana beer*, *African night*, *Sunflowers*, *Sweetcor*, *Sugarcane*, *Goat*, *Mosquito Net* and *Slow Stars*. Through her use of evocative sensory detail, Mead conveys a strong sense of place and of its people, from the *crowded banana trees that crosshatch the sky*, to

the bar where visitors drink banana beer through bamboo straws. Here, the natural world dominates—cows murmur and mosquitos croon in the candlelight while *electricity is a wisp of a word*, untested and untrusted.

And though the children chatter and play games while men and women work, this is a place where *time itself is liquid/meetings start when everyone's arrived/and the bus leaves when it's full...*

The result is a picture of Rwanda, all the richer and realer for its contradictions. Rwanda is the protagonist and refuses to be labelled. "In the land of heat and rain... the season" writes Mead, "is defined not by the showers but by the shifts between" — the place, ravaged by war, caught between its past and future, manages somehow to regroup, to live in that space of uncertainty.

In "a country where flowers never hide," its inhabitants must show equal bravery in the face of what they have suffered — *Chantal sips Fanta and says Forgiveness/ is a kind of victory, but forgetting is equally important*. Rwanda wants, and is, more than the sum of its history and Mead records what she sees with empathy but without judgement, translating the precariousness of life without denying any of its beauty.

Much like Lynn Nottage, in her play *Ruined*, set in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mead similarly captures the sensory experience of life at the bar, creating stories that overlap and dazzle with their eloquence, understanding and compassion.

Mead does not shy away from the suffering, *women shelling beans at twilight/never name their silenced virus* but the community's resilience shines through. In *Christine*, for example, the poem is named after a *wise, crazy woman* or "agakecuru" whom *the war froze [her] forever at thirteen*.

Though Christine relives her past terror monthly, she also helps children with their English and Maths. Likewise, in *Sugarcane*, the scars that line Chantal's cheeks don't stop her dreaming about finding a man and moving to Dubai. Despite what it has suffered, Rwanda's spirit is one of survival, companionship, and kindness.

And, increasingly, as we move through the collection, Mead does not shy away from asking complicated questions, including about her own role as a volunteer, brilliantly captured in the poem *Jenga* where, acting on advice she has been given in her volunteer training, she tries to connect to the local visitors through a game of Jenga. We feel Mead's mortification on realising that *Stack it and Crash it!* causes her visitors to depart, offended at seeing a structure tumble that too closely reminds them of their own housing issues. Her repeated 'I did not know', or 'But then I knew nothing' are powerful reminders of the challenges of connecting to another culture. But connect she does, as we learn of Chantal's protectiveness over Mead, when she slaps a teacher who once asked for Mead's number, accusing him of simply being after a VISA, or of the generosity of Papa Fabrice, who, despite choosing to stop speaking twenty years ago, leaves golden parcels of fresh produce at Mead's door every morning.

As British-Caribbean poet Roger Robinson has stated: "The poet's job is to translate unspeakable things on to the page." Mead translates the unspeakable through her beautiful, evocative, and poignant poetry, not by focusing on Rwanda's suffering or war, but by capturing the essence and spirit of the community she encounters.

Dear Rwanda is a lovingly crafted collection of award-winning poems that act as a light and guide to this

mesmerising country, and I cannot recommend it highly enough.

Nicole Moody

[Buy Dear Rwanda](#)

Thought-provoking parental poetry



The Glassblower's House Matt Bryden

LIVE CANON

The Glassblower's House by Matt Bryden, £7.00

*'Today I heard my son's heartbeat.
A piston. Pure, its own pace.
Or my daughter's heartbeat.
She bounces on her back like a girl'*

This collection of personal, paternal poetry begins with the lines above in the poem *Early Days*. From this apposite starting point, Bryden goes on to provide poetic observations on aspects of parenthood from the underexplored perspective of the father.

With its carefully crafted contents and thought-provoking themes, this collection leaves an indelible impression on the reader's heart and mind. The pamphlet invites us to explore the rich tapestry of emotions that contribute to the experience of being a father. Through evocative language and vivid imagery, the words capture moments of beauty, introspection, pathos, and vulnerability.

Bryden's turn of phrase is eloquent and innovative, as we see in the opening lines of *Taster*.

During the pregnancy, my wife's palate

was clean as the white goods section of Dixons.

This accessible voice, using synaesthesia to heighten the reader experience, demonstrates one of the key strengths of this collection: its ability to resonate with readers on a personal level. The poet's keen observation and astute understanding of the human condition allows him to delve into universal themes such as love, loss, identity, and the passage of time. The verses elegantly explore these topics, inviting readers to reflect on their own lives and connect with the shared human experience of paternity.

The craftsmanship of the poetry is evident throughout. The lines flow effortlessly, displaying a mastery of rhythm and meter.

The choice of words is deliberate and precise, creating a melodic cadence that lingers in the mind. The use of metaphors and vivid imagery adds depth and layers to the poems, enriching the reading experience and allowing the emotions to resonate deeply.

Aside from being an exciting exploration of fatherhood, I can see this pamphlet being of use as an effective learning resource for students involved with level 3 (and upwards) studies in writing. Bryden's use of language is tightly structured to the point where every line is as sharp as a scalpel, but open to many potential layers of interpretation.

With its modern voice, originally exploring a theme that has been often neglected in poetry, it should prove to be a useful illustration of how our common language can help to define uncommon experience.

As it says on the publisher's website, *The Glassblower's House* details pregnancy, birth, the consequent pressures on a relationship, separation and a new start, all from a father's perspective. The tone is not bitter, rather seeking co-existence with the present and past.'

This is an engaging and well-considered pamphlet that demonstrates Bryden's clear ability to make a broad audience understand the acuteness of his personal experience.

Ashley Lister

[Buy *The Glassblower's House*](#)

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