



Writing in Education

Issue 93 • Winter 2024

National Association of Writers in Education



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Welcome to issue 93

I hope you're coming to the 2024 NAWE conference online, partly because of course I think you'll have a good time. But also because there is a "Meet the Editors" event there, where as well as the producers of our "Writing in Practice" journal and "The Writers' Compass" newsletter, there will be me. I can answer questions about "Writing in Education" if you need, but I also have many, many things to ask you.

One thing I didn't imagine ever wanting to say, though, is this: please don't set out to have a disastrous lesson or writing workshop just so you can write a "Goes Wrong" article for me. She vows this wasn't what she did, but Cat Weatherill is back for a second article in the series, and this time I had to cover my eyes as she talked to me about delivering a workshop in agony, about stepping outside for a moment to throw up, and then bouncing right back in work with young pupils.

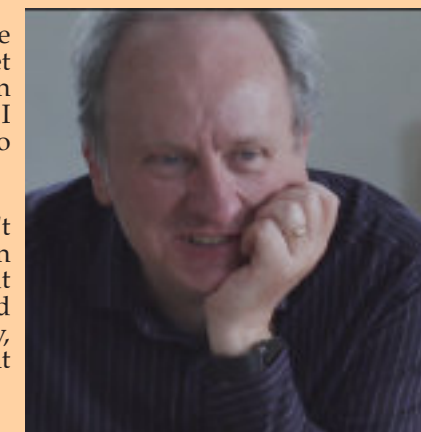
If she submits a third one, I'll be very concerned.

Also in this issue, I'd like to particularly direct you to Philippa Johnston's article on just what's coming up in the NAWE conference. Plus I got to interview an academic cognitive scientist who has somehow maintained an enviable career in academia while also running a business developing software to help us in our work.

I've got to stop there or I'll be enthusing about every piece in the issue. I tell you, it is a privilege to get to read what you submit to the magazine and I hope you write more.

Just don't injure yourself to do it.

William Gallagher, editor



Cover photo of "Goes Wrong" author Cat Weatherill

Interested in contributing?

We invite NAWE members to write on the subject of creative writing in education - in schools, universities, 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:

Writing In Education issue 94: Submissions close December 23, 2024 – note that this edition is a special one concentrating on papers presented at the 2024 NAWE conference..

Writing In Education issue 95: Submissions close March 24, 2025.

Writing In Education issue 96: Submissions close August 20, 2025.

For submission guidelines please refer to:

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

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News

NAWE CONFERENCE 2024: WRITING TO CONNECT
Online, 09:00-17:00 Friday/Saturday November 8/9 2024

See page 9 for all the highlights, but before you go there, go here: [booking is now open](#) for the 2024 NAWE Conference.

NAWE Member Meet-Up
Our next online NAWE Members Meet-Up on Wednesday 25th September 2024 will be a chance to share updates on our writing work and to find out what other NAWE Members are up to. While we will cover all aspects of creative writing work, the last 30 minutes will focus on a specific area which this month will be writing in the community. If you have experience of working in community settings, or are interested in doing so, please do come along and share your thoughts. The session will be hosted by Jane Moss who is a co-opted member of the NAWE Board of Trustees.

Date: Wednesday 25th September 2024, 18:00 - 19:00 GMT Location: Online via Zoom Cost: Free but booking is essential as capacity is limited. Please save the date! Registration via Eventbrite will open shortly. If you have any queries, please contact admin@nawe.co.uk

Bremen UNESCO City of Literature Virtual Residency
To promote literature in digital media, the Bremer Literaturhaus, with the support of the Senator for Culture, awards the Bremer Netzresidenz every two years as a three-month online scholarship in the virtual Literaturhaus Bremen. Published writers, especially those from UNESCO Cities of Literature, are encouraged to apply with a project idea. The virtual residency at Literaturhaus Bremen runs from 1 March to 31 May 2025. The scholarship is endowed with a one-off amount of €2500. The deadline is 30 November 2024. [More details here.](#)

Insider Guides to Success in Academia

Academic author and teacher Helen Kara's YouTube channel now includes a dozen video guides to aspects of academia, ranging from "Your PhD Survival Guide" to "Self-Care for Researchers". Videos tend to be around five minutes and feature a variety of speakers, plus the project is accompanied by a whole series of academic books on the topics.

[Watch her latest videos](#)
[Buy Helen Kara's books](#)

Acting Co-Chair's Report

After many months of work, the programme for the 2024 NAWE Conference has been announced. As ever it presents a fascinating snap-shot of the world of writing in education - so many interesting ideas, so many creative people, so much fascinating discussion ahead.

The Conference exists to share what we are about, and whether you are a regular attender or if this is your first time, we know you will find it an enjoyable experience. It will also be a slightly less expensive experience this year, as we have managed to reduce the cost of attending, particularly for those who are students.

The Conference would be nothing without the many people who have worked to bring it to life and who will meet online in November.

However, we recognise that much as online events give unrivalled access from around the globe, there is nothing like being face to face with fellow NAWE Members.

To give us some of this very special interaction — and to encourage the consumption of tea and biscuits — we are grateful for the NAWE Members who are organising face to face gatherings in their neighbourhoods in the run-up to the Conference. So far we know of In-Person Member Meet-Ups planned for London, Birmingham, Norwich, Merseyside and Belfast, and there will doubtless be more. Details are being announced and it would be great to meet more NAWE Members in this way.

And on the subject of meeting people, our thanks to those who have attended the now quarterly Member Meet-Ups plus the newly revived PhD Network. As Co-Chairs we are delighted that so many NAWE Members have come along, and we are very grateful for the NAWE Members and NAWE Colleagues who have put such a lot of energy into making these gatherings so useful.

We will continue to run these regular online gatherings, and if you have ideas for other versions — perhaps appealing to particular interests — do please get in touch. We are also always looking for subjects for special discussion at Member Meet-Ups, so please do let us know your thoughts.

Finally, on Thursday 14th November 2024 we will have our NAWE Annual General Meeting. We will be presenting our Annual Report & Accounts which show a very positive picture — modest reserves being amassed and much activity delivered.

In addition, following a call for interest, several NAWE Members got in touch to offer their services as NAWE Trustees. Subject to due process, we will anticipate welcoming these NAWE Members as new Trustees of NAWE, responsible through the Board of Trustees for the running of our organisation. Details will be forthcoming with the AGM Agenda and Papers.

Our thanks, as ever, to our NAWE Colleagues and Mosaic (providing our Membership Services) for all their excellent work.

Very best,

Jonathan Davidson & Derek Neale, NAWE Co-Chairs



AAWP Report (Australasia)

Dear NAWE readers,

We are grateful for the opportunity to provide an update about the Australasian Association of Writing Programs (AAWP), the peak academic body representing creative writing and research in Australasia. In particular, we are delighted to share news about our annual national conference. Let us begin by saying that: we are Associate Professor Julia Prendergast (AAWP President|Chair) and Dr Lili Pâquet (Convenor of the 2023 annual conference).

This year, we celebrate the AAWP's 29th annual gathering with our [AAWP Writing Conference](#). The theme of the conference is 'Intersections'. The conference is hosted by the University of New England, Armidale campus, and will take place between 27-29 November. The event will be held on Anaiwan Country; we acknowledge with gratitude that we have been welcomed to walk on this unceded land, and pay our respects to their elders, past and present, and emerging. We received proposals for conference papers, panels, or performances that contemplate literal and figurative intersections involving writing (creative/professional/academic). Presentations cover topics such as:

Interdisciplinarity • Intersectionality • Identities and cultures • Hybrid genres • Co-authorship and collaborations • History and fiction • Writing and place • Poetic forms • Pedagogy • Performance and writing • Technologies and writing • Writing and artificial intelligence • Curriculum design/delivery • Borders and boundaries • Publishing industry • Creative nonfiction and life writing • Writing for different audiences

The AAWP annual conference is our most important national forum for discussing the practices and pedagogies, as well as current and nascent debates, at the nexus of creative writing and research. Approximately 150 people attend the conference each year, including the most prominent researchers in the field, commercially successful and highly acclaimed authors and poets, as well as emerging practitioners, and the academy's wonderful Creative Writing research students.

It is designed for creators, researchers, teachers and publishers of creative writing, who operate within and across the blurred lines of local, regional and national territories. We aim to build cultural capital and community capacity, and facilitate meaningful community engagement, while increasing our universities' value and standing within our respective communities. You will find articles developed from many members of the AAWP community collected in *TEXT: Journal of Writing and Writing Courses*, the leading [creative writing research journal](#).

In 2024, AAWP aims to situate traditional practices, pedagogies and conceptions at the heart of the annual conference. The conference program facilitates engagement with and reflection upon the theme 'Intersections', as it relates to creative writing and research. We consider the intersection between marginalised and mainstream voices, and the modes

of discourse and dialogue applied in such instances of making and thinking.

The program will include three days of engagement with keynote and plenary sessions, workshops and presentations, exhibition elements, readings, and panel discussions.

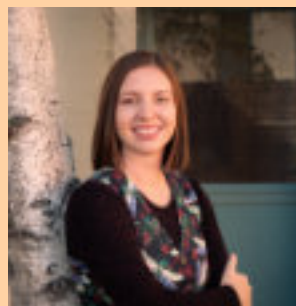
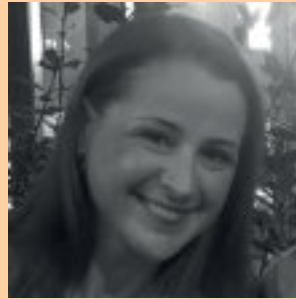
While the conference is held in person, there will also be a virtual stream for those who can't make it to Armidale or Australia. We are delighted to continue our partnership with NAWE by welcoming a number of NAWE members as virtual guests to the AAWP conference. We hope to continue this gesture of reciprocity in the future. We do hope you are able to join us for our annual conference, and look forward to welcoming our NAWE friends, in person or on screens, and to sharing published outcomes after the conference.

*Julia Prendergast lives in Melbourne, Australia, on unceded Wurundjeri land. Her novel, *The Earth Does Not Get Fat* (2018) was longlisted for the Indie Book Awards (debut fiction). Her short story collection: *Bloodrust and other stories* was published in 2022. Julia is a practice-led researcher—an enthusiastic supporter of transdisciplinary, collaborative research practices, with a particular interest in neuro|psychoanalytic approaches to writing and creativity. Julia is President|Chair of the Australasian Association of Writing Programs (AAWP), the peak academic body representing the discipline of Creative Writing (Australasia).*

She is Associate Professor and Discipline Leader (Creative Writing and Publishing) at Swinburne University, Melbourne.

Lili Pâquet lives, writes, and works on Anaiwan land in Armidale, NSW. She is a Senior Lecturer in Writing at UNE, with special interests in crime writing, the publishing industry, and poetry. Her recent poetry and microfiction has been published by Cordite Poetry Review, Antipodes, StylusLit, Rabbit, Australian Poetry, Recent Work Press, and Spineless Wonders.

*She has been shortlisted for scholarly and creative writing awards including the Russel B. Nye award for best article published in the *Journal of Popular Culture*, the Joanne Burns Microlit Award 2023 and 2024, South Coast Writers Centre Poetry Award 2024, and the Liquid Amber Poetry Prize 2024.*



Top: Julia Prendergast
Bottom: Lili Pâquet

Lapidus

Lapidus International – Weaving Our Words for Wellbeing: Making Connections Across Our Changing World

In a world that's going through huge upheavals, Lapidus International offers a gentle reminder of the power of words to heal, connect, and transform.

Our mission and vision is to be a leading global community supporting and promoting writing for wellbeing through membership, events, and collaborations, enhancing the lives of individuals and communities worldwide. We have been quietly but steadily making an impact by creating spaces for people to express themselves, reflect, and grow.

Perhaps now the time is urgent to speak out with more force about the value of our work and ensure wider inclusively and enhance meaningful impact.

Our tagline, *Weaving Our Words for Wellbeing: Making Connections Across Our Changing World*, encapsulates our ethos.

Through writing, we aim to bridge gaps between individuals and communities, harnessing creative expression to foster mental health, emotional resilience, understanding and a sense of belonging for all on our shared beautiful planet.

New Co-Chairs, Mel and Lucy, with the dynamic and talented board of Directors, Gareth, Peter, Buki, Kate, Alison and Rick, are deeply involved in shaping the direction of Lapidus International supported by a wonderful admin team — Claire, Jason, Flo, and Jade — who keep the wheels turning smoothly. Claire handles all things admin, while Jason leads our membership groups, Flo looks after member needs, and Jade works magic on social media. We are focusing on membership growth, organisational development as well as growing our strategic partnerships to solidify our position as a leading global community.

So, what exactly do we do? We're more than just a writing organisation. Our activities are wide-ranging.

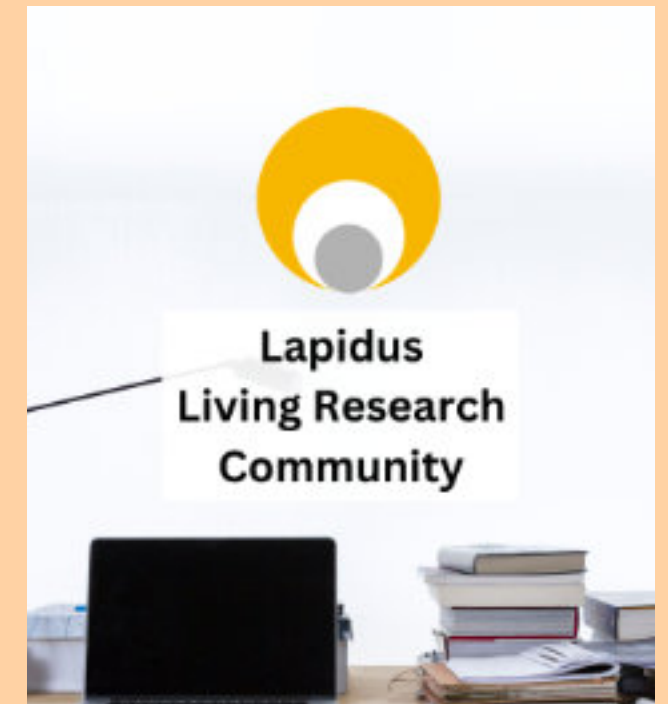
We host regular writing workshops, and support regional groups which meet regularly to provide localised support in Scotland, Wales, Yorkshire, and beyond.

Our open-access *LIRIC Journal*, provides a platform for both practitioners and academics to [share their research and innovations](#).

A members-only magazine is filled with thought-provoking articles on practice and participation in the therapeutic writing field.

Get a flavour of our [most recent issue 4](#) to have an idea of the excellent work and reflections from our members and associates.

Beyond that, we offer monthly gatherings through



our Lapidus Living Research Community (LLRC), where members explore different aspects of writing for well-being.

For example; Exploring thoughts about what our writing practices might be 'doing' or 'becoming'; research with climate activists, using creative writing exercises on the rocky, threatened foreshore of the North Somerset coast; and investigating how poems can help us recognise and sustain tension between conscious and unconscious material, holding onto conflicting ideas, thoughts and feelings to shore up our moral strength to take action.

One of our most exciting initiatives is the *Plumblines Poetry Competition*, which brings poetry to the forefront, supported by a legacy and honouring the passing of one of our members.

We also host the Creative Bridges Conference every two years, with the next one scheduled for September 2025, uniting researchers and practitioners to discuss writing and well-being in depth.

And lastly, plans are afoot to audit needs to provide relevant and up to date CPD sessions for all members.

What makes Lapidus International truly special is its global community.

From New Zealand to South Africa, Hungary to the Middle East, our members connect through our online spaces, sharing experiences and supporting one another. As we grow, we're committed to maintaining ethical standards and championing equality, diversity, and inclusion.

If you're passionate about writing and well-being, Lapidus International is a vibrant community to be part of, weaving words and lives together in ever-expanding circles of care.

HE Committee

I know some of you love data, and links. Here is a little something for you.

NAWE is a member of the British Academy's Learned Societies and Subject Association Network. As a result, we are given the heads up about all sorts of British Academy activity. For instance, they have a [SHAPE Observatory](#) (SHAPE being the acronym for *Social Sciences, Humanities and the Arts for People and the Economy*), where they produce State of Discipline reports, mapping tools and general briefings.

To mark A level results day, the British Academy launched a new interactive tool that explores subject trends in SHAPE disciplines. Their [SHAPE Indicators dashboard](#) allows you to search trends in A levels, GCSEs and Scottish equivalents over the last decade. They also offer an informed and nuanced [news story](#) on the latest A Level results.

For instance, one headline: English is seen to be stabilising after several years of decline.

The British Academy has also published a [new report](#) on subject choice in post-16 Education in England over the past 20 years, complete with downloadable data dashboards where you can explore trends. A veritable feast for data fiends.

The biggest frustration with much of this data is that Creative Writing is invisible, not searchable, not classed as a pre-degree discipline since the demise of our A Level.

However, many if not most of the UK's HE Creative Writing programmes are linked to SHAPE disciplines, especially, but not only, English. There are more joint Creative Writing qualifications in the UK than single honours degrees.

We collaborate with, depend on, and sit alongside many of these SHAPE disciplines, so should be interested in their welfare. We should also be concerned about our absence.

At various points in these data sets and web pages, the British Academy calls for feedback. I urge all who have feasted on the data to email and ask: where is Creative Writing?

How can we have so many undergraduate and postgraduate students, how can we have our own Subject Association (NAWE), our own QAA [Benchmark Statement](#), and yet be so unseen and unmentioned in these views from the SHAPE Observatory?

Derek Neale

Derek Neale is a novelist, short story and script writer. He has written extensively about the writing process and is Emeritus Professor of Creative Writing at The Open University.

He is currently Co-Chair of NAWE (with Jonathan Davidson)

AWP

The leaves aren't the only thing changing this fall at AWP! We are excited to announce that we have been working on a [new website](#)! While we work to better your experience, you'll notice delays in announcements—including conference events and program updates. With some exciting changes ahead, it's certainly worth the wait!

The Writer's Chronicle relaunches October 15 with a brand-new look and feel. Features explore making a living (and not) as a freelance book critic, the reluctant end of one writer's teaching career, romances that have begun at AWP's annual conference, and much more. Articles on writing and publishing examine mentorship, revision, book publicity, and the lessons novelists can take from video games.

Three writers share their favorite prompts and exercises, and our new Sneak Peeks section delivers excerpts from new and forthcoming novels, essay collections, memoirs, and books of poetry. All this and we revisit Jericho Brown's much-discussed keynote from the #AWP24 Conference and Bookfair in Kansas City.

Ready for your next annual AWP Conference & Bookfair experience? We'll be heading back to Los Angeles, California from March 26–29 in 2025. Attendees can register for #AWP25 in late September.

The AWP HBCU Fellowship Program, funded in part by a generous grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, is back for #AWP25! *New York Times* bestselling writer Tayari Jones is serving as our creative advisor. Three faculty fellows and six student fellows will join her in L.A. and have a private meeting and discussions together.

#AWP25 is also the inaugural year for the AWP Tribal Colleges and Universities Fellowship Program. Funded in part by an NEA Grants for Arts Projects award, this new program seeks to uplift and provide space for Indigenous American writers within the AWP community and throughout tribal colleges and tribal lands.

Fellowships will be offered to two faculty members and four students, who will meet at the conference with Jake Skeets as the inaugural creative advisor. Skeets is the author of *Eyes Bottle Dark with a Mouthful of Flowers*, winner of the National Poetry Series, American Book Award, Kate Tufts Discovery Award, and Whiting Award. His work has appeared widely in journals and magazines such as *Poetry*, *The New York Times Magazine*, and *The Paris Review*. Skeets is from the Navajo Nation and currently teaches at the University of Oklahoma.

With more exciting announcements coming soon, make sure to check our [new website](#) and follow us on all social platforms to stay in the loop. We hope to see you in LA for #AWP25!

Rachel Balzano, Communications Manager

Writing to Connect NAWE Online Conference 2024 November 8 and 9, 2024



The Writers' Compass editor PHILIPPA JOHNSTON on all you can expect from "Writing to Connect" — the 2025 NAWE Conference, which takes place 09:00-17:45 on both Friday 8 November and Saturday 9 November online.

The annual NAWE Conference brings together NAWE members and others from across the UK and further afield to explore creative writing and how it is taught and facilitated in all kinds of education, community and health care settings and at every level. It's an opportunity to share learning, information and ideas; hear about new research and projects; be inspired and energized; and make new connections. This year, we have 70+ contributors from across the UK and as far as Australia and Japan.

The 2024 conference programme features 60+ talks, presentations, panels and workshops covering a rich diversity of topics ranging from new ways to workshop to positivity in practice; from using fiction to explore environmental issues to connecting in the classroom through ekphrasis; from digital storytelling to the teacher as writer; from giving a voice to mental health to building creative communities.

You'll find sessions on approaches to teaching, working with different communities, teaching and learning within HE, the Creative Writing PhD, writing for well-being and in health and social care, the craft of writing, and digital tools and resources, and more.

There are 'how to' sessions around public funding for

writers (workshop and one to ones), making YouTube channels work for authors, and teaching yourself to publish your work across different modes. Interactive workshops range from psychology and character development and digital storytelling as a tool for building connection to the use of AI tools to support radical creative practice and more. Plus there are networking opportunities and a chance to meet the editors of NAWE's publications.

Whether you teach creative writing at university, in college or at school, or are studying it; are a freelancer working as a facilitator in a community or health care setting; or are an individual or organisation supporting writers, we're sure that you'll find sessions that are of direct relevance as well as others far removed from your work and interests which you may well find surprisingly valuable.

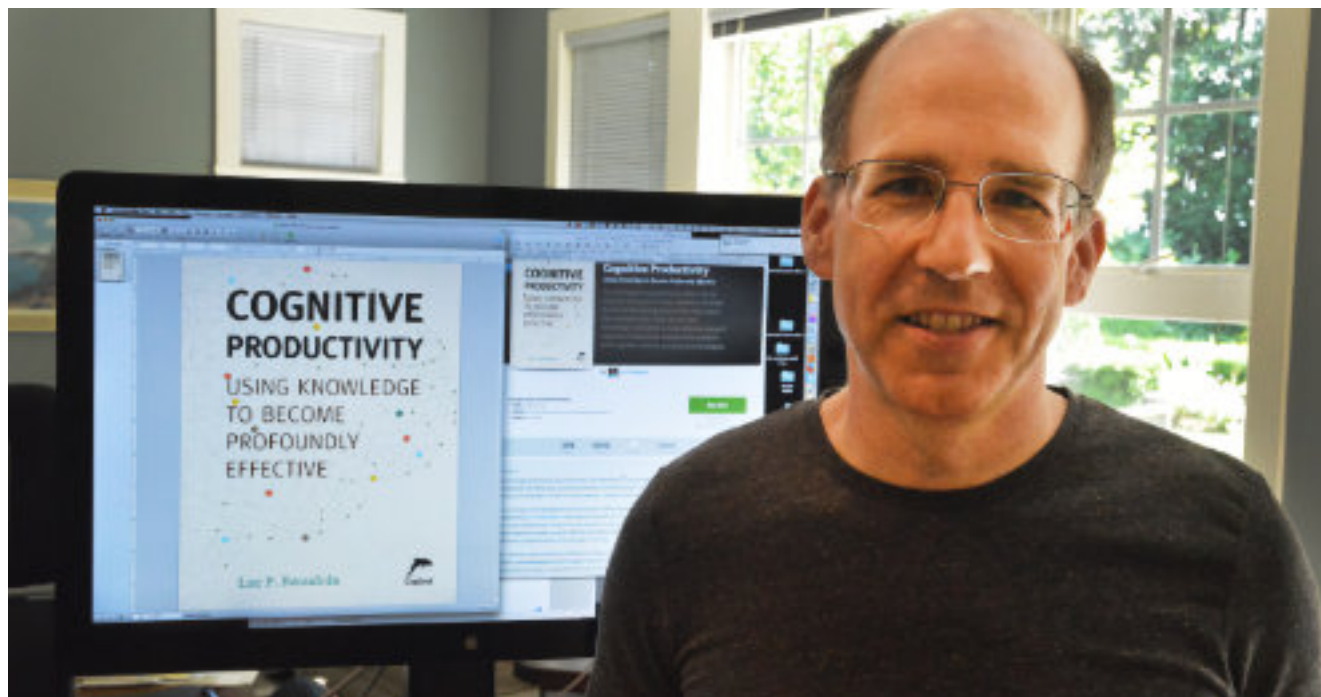
We look forward to welcoming you for two days of reflection, inspiration and discovery in the company of your fellows as we celebrate writing to connect.

Early bird delegate tickets start at just £19 for Student NAWE Members and £56 for Full NAWE Members (available until 21 September 2024). Non-member rates include a year's free e-membership to NAWE. Sessions are recorded and are available for delegates to view on demand after the conference.

You can find [full booking information](#) for the NAWE Online Conference 2024 – [Writing to Connect online](#). If you have any queries, email admin@nawe.co.uk

Interview: Linking Academia, Science and Business

Luc P. Beaudoin



WILLIAM GALLAGHER talks to **LUC P. BEAUDOIN** — practically the embodiment of linking disciplines, subjects and countries. From his PhD at the University of Birmingham in the UK to being adjunct professor at Canada's Simon Fraser University, Luc has remained deeply steeped in academia while writing books, running an app development business, and launching a worldwide manifesto to get software firms to adopt linking technology that benefits researchers, teachers, and all writers.

Only connect. It's E. M. Forster's phrase that all writers know, it's the ideal we work to in theory, but it's also an idea that underpins the career, writing, and business of Luc P. Beaudoin. A cognitive scientist, he has studied how we work, and created tools to help us stay focused. And if you thought AI was invented last Tuesday, he's three decades ahead of you.

"It was 1990 and I'd done neuroscience as an undergraduate [in Ottawa], and my thesis was cognitive science and AI," says Beaudoin. "I took a course in perception by Claude Lamontagne from the University of Edinburgh, an amazingly brilliant person, and he suggested that I get a Commonwealth scholarship. I applied, saying I specifically wanted to study with Aaron Sloman, who's now an emeritus at the University of Birmingham. He's one of the top philosophers of artificial intelligence who gets his hands dirty and does actual programming."

"What goes by the name of artificial intelligence now is actually statistically-based machine learning, and my study at the time was about using artificial intelligence to understand some human functionality, for instance motivation," continues Beaudoin. "Mine would have been one of the first PhD theses on the topic and it's quite frequently referenced — its subtitle is 'global processing in autonomous agents', so now self-driving cars and robotic vacuums, they all fall within that field."

Even as a student, Beaudoin was connecting different disciplines and benefiting from how they linked together. "I took a course in cognitive psychology and that's where I discovered cognitive science. So I discovered it in my third year as an undergraduate, and I fell in love with it, and I switched from wanting to be a clinical psychologist to wanting to be a cognitive psychologist, a scientist," he says. "Cognitive science is the interdisciplinary, computationally inspired study of the mind."

During his PhD, Beaudoin says he "developed some software to help me remember stuff." He then continued studying as he worked in academia at the Simon Fraser University in Ottawa, but became increasingly interested in creating "tools to help people learn." Sussex Emeritus Maggie Bowden was his external examiner and told him "if you want to learn about something, write a book about it."

How Hookmark is a boon for academics, writers and researchers – if they're on a Mac

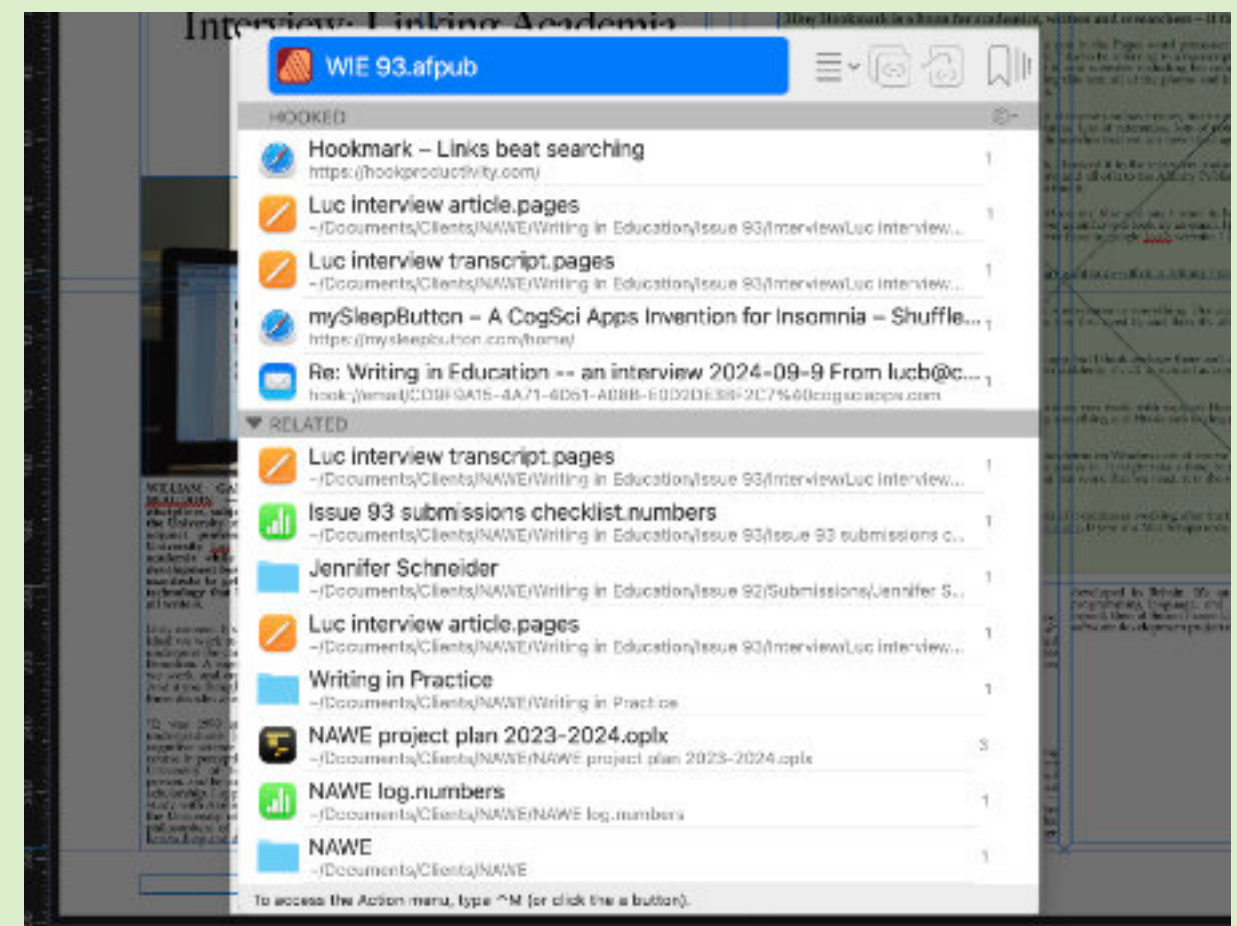
The screenshot below shows you a moment in the process of putting this interview into the magazine. I'm right there in the publishing app, but I need something so I press Control-H and I immediately get this list. From there I can go to the original draft of the text, I can go to the transcript of my interview with Luc.

I can go to a specific email he sent me after we spoke. Or to my NAWE project plan, related magazine work, and various websites I've used during the research. The point of Hookmark is that you think of something you need, and you're there. No more hunting for it again, no searching, no trying to remember, just bam, you're there.

And then bam, you jump from the email to the website to the document and back. Immediately.

It's all about the cognitive load on us and how removing search means we stay focused on what we're doing.

I told Luc that there isn't a day when I don't use his app, but I think perhaps there isn't an hour. Once you grasp how to use it — and it took me a time — then suddenly it's all as natural as copying and pasting, you do it without thinking.



There is no Hookmark for PC, it's Mac only. But the needs of an academic on Windows are of course the same as those of ones on a Mac, and that's where [Luc's manifesto](#) comes in. It might take a time, but this bidirectional linking, this ability to skip between each element of our work that we need, it is the way all computers should work, all of the time.

Hookmark for Mac has a generous free trial — much of it continues working after the trial is over even if you don't buy it — and it starts from \$30 on its [official site](#). If you're a Mac Setapp user, the full version of Hookmark is also [available through that](#).

So he did. Starting with *Cognitive Productivity: Using Knowledge to Become Profoundly Effective* and then adding a more Apple-specific guide called *Cognitive Productivity with macOS 7 Principles for Getting Smarter with Knowledge*. ([See both on Amazon.](#))

As many academics do, Beaudoin continued working in his field while publishing books, but then he went further and added a third, linked aspect. “I started writing software for myself, as I said, as an undergraduate to learn to learn English vocabulary — English would be my second language — and also scientific concepts. I was using POP-11, which is this absolutely phenomenal programming language developed in Britain. It’s an artificial intelligence programming language that I was using. First, I was developing for myself, then at Simon Fraser University, I ended up running a software development project for eight years.”

“So by the time I launched my company, I was highly steeped in development. I come from a family of entrepreneurs. So I, I have that, and I started with a proof of concept idea, which was for an app called [My Sleep Button](#). It boggles my mind — I do write papers in the area of sleep, but I came up with that ten years ago and there’s now over 100 significant citations. Even in the last month, it’s referenced in women’s health magazines.”

Beaudoin based that sleep app specifically on his research into cognitive science — “it’s based in my theorizing about the human sleep onset control system” — but following its success, he wanted to bring the same understanding to productivity apps, to help people get their work done.

Together with a business partner, Beaudoin ultimately developed a Mac app called [Hookmark](#). “So Hookmark in a nutshell is an app that you use to access information that’s relevant to your current project,” says Beaudoin, “and often that is re-accessing information. And that information typically is on your computer and files, its email messages, its tasks, etc. So a hookmark allows you to connect up related resources in a pretty easy way to create these bi-directional links between them.”

“That means that instead of searching for information that’s relevant, say, to the current paper you’re writing, you just use your draft as the hub and you hook the related papers. It’s really meant to keep the user in the zone, to keep them in the flow and focused. Because the problem is searching is distracting and going to your email, for instance, to find that letter from your editor, yes, you can find it. But the next thing you know, half an hour’s past because you’ve just been responding to emails that have come up.”

“How you do all this, is with the link metaphor that everybody’s familiar with from the web. We’re used to copying links to the web pages and bookmarking them. So Hookmark lets you do that, but for for as many resources — documents, emails, websites — as possible.”

“Or let’s say you’re making notes about a PDF. Academics use PDFs a lot. So you’re reading an academic article. Note taking, we all know is a good thing. We tell our students it’s a good thing. So we should be doing it, too. But if you write your note in the PDF itself, that’s only useful in some context.

Sometimes you really want the note in PDF, but for an expansive one, if you want formatted text and you want to have hyperlinks to another reference, then really you should be making your notes in your favorite note taking app.”

“So let’s say you use [Obsidian](#), you go ahead and you create your note in Obsidian. But now the question is, how do you get back from your Obsidian note to the PDF and how do you navigate from the PDF to your note in the future? Well, Hookmark allows you to set up, very easily set up, these bi-directional links. In the PDF, you bring up Hookmark and you have a link to your note. But then when you’re in the note, you want to get back to the PDF. You might have closed the PDF app, you might be starting your work on Monday morning and you need to get back to that PDF. Well, because it’s a bi-directional link, you can bring up a Hookmark on a note and go back to your PDF.”

Seriously, once you’ve used Hookmark, you don’t stop using it. But for technical reasons it is limited to Macs and also even within the Mac, there are some apps or resources that won’t let Hookmark do its thing. Luc Beaudoin wants to see all apps, on all platforms, supporting this bidirectional linking. He doesn’t mean he wants them to support his Hookmark app necessarily, he just wants to see this type of back-and-forth linking be as normal a part of our work as copy and paste is.

Consequently he and a consortium of academics and developers have launched the “Manifesto for Ubiquitous Linking” which [you can sign](#) on its site. It’s a growing list of people who support the concept and it includes fuller explanations, examples — and for developers, technical information about how to add it to their apps. Beaudoin estimates that it’s up to a single day’s work for a developer to add support for this type of linking, and says that every week he is working with more companies to include it.

“We encourage end users, not just developers, but end users to sign the manifesto because ultimately all this is being done for the end user to make it possible for them to remain in flow while they’re working,” says Beaudoin.

Only Connect

Just as in research and in life, making connections leads to great and unexpected benefits. In the case of Hookmark, Luc Beaudoin says his company developed the app and only after using it realised an extra, enormous benefit that it practically added by itself. He’d concentrated on making a system that meant whatever your current project is, you have all the information you need to hand.

What he didn’t plan was that once you’ve hookmarked something, it’s always available to you — no matter what work you’re doing.

“So basically your most useful information. Like if I copy a link to a web page, that means, ‘Hey, I probably want to refer to that in the future.’ Hookmark keeps it all, available to you forever.

“It was a surprise to us,” says Beaudoin. “It turns out to be an excellent repository of key information.”

Escapism without Escape



ASHLEY LISTER leads creative writing classes in a UK Category B prison. In this essay he considers the reasons why the content of so much prison writing appears to be focused on the immediacy of the prison environment.

“Why write poems about being in prison when you are in prison? Isn’t the point of writing in here to let your thoughts escape from this environment?”

The words were spoken by a prisoner in a creative writing class whilst we were discussing potential submissions for a forthcoming poetry competition aimed at prison populations.

As a way of encouraging creativity, and demonstrating form and content so that my class understood the broad parameters of what could be submitted, I was showing students what judges had valued in the previous competitions.

To this end, I had presented them with examples from the winners from former years, as well as the highly-commended and those mentioned in dispatches.

Realistically, I had to concede that the prisoner’s observation was correct.

There had been a disproportionate number of submissions amongst this selection that seemed to focus on prison, imprisonment, guilt and justice.

Whilst I could have argued that such a high instance of this penal theme might have been down to the preferences and prejudices of the judging panel, it had to be said that the same subject matter was

Photo by MarcelloRabozzi, Pixabay

consistently appearing in work produced in class, such as the piece below.

Prison squats on me

Gives a wedgie to my thoughts

Cutting off blood flow to my dreams

Gives Chinese burns to my nerves

Spits fear and smutty comments in my ear

To steal my gear and lunch-moments.

If I were a weaker man

It would deform my flesh

Mutilate my mind.

Still, it taught me

All I forgot.

(Prison Writer)

With this piece I wanted to argue that, whilst the first word of this untitled piece is ‘prison’, and the content appears to be a description of the persona’s experience of the penal system, this poem is about much more than that.

The conceit of this work is its personification of Prison (with a capital P) as a playground bully: squatting on its victims, giving them wedgies and Chinese burns,

and performing those countless unjust atrocities we all remember from our childhood in the institution of a school. We even have further reference to the days of early education in the penultimate line with the words ‘it taught me’.

There are various levels of interpretation that can be applied here, depending on the whims of the reader.

Perhaps the metaphor can be extended to show that the persona compares their incarceration to an environment similar to a school: educating the convicted so that they learn the error of their ways?

With this interpretation Prison (with a capital P) could describe those aspects of the judicial system that (rightly or wrongly) suppress the individual.

It is possible to look at the violent vocabulary in the poem (blood, burns, spits, deform, mutilate), where the semantic vehemence is consistently aimed at the persona. Here it could be argued that this is a poem railing against the perceived injustice of being subordinate to an authority, whilst accepting the societal need for those restrictions.

Regardless of any individual interpretation I think, on reflection, most readers would agree that this piece is not just about prison.

A similar argument could be made for the piece below which, ostensibly, seems to be a reiteration of the monotonous regularity of a custodial regime.

Every day that restarts

It takes away our hearts

Waking up in a cell

Without whistles, just a bell

Where we sleep and eat and poop

In a constant, endless loop

Locked up twenty three seven

Believe you me it isn't Heaven

It makes you wanna give up the fight

There is darkness at the end of the light.

(Prison writer)

Whilst this is a bleak piece that describes the repetitiveness of incarceration, the poet appears to be doing more than simply reiterating a solipsistic account of their daily routine.

The use of rhyming couplets and full, hard rhyme could be perceived as naïve at first, especially with the childlike use of the word ‘poop’ on the fifth line.

However, the presence of rhyming couplets in this piece lends itself to a predictability that mirrors the poet’s perception of a predictable routine on the wing.

It should also be considered that the word ‘poop’ is an artful inclusion in that it doesn’t draw attention to

itself for being taboo language, but it is still a word which seems out of place in the vocabulary of a prisoner, and thus reinforces the message that the action described is an inescapable and unremarkable part of the aforementioned routine.

Whilst it can be argued that prison, crime, punishment and justice remain predominant themes in the output from most prison creative writing workshops, it is also worth noting that it is in the nature of the writer to draw upon the immediate environment for inspiration.

The poem below was produced by a student in one of the prison creative writing classes but, rather than focussing on the aforementioned themes, this piece follows the meta theme of writing a poem about writing a poem.

Write Your Own Poem

What's included in the kit?

10 rhyming words

Things you need!

An adequate imagination

(Prison writer)

As someone who has worked with many creative writing students, in and out of prison environments, I think it is fair to acknowledge that this genre of meta poetry is a rich vein for many student writers.

It is a frequently revisited subject in the creative writing workshop, for the same reason that prison life is such an important topic for those living in prisons: because we try to write what we know to either describe it for others, or to make sense of it for ourselves.

Like many other creative writing facilitators, I often use ekphrastic prompts to help stimulate aspects of creativity for my students.

When I’m working with images as ekphrastic prompts these can range from scenes of rolling Highland landscapes to pictures from backstage at Crufts. It goes without saying that, even if every student in the class elects to write about the backstage scene at Crufts, I don’t raise questions about why so many people are writing about dogs.

Which is why I am not particularly surprised that, even though creative writing does offer an opportunity for escapism, the subjects of prison and incarceration are seldom far from the content of writing produced behind bars.

Ashley Lister has been a creative writing lecturer for more than a decade. He has a PhD from Bolton University for his thesis 'Five Plots: The relationship Between Plot and Genre in Short Fiction'.

He is also the author of more than 50 full length titles, including "How to Write Short Stories and Get Them Published".

(When It) Goes Wrong

CAT WEATHERILL finds that you can have perfect planning and a perfect audience, and yet it can still all go wrong — in the most physically painful way.

Be prepared... That was what I learned at the age of seven, sitting cross-legged in a ring of Brownies in a cold school hall. Decades later, that mantra still guides my packing whenever I set off on a foreign trip.

Travel companions have laughed at me.

‘Why are you bringing wire?’ they’ll say, holding up my Emergency Bag like it’s a filled dog poo sack. ‘Scissors? String? A sewing kit?’

They take it all back later, when the button flies off their shorts and a flappy window blind needs fixing.

So my Emergency Bag was with me as I flew to Thailand on an international schools tour for Authors Abroad. Five weeks, three countries, ten schools, dozens of sessions, thousands of students and millions of words to be spoken... this tour was going to be EPIC. I would need to deal with relentless 38-degree heat. Packed timetables. Manic airports. Bewildering menu options. Crazy traffic - just crossing the road can be a challenge in Asian cities. You need to keep your wits about you, not wander along in a dream-like state wondering whether you should have bought those fabulous silver earrings or...

BOOFF!

I didn’t see the scooter that hit me. I simply remember a clip to my body that sent me sprawling into the gutter. As I picked myself up, I knew something had happened to my face. My right cheek had blown up like an airbag. My eye was closing. My arm had been scraped like a carrot by the gravelly road.

I was on my own but someone stopped a tuk-tuk. How kind strangers are. The tuk-tuk delivered me to my resort, where the staff took me to the nearest hospital to be cleaned and examined. There were no broken bones but I had an assortment of cuts and grazes. My knee needed stitches. I returned to my resort festooned with surgical dressings.

The following day, the bruises started to appear. They were spectacular. I had one day to recover before flying to Vietnam. I had five more school visits to do.

By the time I reached my hotel in Ho Chi Minh City, I was exhausted. It was Sunday evening. The next morning, I needed to be in a school, working with infants. Looking at myself in the bathroom mirror, that seemed impossible.



Cat Weatherill engrossing children by wearing a pirate's eye patch – so she wouldn't gross them out with the real damage to her eye.

Not only did I have a huge black eye, the entire right side of my face was green with bruising. My eye had filled with blood, turning the white into red. I looked like a zombie.

I could joke about that with the older children, but the little ones? No. I looked too scary. But I did have a pirate hat with me...

I nipped to a nearby pharmacy and bought a pack of cheap face masks. Once I was back in my room, out came the Emergency Bag. I cut up a mask and began sewing, shaping an eye patch and re-attaching the elastic.

Armed with the eyepatch, I headed into school the next morning. The children were clearly a little bewildered when they first saw me. Was this really the author they had seen on YouTube? Why was she dressed as a pirate? Why was her arm covered in huge sticky plasters?

The fact that I didn’t tell a single pirate story must have added to their confusion.

But they were totally accepting, in that glorious way that infants are. I had a wonderful morning.

I removed the pirate hat for the juniors but kept the eye patch. I showed them my bruised leg. They were mightily impressed, as were the teachers. It was

When Writing is Resistance



Photo: Mick Garratt / Middlesbrough Central Library / CC BY-SA 2.0

KIRSTEN LUCKINS describes how poetry helped people and communities stung by the UK's shocking riots in the summer of 2024.

It can sometimes be hard to argue for the relevance of poetry. Poets and teachers are met time and again with that quote (both bane of, and spur to our practice) that “most people ignore poetry because poetry ignores most people”.

But in the wake of shocking events like the summer's far-right riots the act of writing offered a much-needed catharsis for my community of women writers, and poetry proved the perfect net in which to catch mixed and painful emotions.

The community I work with is called the [Tees Women Poets \(TWP\)](#). We count among our active membership women of all ages and backgrounds from Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Darlington and all points of the five boroughs that make up the Tees Valley. As agitators rapidly spread a wildfire of violence across the country from the flashpoint tragedy in Southport, it was our northern towns that were top of the list of targets.

The shock of the destruction, rage, and Islamophobia exploded around us, triggering our own fears and traumas. In the immediate aftermath, many of us joined in the clean-up and counter-protests, but after that – what?

My first impulse was to check in directly with folks I knew would have been directly affected, in particular the women's group from Hartlepool's Nasir Mosque who we came to know through a podcast project, and

other members living close by the location of the riots. Reassured that they were at least physically unharmed, my second impulse was to go from the individual to the cultural, and try to instigate a joined-up response from arts organisations across the region – a huge undertaking that I rapidly realized was well beyond my capacity, but which others are taking forward.

So what was my real sphere of influence? The one thing I could offer immediately was a space for people to gather, talk, and write.

It seemed most appropriate to make this very loosely structured, not a workshop as such but rather a space held by something more like guidance than teaching, in which the familiar rhythm of “writing prompt + writing time + sharing back” could be deliberately configured as a pathway from venting to healing.

We met on Zoom, just a couple of days after the Middlesbrough riots.

As an organisation committed to disabled access, the TWP run a core workshop programme that is hybrid/ live-streamed, and a regular Zoom open mic open to writers of all genders.

I had no idea which of our mailing list might come to this first online space. Would they all be local to Teesside? Would they all be women? I opened up the Chat window and people began to connect — from

completely purple from the knee down and my foot was turning blue. I told them what had happened but asked them if they could think of more exciting reasons for my injuries.

‘You were attacked by a silver tiger in the mountains.’

‘You are secretly a Thai boxer and have just had a prize fight.’

‘You were on a ship that was attacked by pirates. You fought them off and kept the captain's eye patch to cover your black eye.’

Anything can be used as a writing prompt!

What I remember most about this trip is the kindness and care. The school nurses who re-dressed my wounds and checked for infection. The teacher who slipped me throat lozenges because she could hear I had a dry cough. The three-year-old who gently stroked one my plasters with a finger and whispered: why do you have so many “ouchies”?

School tours abroad can be challenging, for sure, but they are always joyous. There's nothing that can't be handled - if you pack your Emergency Bag!

Cat Weatherill is a best-selling author and storyteller. She works extensively in schools across the UK and abroad. catweatherill.co.uk

Make the most of your membership

You'll know about NAWE's 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 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.

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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.

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.

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

We look forward to hearing from you! ‘

nawe

Teesside, yes, but also from Scotland, and Sunderland, and Liverpool too... We were not alone!

Teaching writing in community groups where people may be drawing on all sorts of traumatic lived experience, it is easy to see the importance of just talking before any challenging exercises begin.

Even though this group was made up of experienced writers, the occasion demanded that we simply talked and connected before attempting to craft our thoughts and feelings in any way.

We heard from those who had mixed heritage or were children of immigrants, or whose identity as immigrants without the security of (expensive) citizenship was thrown into panic by the anti-immigration rhetoric uppermost in the riots. Some of us were descendants of white economic migrants, who wanted to reflect on their accidental privilege of "passing".

More than a few of us carried a different guilt, being desperate to join in with counter-protests but prevented from demonstrating solidarity by a variety of disabilities, ill health, serious anxieties or other visible vulnerabilities that made us fear for our safety if we took to the streets. In this position of helplessness, it felt genuinely empowering to write something that might make its way out into the world.

These were the writing prompts I offered the group.

1. Tell them what you think. Write a direct speech, letter or statement from "I" or "We" to "You".

The taking of sides is always the first emotional response to a threatening situation, and people were hungry for the opportunity to state their values and reclaim the moral reputation of their communities and towns.

A communal drawing of boundaries, saying 'this is not what we stand for', was affirming and strengthening when we had been feeling very isolated and afraid.

2. Bear witness. What did you see, hear, feel?

This prompt offered the chance of unpacking details for those who had been caught up in either the riots or the clean-up efforts and counter-demos. The door is opened here for a withdrawal from confrontational words, into observation and celebration of the positive responders. I wanted to deliberately lead people away from raw first responses and into a psychological state where hope and resilience could return.

3. Champion humanity and challenge the rhetoric – tell the stories that humanize.

The invitation here is to counter the far-right dehumanization of Muslims, immigrants and people of colour by celebrating everything from our own family histories as immigrants, to the diverse relationships in our communities, to the positive influence of othered people on our country both now and throughout history. In this prompt we hoped to find comfort and strength in a wider perspective, and



Kirsten Luckins

make a persuasive statement about the emotional foundation of our politics.

4. Take it big – what are the systems that bring us to this?

For some people, these moments of political upheaval always beg the question *cui bono*? This last prompt was an opportunity to reflect on the vastly bigger picture of economic and social pressures that create the conditions for hatred, fear, anger and othering to arise. Now we are truly beyond personal catharsis and into the realm of ambitious, 'state of the nation' writing.

Fierce performance poet and T.S.Eliot winner Joelle Taylor said "To write a poem is an act of resistance. To perform is a revolution". (*From There Is No Closing Time: On the Poetics of Performance* by Joelle Taylor, in *The Craft: A Guide to Making Poetry Happen in the 21st Century*, ed. Rishi Dastidar, Nine Arches Press, 2019.)

Well, we are still working up to the performance of the poems that emerged from this gathering, but the first part of that quote definitely holds true. What originally felt to me like a poor, scant kind of offering (but the best that I could do) turned out to be really valuable to the people who came, talked, wrote, and shared themselves in that moment. Resistance can and should take many forms, and one of those forms is writing.

Kirsten Luckins is a poet, performer and creative producer in Teesside and the founding director of intersectional feminist collective Tees Women Poets. Formerly producer in the north for spoken word charity Apples and Snakes, and national project manager for the Rebecca Swift Foundation's Women Poets Network and Women Poets Prize, Kirsten's central practice as a community artist is to support women to transform their lives through writing and performing poetry.

Vygotsky in the Workshop: Applied Pedagogy in the Creative Writing Workshop



Photo by StockSnap via Pixabay

SAMUEL PEACH makes the case for how pedagogical analysis should be part of creative writing workshops, and how both writers and academic institutions benefit from it.

The creative workshop and the erudite theorist

Favoured for their capacity to provide an engaging platform for peer-feedback, constructive discussion and a learner-led opportunity for creative development, creative writing workshops are an integral part of most post-graduate creative writing curriculums.

Students contribute to a diverse and multi-perspective analysis of a piece of work, applying the present "funds of knowledge" in the assimilation of a collaborative piece of feedback (Llopert, 2017).

In consideration of the practice of the creative writing workshop rather than its varied intrinsic mechanisms for development, the benefits of the workshop can be "associated with college attendance and overall satisfaction of the college experience" – with notable implications for learners' capacity for critical reflection and subsequently the relationship between a sense of self in authorship and identity (Hoey, 2020).

Zhou (2004) posits that the prevalence of a "learning community" within the classroom relates to a historical attempt to "humanise the learning environment", best applied in a holistic approach to

multi-modular curriculums in which developed relationships between students can be accessed as a tool for creating an environment of mutual objectives and respect.

Any form of creative writing assessment is inherently subjective to the question of whether pragmatic erudite theory has such a place in the creative classroom. Should such an impressionistic practice be subject to scholarly dissections at the hands of critical logicism? Just as the theorist might denote the artist as self-indulgent and grounded in romanticism outside of the realm of critical analysis, so too is the theorist denoted in his reverence of a surgical analysis bereft of humanist considerations.

In what aspect of the creative process can the pragmatic precision of the theorist be applied to the qualitative work of the author?

In my investigative work on pedagogical analysis and my experience as an author, I believe the answer lies in the space encircled by the conference-like formation of the creative workshop.

Pedagogy in the Workshop

It is in the act of teaching creative writing that pedagogical principles become a more blatantly inherent part of authorship. That is not to say that pedagogy and creative theory are otherwise unrelated. Indeed, the preconception that creativity is

an innate capacity gifted at birth and as such, cannot be cultivated, is unfounded and outdated (Cremin, 2015).

Why then could it be said that pedagogy – in itself aiming “To cultivate oneself, to strive for the continuous self-improvement of one’s personality” (Jakubik, 2023) – cannot be applied so directly to the continually progressive act of creative writing? Yet, it is specifically within the creative writing workshop that suddenly modern applied pedagogy appears absent. Here – in perhaps the most “humanised” aspect of a creative curriculum – we instead observe practices that limit or actively impair the benefits of a constructivist learning environment.

Successful models are often those that prevent rebuttal and the devolution of critical discussion towards one of inapplicable criticism; some of which (including Schneider’s ‘Amhurst writer and authors’ method) aim to prevent criticism entirely (Schneider, 1993).

This scaffolded deconstruction of the “learning community” raises the question of how pedagogy can be applied more directly to workshop formats and what the implications may be for the current separation between the creative workshop and applied pedagogical practice.

It should first be addressed that the potential deficits discussed here are by no means revolutionary.

The prevalence of Iowa’s workshop-based creative writing curriculum has resulted in an undeniable reverence of its practices and loosely termed ‘pedagogies’ – many of which have historic roots in the 1890’s Iowa amateur writing scene (Myers, 1993).

On a curricular basis, this has resulted in the “the workshop [being] the dominant, if not the exclusive, pedagogical model” despite the lack of pedagogy applied in its social inception (Donnally, 20120).

Bishop relates the adverse effects of the belief that a skilled author denotes a competent tutor, whilst Donnelly cites former Iowa student Bruce Dobler in noting that participants in the Iowa workshop were often “resistant to learning and teaching – self-expressers for the most part who were only looking for uncritical love.”

One might then question why such practices revered as a pedagogical foundation for the creative writing curriculum (Bishop, 1990).

Firstly, one must consider the justification for the Iowa workshop model from a critical perspective that does not condemn a practice simply because it was founded prior to the prevalence of modern constructivist methodologies.

Qualitative analysis often indicates that an environment that so clearly encourages peer assessment may lend itself to the development of critical cognitive skills and self-awareness (Adachi, 2018). This adheres closely to the scaffolded principles of constructivist pedagogy; in which active interaction with a source material allows for higher-utility learning and an evolved understanding of the involved processes (Olusegun, 2015).



Samuel Peach

Such concepts have been successfully implemented since the mid-20th century.

The idea that the writing process might be considered alongside purpose was introduced to American institutions by Barriss Mills in response to concerns that learners were “so poorly prepared in writing that they bordered on illiteracy” (Peary and Hunley, 2015).

Mills implied that in ignoring a learner’s purpose for producing a text, educators were rendering themselves unable to consider the mechanisms underlying their creative processes.

Overarching remedial tasks would not serve to improve learners’ understanding of style and grammar because they could not meet the needs of the individual.

Genre and individual tendencies would be considered in the development of the student’s own creative processes; further implying the importance of student-based learning in creative writing (Mills, 1953).

Inherently, the creative writing workshop provides an excellent foundation for this method.

A learner’s work is considered as an individual text and can be compared to the student’s previous work by the class; allowing tutors to guide discussion towards one of student-centred formative progress.

It is here however that we must begin to consider what constitutes workshop practice and how elements of the creative workshop are varied to incorporate pedagogical literature.

A literary analysis on the AWA workshop method, the Iowa workshop model, and Kearn’s author-led model highlights three critical aspects of the modern workshop that are often varied for these purposes (Schneider, 1993):

- (1) The role of the mentor leading discussion;
- (2) the capacity for the author to respond to comments
- (3); the form of feedback provided to the author (France, 2008).

The role of the mentor in the creative workshop is one participants are often keen to discuss.

Learners place great value on the constructive feedback of industry professionals but also expect the workshop leader to enable peer discussion. Workshops that are often considered successful by learners are those in which the attending tutor achieves both of these requirements, with an emphasis on the provision of annotated feedback to be subsequently reviewed by the author.

These expectations may shift if the attending mentor is only leading a singular session. Here, learners may value the mentor’s feedback over that of their peers; favouring a new voice with new opinions informed by new ‘funds of knowledge’.

From a pedagogical perspective, it is perhaps best to consider the objectives of the mentor within the workshop. Certainly the provision and enabling of a peer learning environment in which all learners feel able and willing to give feedback.

We might then consider the nature of any feedback; whether it contributes to the development of a text or a more holistic approach to authorship.

Bishop notes the importance of a participant’s “class, community and society” and how it inherently influences prose, stating that the mentor’s work is ‘transformative’ and should aim to accommodate the richness of experiences that can be derived from such diversity (Bishop, 1993).

In establishing a tutor centred workshop (that is – wherein feedback is provided primarily by the overseeing tutor), the workshop risks subtracting its most valuable pedagogical trait.

A workshop without peer assessment and collaboration is inherently not a workshop, and yet rarely is social constructivism applied outside of standardised peer discussions (Berg and May, 2015). We might then consider the tutor’s role in applying these principles to such discussions.

Peer assessment and discussion lends itself to forming an understanding of a piece of work and its concepts. The tutor’s role in this area of the workshop is often to facilitate a turn-based discussion; one that engages each participant in the provision of feedback.

Kim chooses to subtract the mentor from such discussions, instead requiring learners to “share their findings and notes with [the tutor] who, in turn, provided feedback” (Kim, 2006).

This approach allows students to form an intersubjective understanding at a basal level; inherently scaffolding the learning process and providing a foundation with which the tutor may formatively assess learning (Rogoff, 1990).

In doing so, it might be said that the tutor is prevented from guiding discussion towards one of critical discussion. Of – in allowing learners to dictate their own learning pathway – risking a conclusion that fails to benefit the author.

Perhaps it is here that Piaget’s notions are best applied in response to Vygotsky’s theories of traditional constructivism involving the “more knowledgeable other” (Safia and Mala, 2012).

Here we consider the benefit of peer discussion without tutor interference – a practice largely supported by Piaget’s theory on autonomous morality between equal peers (Lourenco, 2012). Piaget’s notions of social constructivism differ in that Vygotsky largely favours the unilateral authoritarian methods of teaching (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky’s learner is one of obedience; of progression through scaffolded interactions with the tutor.

More relevant is the objective of Vygotsky’s learner wherein the ‘formation of knowledge’ might be said to relate only to creativity in the latter stages of construction.

Creativity is to be enabled by the scaffolded learning process, but may not be inherently present throughout the learner’s progression.

It is here that Piaget’s peer-led methodology differs to the greatest extent, requiring learners to collaboratively develop “Initiative, questioning and activity” in order to ‘solve’ a subject (Lourenco, 2012). Within the creative writing workshop, these skills are fundamental and synonymous with learner progression.

Participants form an understanding of the creative process and in doing so, enable themselves to provide critique on the basis of the requirements of this process (e.g. pacing, character and structure).

How then does the tutor contribute to the peer-led constructivist workshop without adopting Vygotsky’s unilateral methods?

The role of the tutor here may well be one of guiding discussion towards constructivist development. Rather than correcting participants’ work, the tutor might first establish a discussion aimed at constructing an understanding of the piece, its objectives and the elements comprising it.

Such dialogue is autonomous among peers and may only require the tutor to present the workshop with points of discussion.

The tutor takes the role of actively guiding discussion towards one scaffolded by constructivist principles, acting as a pedagogical facilitator without detracting their critical contributions entirely.

Rather, tutor feedback – although present – should not aim to provide any form of conclusive answers that

might prevent learners from reaching such conclusions autonomously.

France reflects on the ‘facilitator’ within the workshop extensively, noting the realistic limitations that tutor’s encounter when relying on autonomous discussion (France, 2008). She notes that “If the tutor’s role in the development of students’ creative work were only to encourage[,] one would have to question whether learning could take place”.

Although this is a consideration outside that of the constructivist tutor, France’s reflections on the responsibilities of the tutor remain wholly founded and necessitate the consideration of how a tutor might contribute to a facilitated discussion.

The pastoral role of the creative writing tutor remains a responsibility that is often only apparent during the blatant disruption of a constructive critical environment.

It is a responsibility present only when required and is not one to be scaffolded into the mechanisms of the workshop itself. In rectifying this, we consider the sense of self in authorship; how the act of providing critique relates considerably to development of the author within the writing workshop.

Learners “must attempt to embody a way of speaking, or writing, which depicts a self to his or her audience,” an act that establishes an almost synonymous relationship between the author and their work (Donnally, 20120).

It is within this relationship that the tutor’s pastoral role is perhaps most necessary – both through mediation and preventative strategies applied to differentiate between the workshoping author and their work. Parras describes the benefits of applying such ideas with new writers;

“Students who consider themselves poor poets, for instance, often find relief in the idea that their previous poetry was not written by themselves, but by their naïve Hallmark-card ideas of what poetry is; thus, the new conceptions about poetry that they learn in the workshop will ultimately make them into new poets” (Parras, 2005)

Parras’s use of a preliminary explanation allows participants to regard their own work from a perspective of objectivity; reducing tensions related to critique by instilling a ‘death of the author’ mentality in his learners.

This method aligns with Brooke’s (1991) intangible stance on the author’s self, described by Royster as a ‘conglomerate of stances’; a construction of melded roles imposed on the learner the enable learning and simultaneously, authorship, to take place.

In allowing students to consider their own sense of authorship within the workshop, tutors foster an environment wherein critical feedback might be delivered freely and in consideration of the roles of subjectivity and objectivity.

Certainly, we might then say the constructivist workshop merits the tutor’s presence and as such, justifies its place in academia.

With the emerging prevalence of Western creative writing courses, the role of the workshop and its incorporated practices will inevitably be scrutinised on a pragmatic, pedagogical basis.

Whilst many learners may feel indifferent about the “scholarly” reputation of the arts, it remains that academic institutions are innately required to ensure learning is enabled and that as such – pedagogical analysis can be actively incorporated into such practices (Peary, 2015).

As such pedagogies are progressively incorporated into contemporary curriculums, the value of the workshop as a tool for improving self-assessment, enabling peer-assessment and engaging in formative dialogue is clearly apparent and remains a critical tool in the creative classroom.

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Plot Twists in Wonderland

JEN SCHNEIDER imagines the story of a lone teacher facing up against the close-minded banning of books in schools.

“In this crystal ball, I see exciting futures for all kids,” I say as I hold a prized sphere on my lap during my favorite time of day – reading hour, a time when restless itches turn switches and imagination takes flight. At the window, the sun winks as scores of insects pollinate.

The kids, dressed in a kaleidoscope of patterns, from plaid to pinstripes and hand knits to fast fashion, gather on the carpet then settle. Nike swooshes and Adidas stripes trade spaces with Converse lace ups and crocodile tongues carefully tied.

“Choose-your-own-adventure stories spun of rainbow-hued cotton candy await your attention,” I say as I pull the day’s randomly selected titles closer to my chest then breathe. “Inhale words and pockets of air – in this classroom, we create spaces where everyone has a place.”

“What about your future, Ms. T.?” Kids named Alice, Charlie, Charlotte and George ask, eyes wide.

“That’s as easy a question as any,” I explain. “I saw mine fifty years ago. When I sat in your seat on the alphabet carpet.” The crystal ball I purchased in a thrift store for half-price on a back-to-school sale only confirmed what I already knew. “I always wanted to be a teacher and I’ve never loved anything more than story hour. Here, in Classroom C., is where I’ve always wished to be and where I hope to retire.”

I sit amidst stacks of favorite reads - The Giving Tree, The Witches, Goosebumps, Tango Makes Three. It’s shorter than in years past. Like games of Jenga, admin increasingly pluck at my reading superpowers with the indelible ink and Expo markers. Some days, I drop. Other days, I stumble. No matter what their piercing glares deliver, I shall not conform to their binary fodder.

Instead, I stand and twirl, gathering momentum and winds that remind me of the power beneath my wings. The kids laugh, still unsure of what’s in store. I turn again, then resettle in my seat, as my corduroy skirt folds. Each crease an itch. Each torn page, a blemish on plans to plant new seeds. Children don’t know what they cannot see.

“Is it time?” kids call in a blend of alto and soprano.

Our class parrot, in the corner, repeats. “Time. Time. Time.”

“It is,” I say, with a bow and a wave, then pull a book

from stacks of scaffolding imagination that await. I fluff my skirt and twirl my pencil. I'm a real-life Mrs. Frizzle on a magic carpet. Thing 1! Thing 2! Students in technicolor suits. We're birds. We're planes. We fly with imaginary wings that span the Dinosaur Age. We dream big dreams. Ready. Set. Begin.

"Where shall we go and who shall we be today?" I inquire as the kids wait, blue, brown, and green eyes wide.

We spin our crystal ball and start to read. At the door, someone knocks.

"Who's there?" I call into my oversized mouthpiece.

"Aliens! Astronauts! A giving tree!" Kids reply as our principal, with a sand dial in his hand, gravity always pressing like time, enters the classroom.

"Timed reading tests are scheduled," the principal says in a blunt tone as his eyes squint then trace the room's décor. I spent the weekend swapping our winter posters for spring blooms. Waist-high cat tails share wall space with dandelions, star magnolias, creeping phlox, and multi-hued bulbs. I may have been a later bloomer, but my classroom is a place where bloomers on all clocks, early or late, are celebrated. It's one of our traditions. We celebrate the seasons with florals as varied as the book we read.

"But Sir, it's Story Hour."

"Ms. T.," the principal says as his eyes, readers on, settle on the book tower next to my chair, "we've had this conversation before. The books you choose, and the characters they let loose, they're uh, no longer sanctioned."

The kids squirm as he continues to talk, his words a string of tangled syllables and knots.

"We teach, to the test," the principal scolds then shifts his unbecoming and admittedly rare glare to the children, "and we do as we're told."

"What does sanctioned mean?" a child with round glasses and a checkered tee asks as the tension in the room rises. Twenty-six tiny bodies, legs crossed like applesauce, shift on the alphabet carpet. Their tiny brows scrunched. Their large hearts awaiting The Magic School Bus's next plot point.

"Don't worry, kids," I say, "all characters matter. Even those with a message that is unfamiliar. Don't let the reputation of a distraction lead you to read only a fraction of the books in our library aisles."

"Ms. T.," the principal continues with a note of irritation in his uncharacteristically downtrodden voice, "enough with the rhymes and the drain on my time."

"But it's late in the day, and I have a room full of kids who are itching to get outside," I reply, refusing to acknowledge his dig on rhymes, one of my many favorite things.

Someone, somewhere near the back of the group, sneezes. It's allergy season and we've got tissue boxes



Jen Schneider

piled like Lego towers. I pass a box of Kleenex. My kids know the game plan.

"Plus, we're just about to finish reading and tango makes three and then we have our wrap up activity, we're planting seeds for our family trees," I say. "Can't this wait?"

"Ah choo!" Sneezes spiral like truths in an overlooked pile.

"No," the principal says with a shrug of his plaid covered shoulders. "Come with me. I'll have a substitute take your seat."

I rise from my oversized armchair, the one I found at a local thrift last year and reupholstered myself, the gold velour, a throne of sorts. I flex my shoulders and ensure my spine is as straight as the ruler we use come math time. My skirt's asymmetrical hems conceal the trouble my curricular choices have revealed. I've faltered in my own storyline. I'm worried that my contract might no longer be a reliable page.

As we leave, I pass out an ungraded worksheet full of scaffolded questions of various grades.

"Not another test!" the kids say.

"It's a collection of brainteasers designed as an exercise in patience," I explain. "And there's lots of

right answers. Take your time; think before making meaning or drawing conclusions -- just like with the words in the pages of our advanced readers."

The children nod in degrees. "Come back soon, Ms. T."

"Give me your best responses and do your best work. There's twenty minutes until recess," I say as I follow the principal out of my beloved room. "Hopefully, I'll be back soon. Let's see who finishes first."

Principal is quiet as we walk. His suit drapes loosely on his large frame. As I think of frames' multiple meanings, I smile at the irony, I had coincidentally included a series of similar questions on the kids' pre-recess worksheet. I quicken my pace to keep up with Principal, but otherwise I'm a step ahead of what my crystal ball might suggest.

Question 1. Define frame. What is its dominant form of speech?

Question 2. What might the Framers say of framed speech?

Question 3. What becomes of a frame that protects unprotected speech?

I look forward to the kids' analysis. In the past, some colleagues, under the influence of admin, I think, have said my stretch questions climb too high up the pyramid of Bloom's taxonomy.

I welcome their curiosity and reply cautiously, with a carousel of standard responses tucked in the folds of my skirt. -- Just wait, I like to say, kids are refreshing in the best of ways. Don't worry, I bought a ladder on a back-to-school deal. Climbing (whether plots, mountains, or glass castles) is our superpower!

Suddenly, however, I'm worried about what surprises Principal might have in his pocket for me. I count my paces like I do pages in a book. One. Two. Four. More. Finally, we reach his office door. A sign states -- Knock Before Entry.

Must I? I think as I smooth imaginary creases on my floral shirt, each daisy a seeded reminder to myself to raise the bar daily, frêt only over the sweat in my arm pits, and marvel at the coincidental link to the kids' worksheet.

Question 4. Which is more likely to garner an audience's anticipation at a story's opening: knocks before entry or entry before knocks?

Question 5: Which is more likely to conceal opportunity for a character's redemption: knocks before entry or entry before knocks?

"After me," Principal says as he extends his arm across his chest. The plastic name tag around his neck dangles in the air between him and I like a pinata at a birthday party. I'm tempted to swat at it playfully, but I know better. I'm sure Principal prizes his school ID as much as I've always loved mine. It's personal; it's a part of me.

Principal's desk is full of books, stats, and soda cans. The shelves are lined with binders, mostly policies and meeting minutes, but here's a gap in staff names, filed alphabetically, from left to right. ABCDEFGHIJ__LMNOPQRS_UVWXYZ. It's where my binder should be. I note the missing K -- a former colleague whose story is a muddy grey.

We sit; Principal's on one side of the faux-oak rectangle, and I'm on the other. The chairs are metal, with unforgiving angles. Between us floats an island of paper and clutter. I look across the desk and catch the principal's eye. He looks tired.

"What's this, a pop quiz?" I joke suddenly feeling as if there might be only one right answer -- contrary to my preferred pedagogy.

"I tried," he sighs.

"Really!" I exclaim. "Which one? Games of Throne? The Skull of Truth? The Devil's Storybook? The Adventures of Captain Underpants" Just last week I had shared a hand-written, carefully curated list of contested books I recommended for our library collection.

"Come on, Ms. T. Focus! Enough with the Amelia Bedelia routine," Principal scoffs in a voice uncharacteristically harsh.

"Okay, sorry," I say, worried I misunderstood Principal's initial meaning. "Honestly, the kids made me add the graphic comics."

"It's not like I can board a plane and fly off like Amelia Earhart," he retorts then shuffles a stack of manilla envelopes. I must follow the rules of the Board and you, a teacher with a contract, must do as you told."

"Sir?" I say, my voice unexpectedly quiet, as he looks up from the papers before him. In the eleven years of teaching, he has never, not once, quoted Amelia Bedelia. This can't be good. "What in heavens do you mean?"

A fly buzzes on the wall behind his head. To the left, at the window, a bluebird flaps wings as wide as Dracula's breath. The school's hermit crab, on holiday, hides in its neon green shell. If only it understood irony. I wonder what my crystal ball predicts might come next.

"As I said," he continues then slides a slip of yellow paper across the desk, "my hands are tied."

I shift in my seat, my stomach suddenly in knots. At the window, tucked between cinderblock and laminated posters of planets and constellations, the sun begins its slow descent. As I straighten my dress, a floral A-line, I reach for the information I fear will be hard to digest.

Question 6. How many knots does it take to restrain an idea?

"Am I being tested, or worse, on the stand?" As a college sophomore, I took a required course in legal studies and confirmed I much prefer reading in an elementary classroom to a court of law. I declared a

major in children’s studies nearly fifteen years ago. I’ve never looked back, but now, questions swirl. I feel like a character in Ray Bradbury’s *The Martian Chronicles*. What on Earth is going on? I pull the piece of paper closer, and I think of more questions on the kids’ worksheet.

Question 7. Which of the following words is least like the others? Clarity. Curiosity. Curriculum. Censor.

Question 8. What word is missing from the following list? Conflict. Climax. Character. Challenge.

Question 9. Define conflict. Define censor. Define curriculum.

Rank the three terms in order of (a) significance and (b) circumference.

Question 10. Does censorship have a flavor?

Question 11. Do book challenges have a scent?

Principal says nothing, but the clock on the wall ticks on. There’s a small fan that whirls atop the principals’ own bookcase. A series of leather-bound encyclopedias, with faded letters on their spines and slightly crooked smiles that bind, cast a heavy shadow around the principal’s feet.

Question 12. Does silence have a weight?

Question 13. Is shadow a dominant form of speech?

Question 14. What is the weight of a forced wait?

I trust my intuition and bow to my instincts. Principal is not usually a quiet man, yet the news he’s been asked to deliver has an extended silence, it seems. I’ve never been a fan of horror. Poetry and rom-coms are my preferred out-of-school genre. Eager to defer if not deflate this story’s climax, I look to words to lighten the room’s heavy ambience.

“Want a lollipop?” I ask as I pull a Dum Dum from my pocket. It’s a sweet pineapple, fully wrapped.

He shakes his head no, then says with his palms clenched, “let me get right to it. The Board voted, and you’re being placed on leave effectively immediately.”

New questions, even higher on the staircase of Bloom’s Taxonomy, take flight in my mind, a whirl.

Question 15. Describe leave’s primary form of speech.

Question 16. Is involuntary leave defined more by one’s coming or one’s going?

Question 17. Is the phrase “involuntary leave” more likely to be found in an independent or dependent clause?

My mind swirls with a plethora of grammatical concerns. I was not prepared for this plot twist. After several seconds of stunned silence, I collect my vocal cords like marbles and manage to speak.

“I don’t understand... What. Why. Who. When.”

The words that emerge from my lips in single-file format are isolated syllables, the kind of key terms I provide students to use as writing guides. Principal tries to explain.

“Parents, board members, community stalwarts complained. I fielded another three calls earlier today. One complained about lessons on non-binary interpretation of gender. Another was upset about the book *My Shadow is Purple*”.

“I bought that book with my own money, from our book fair, the one held in our library.”

“What’s it about?”

“Shadows, obviously” I say, refusing to give in to overt and unwarranted pressures to justify my teaching.

“Shadows?” Principal responds, with a look of curiosity, his eyebrows curved like arms in a hug.

“It’s a book about inclusivity. And belonging. The main character sees his shadow as purple.”

As think of more questions for the kid’s critical thinking folder, my stomach grumbles. I missed lunch but it’s anger for censorship and a hunger for inquiry that rumbles in my belly.

Question 18. Does hypocrisy have a flavor?

Question 19. What is the scent of misunderstanding?

Question 20. What is the color of independent thinking?

My eyes scan the binders on Principals shelf from a new angle. ZYXWVUTSRQPONMLJIHGFEDCBA. Left to right. Right to left. As the sky outside darkens the spines of the books grow darker.

Question 21. Is an alphabet spelled backwards any less powerful?

“There’s more. It’s not just that one,” he says. “What about *Worm Loves Worm*?”

“It’s a story about compromise and harmony, with a touch of ecology. Each of us dependent on our partners in the ecosystems in which we live, learn, and play.”

“Touche, Ms. T. I’m dependent on what they say,” Principal says as his brow forms what appears to be an earthworm in a new habitat.

“You can’t do this,” I say. “I’ve mastered the art of resolving food fights and fist feuds. I turn sloppy joes into savory delights. I refuse to drink the artificial Kool Aid. No red dye No. five for me. On what grounds is the leave? Please, push back. Make them rethink.”

Principal sighs. “I tried and I too am tired. Not only can I, but I must. If not, I too will be dismissed, and I can’t afford to lose this job. It’s out of my control. I’ve fielded complaints before, but nothing like this. The paperwork alone is all consuming.”

Questions pile inside my mind like Lincoln logs. Beyond the dusty window, a pigeon pecks at invisible crumbs.

Question 22. How many degrees separate tired from fired?

Question 23. How many degrees separate tired from tried? Fired from fried?

Question 24. If birds of a feather flock together, what becomes of clipped wings?

Question 25. If parties agree that the sun rises in the east and sets in the west, why is East of Eden so confrontational?

Question 26. Do compasses have moral centers?

Question 27. How do moral compasses wrestle with the challenges of clocked time?

Question 28. Can a book’s worth be weighed?

Question 29. Can a teacher’s work be measured?

As Principal talks, I check my watch. The kids must be wondering where I am.

“The Board met again last night. The texts are considered controversial and teaching them remains actionable.”

“And that’s it?” I ask. “How am I supposed to pay my bills. I’ve got rent, school loans, and a long of new books on my purchase wish list.”

“As I said, my hands are tied.”

Question 30. True or False: Tied hands are rarely undone.

Question 31. True or Fale: Tied hands are often stronger than the most secure sailor’s knot.

Question 32. True or Falso: Figures of speech are often used as weak verbs.

Question 33. True or Falso: Figures of authority often use leave as a weak replacement for confidence.

“I’ll need your ID badge,” Principal says, his hand outstretched. “I’m no court, but this meeting is no longer in session.”

I look at the clock on the wall. The minute hand strikes twelve.

“It’s recess,” I say. “My class deserves a break.”

Question 34. Define recess. Define stress. Compare and contrast a playground at recess with a court in recess. Which context emits more stress?

“You won’t be joining them, I’m afraid,” Principal says with an emphasis on afraid.

“Afraid of what,” I say to silence I anticipate.

Question 35. Define fear. Define atmosphere.

Question 36. How does a book’s atmosphere alleviate fear?

Question 37. How does a room’s silence fill space?

“May I say goodbye to my class?”

“I’m afraid not, Board orders. And the parrot – she stays.”

Question 38. Does order have a shape?

“I’ll fight this,” I say. “I’ll appeal the decision.”

“By all means,” Principals responds as he pulls an orange from his suit’s front pocket. “But I don’t see a path for revision.”

Question 39. Which of the following can be peeled? Truth. Time. Testimony.

Question 40. Which of the following can be appealed? Truth. Time. Testimony.

Question 41. How many degrees north of wrong is a broken rung on Bloom’s Taxonomy?

Question 42. Define lecture. Define revision. At what point do the two coordinate paths?

“So, is this how my story ends?”

“I’m afraid so. This slip of paper is your exit ticket. Do not stop at the cafeteria or your cubby.”

My genre is neither horror nor dark comedy. Suddenly, I feel like a protagonist in a late-night sitcom. I never imagined I’d be a protagonist, let alone a villain, in my own story. My crystal ball never suggested I’d be a subject of lessons on grammar, contracts, and constitutional protections.

After 4,240* hours spent reading to students, I’m done, for now. Time is all I’ve got, and I’ll spend it reading (and fighting bureaucracy hypocrisy). I question all truth tellers.

Before I leave, I grab a sheet of paper and write a new lesson plan while listing questions for which I’d like answers. No dictionary or Board approval needed. A postscript of my own devising.

How to Get Fired (Up)

Learning Outcomes • Describe conflict in real time.

Evaluate arbitrary principles of universal design for gutting a profession • Compare and contrast politicized education with imaginative plot construction.

Assess the deconstruction of Bloom’s Taxonomy and First Amendment protections • Construct a timeline of dreams denied in classrooms forced to comply. • Signed. This is not the end. Ready Set. Begin.

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Book Reviews

Edited by MATTHEW TETT

The Artificial Parisienne by Sue Burge.



North Norfolk-based writer and tutor, Sue Burge, has written a stunning, extremely original third collection of poetry — the intriguingly-titled *The Artificial Parisienne*. From the outset, it is clear that Burge's collection is a tribute to Paris — a city she has close associations with.

In myriad ways, she writes about France's capital city using form and structure uniquely, in addition to drawing on her own personal experiences.

The opening poem — 'A reverse abecedarian in praise of Paris' — is full of evocative metaphors.

One such example is how [Paris] '... will make a jumble sale of your heart'. Burge uses white space for impact which enables the reading of the poem to be quite intense,

aided by a definite lack of punctuation.

This is one example of how the poems in this collection are so varied, from prose poetry to 'Snapshots' — a poem in six parts which has links to the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s.

One particular quality is how Burge plays with forms — all evoking something different about Paris.

'Zuihitsu: the year of the thief', written in the second-person narrative, feels as if it is somewhat autobiographical: 'You are staying in a hotel near St Placide, looking for work.' I really like the comical image of the hotel manager who '... has a big tall head like a cartoon baddie.'

One can't help and think about this as evidence of innocence or vulnerability. Somewhat contrastingly is 'Où est le Métro s'il vous-plait?' which offers a simplified history of aspects of Paris, drawing on observations: 'The next day, there's a strike, the Métro is closed.'

Burge writes personally about experiences, whether these are fictional or real. In 'Cinematic', the first line states 'I am wearing moodiness and a trench coat.'

In the titular 'The Artificial Parisienne', the poem, in English, is embedded in [found] French texts aimed at tourists: it is certainly inventive and creative. One example is:

'Je suis votre guide my paper dolls spent their flimsy lives je vous accompagne dans'

I really like the way there is clear recognition throughout about how things are 'different' in Paris — clearly, they are not, really, but it shows how place can affect people's perceptions.

Burge writes how so many things are different: the sky, the mood, the trees, the stones.

Here, it is clear about place can change experiences and views, even if the specific reality is that things are not that dissimilar.

In some ways, a similarity is the seamless merging of English and French in 'In Which A Middle-Aged Woman in Primark Jeans Denies Her Invisibility' — and what a superb title.

One example is:

'Can that be me, mon dieu, c'est pas vrai, in the LBD...'

There is humour here, plus references to French slang, such as 'BCBG' ('bon chic, bon genre', apparently, meaning 'good style, good attitude') to describe a bourgeois lifestyle.

The childlike 'I am building Paris in my bedroom starts off with an explanation:

'First, I cut a string of paper dolls / from a back-copy of Le Monde'.

However, in 'In Printemps Department Store', readers are taken to the heart of Paris, to somewhere synonymous with shopping, perhaps similar to the UK's John Lewis.

We can, seemingly, take ourselves to different places through activities, even if we are not physically present there.

She writes how 'A sleety April shower drives me in...' (to the store) and how she '... escalate(s) up six floors of opulence...'

There are more references to consumerism in 'La Charlotte de l'Île' but here, in the second person, we are told to 'Imagine the most perfect chocolate shop... like a glowing page in a child's / favourite pop-up book.'

In 'The Cemeteries of Paris', we are again taken on a journey through three of Paris' famous resting places. Some feel very personal; others less so.

In many ways, this collection is a literary guidebook — one that would be perfect for any lover of poetry, something to accompany a more conventional guide to the city.

In 'Paris is a paint-chart', Burge writes beautifully about colours — and at times such details leave a nasty taste, probably intentionally. Examples include 'the Seine is a porridgey Drainpipe Grey...' and 'even the dogshit is painterly, a Brindled Roan.'

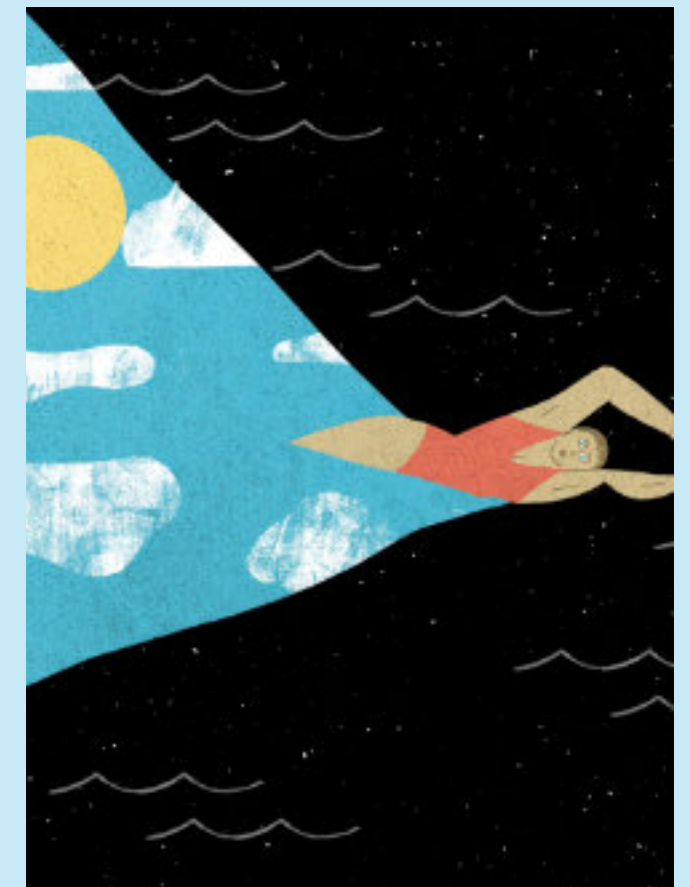
The final poem, 'The Bees of Paris', has references to a colony that is smoked out of Notre-Dame during its devastating fire — but one can't help and think about how bees are so vital to our world. This, then, is a fitting final poem in a wonderful collection.

[Buy Burge, S. The Artificial Parisienne. Live Canon, 2024 \(£12\)](#)

Matthew Tett

Matthew Tett is a freelance writer living in Bradford-on-Avon, a small town in Wiltshire, UK. He has been published in *Writing in Education*, the *Cardiff Review*, the *New Welsh Review*, and *Ink Sweat and Tears*. His short story 'Spun Sugar' was published in the inaugural edition of *Liberally*. In 2021, he won Word After Word's mini memoir prize. 'One Big Treat' was published in Skobeloff Publishing's *Horror & Ghost Stories Anthology*. Matthew is also the producer of *StoryTown* and the Reviews Editor for *Writing in Education*. Since 2022, he has been a reader/team leader for the *Edinburgh Flash Fiction and Short Story competitions* and a *Developmental Editor* for the *Flash Fiction Contest*. Matthew primarily writes short fiction.

I Think I Could Be Wrong by Gillie Robic



If a title has shelf appeal, surely this must be it? In a world where so many are convinced they're right, the title of poet Gillie Robic's new collection feels refreshingly unsure.

The line appears in the poem 'Motes', which describes a shock to the system so profound that the narrator has become a pollen-like dust, 'a scattering of yellow / sifted onto the tarmac useless as nylon / stockings on Jessica Rabbit in a briar patch'.

Hoping for a horror-film sequence to restore them to wholeness, the narrator realises this might be impossible.

In the final stanza, the words are spaced further and further apart until fragmentation is complete: 'I was whole I think I was an entity / I think I could be wrong.'

The sense of alienation and confusion speaks to the anxieties of 21st Century life; it also underlines the power of poetry, to reflect and explain us to ourselves.

Robic is skilled at world-building. Revisiting her childhood home in Mumbai, in 'The ground glass windows', she peers into 'the high dark kitchen / smelling of charcoal and childhood'.

Opening a once-forbidden door, 'beyond which maybe nothing exists' she finds only the verandah; behind another door are her parents' rooms. But 'there's nothing there and if it's gone am I a ghost / and can I ever leave'.

'The warp of light' describes how, at school in England, Robic is asked to paint 'street lamps at night' and paints 'yellow rays radiating into darkness', only to be told 'they don't exist!'

But in her tropical home they did: and now she stands 'in this cold place, watching / light only where it falls.'

This is a collection infused with light, and its memory; the moon; shadows.

The imagery is beautiful and striking, as in 'Chambers of the Heart': '... filled / with fear and the astonishment of love / clasped about the stillness of joy, / fine-painted and filigreed with gold, / set with cobalt-threaded glass, / fragile as life.'

But there is menace too.

In 'Hostile Hotel', a setting reminiscent of a Paul Theroux story, the proprietor states repeatedly, 'I only want quiet'. Meanwhile, 'Extended families crammed / into the bedrooms, cooked / on the cement floors, / ate off overturned wardrobes', until the proprietor leaves suddenly, returning to give the staff 'sledgehammers / to smash the place up.'

As well as being a poet, Robic is a filmmaker and puppeteer. 'Stages' finds her absorbed in

a 'patchwork landscape', where 'the colours of darkness / intensify [...] till radiance / becomes the definition of blindness'.

Is this world any crazier than so-called reality, Robic asks: 'It's easier / to know the scenery is painted than to recognise / the patchwork landscape hanging from the trees.'

Robic has a feeling for nature: 'water music' powerfully evokes a flooded, drowning London, where the rising water is 'strangely free of flotsam and jetsam / just the occasional briefcase/ and one or two bags for life'. It flows into a hospital, 'where nurses and orderlies smiled/ and paddled and doctors floated/ on their backs watching cloud formations/ and the empty towering skyline/ scraping the blue'. At last it reaches the estuary, 'wide as the sea/ the familiar ocean/ rising overhead/ children playing/ in their element/ arching like dolphins/ into the air'.

There's a lightness of touch, too, in 'Oxidisation', narrated by an elderly bird statue, whose wings have 'stiffened, cracked / and started to fall away.'

Having once soared, the bird has 'lost my place on the opera house' and now sits around 'playing chess with various levels / of angels, all imagining slights to their class [...] as we swap stories about old campaigns our duties involved'.

Although at ease with humour, Robic does not swerve life's horror.

In 'Leatherjackets' the female narrator is hurrying home at night, alone, when men '... emerge / from the shadow of the abandoned / gasometer grinning sucking / testosterone off each other / mouthing the usual commentaries / on bodies and intentions'. But then, the woman's eyes '... spin from hazel to witchery / a bubble of rage forms in her gut' and anger enables her to soar into the sky, 'stunned faces watching her departure / as they recede her body fills with laughter'.

Poetry can empower us, Robic seems to say. The collection has a transformative feel.

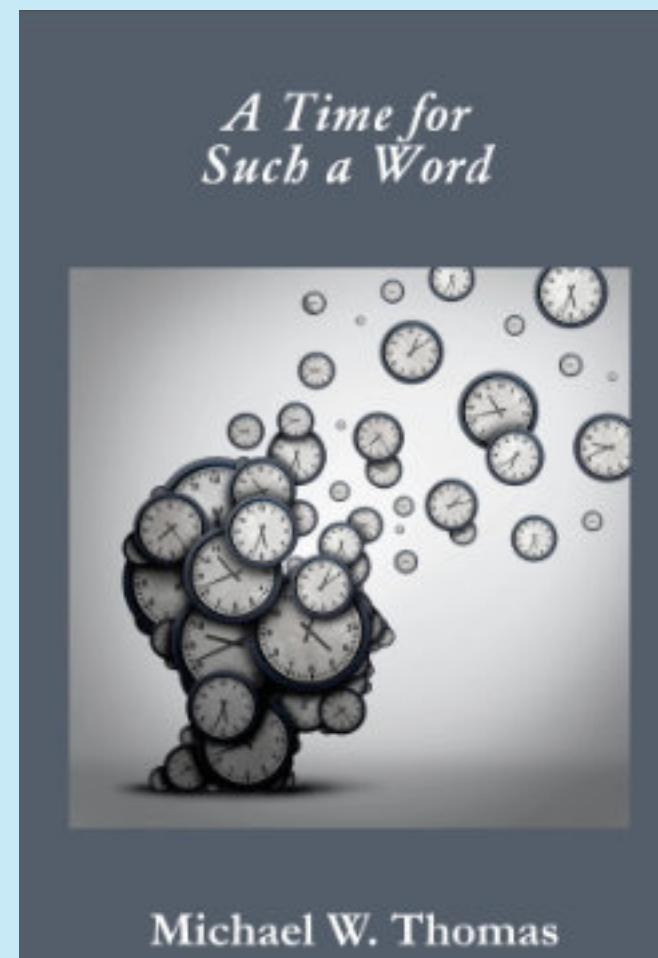
The poems engage with multi-media: several have a QR code, which can be scanned to watch a reading, or a film. The volume is arrestingly illustrated by Cristobal Schmal.

[Buy Robic, G. I Think I Could Be Wrong. Live Canon, 2024. \(£12\)](#)

Sarah Hegarty

Sarah Hegarty's short fiction has been published by Mslexia, Cinnamon Press and the Mechanics' Institute Review. Her short story The Ishtar Pin was a finalist in the 2021 Manchester Fiction Prize. Her debut collection Magpie and Other Stories is published by Troubador. www.sarahhegarty.co.uk

A Time for Such a Word by Michael W. Thomas



There's a lot to love in this finely crafted, accomplished collection. In fact, after reading it, I'd pay the cover price to re-read just one of these poems, but we are gifted with 53 great ones here, each one conjuring exact images and drawing the reader in to their atmosphere.

I hadn't heard of this poet before and I wondered how he'd stayed off my radar; I will most definitely read more of his writings. There is a sense of urgency or driving forward, a passion that keeps you hooked as a reader. I read this collection on a train journey and it was a wise and

empathetic travel companion.

The collection starts with 'A Year to Speak'. The concept of this poem, along with the imagery and language, was a great introduction to the whole collection and this poet's unique, extraordinary voice. Almost filmic, the images that the poem conjures remain in the memory long after reading and I find that particularly impressive, given I have short term memory problems.

The poet writes about hiding one word each day in the landscape and giving himself a year to speak the words but it depends what order he finds them in and if they 'knot or spill as I heap them in my mouth.'

The poem has so much to say about life and death, the human condition, and the importance of language and how what you say depends on the timing, landscape and the circumstances. The poem includes the lines:

'A prayer, perhaps

That quivers like a globe of midges'

It makes you glad of the pages in this book that you are yet to turn. Throughout the collection we visit different points in time and space.

The title 'A Time for Such a Word' is taken from Macbeth. I wasn't surprised to learn that Thomas is also a playwright as his observations are so acute; he has a gift for outlining characters using specific details.

Early in the collection, I fell in love with this poet's voice, his turn of phrase, colloquial language, humour and reflections. Time plays a huge part in the collection. If you need proof that poets are time-travellers, read these works.

The best way to read this collection is to start from the beginning and let it unfold taking you on an exciting journey.

However, if you are the kind of reader that dips in and out of collections and reads whatever poems grabs your attention, you won't want to miss 'Safe' or 'The Man with no Umbrella'.

'Safe' is in the middle of the collection and this longer piece takes you over nine pages on a journey with the stranger in the poem. We visit the rectory where he stays a while with the elderly couple that took a shine to

him as he reminds them of a son now lost.

The precise language and characterisations draw you in, there is a dream-like, spooky quality to this profound piece. This poet can describe a character in one line and we know exactly what he means:

*'a friend of the dad's from army days
who is buckled tight into himself'*

The poem reads like a parable with an exploration of belief, hope and what makes us feel safe.

'The Man with no Umbrella' is one of the most beautiful poems; it speaks of a raindrop in lonely man's ear, imagining the raindrop has a memory of being in the bitten apple at Eden and on the cheeks of couple's having misunderstandings. In the end I was glad the man had no umbrella.

This is a collection that I enjoyed immensely and will be re-visiting.

I highly recommend this book and getting to know this writer, who has an obvious love of language and all that makes life interesting and wonderful.

[Buy Thomas, Michael W, A Time for Such a Word, Black Pear Press, 2024 \(£8\)](#)

Ann Grant

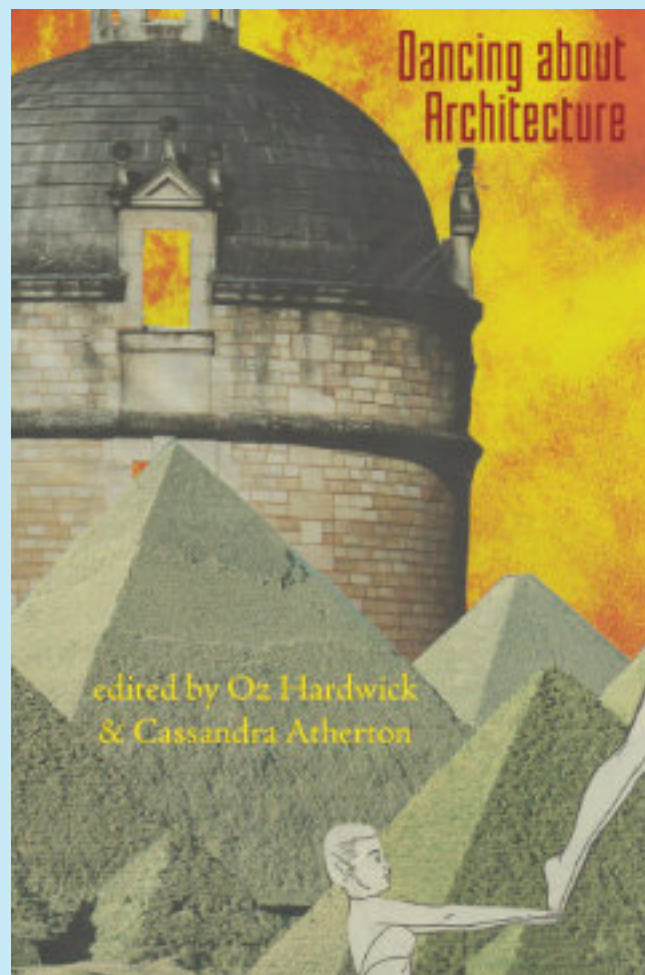
Ann Grant is a poet living with MS based in Kendal, Cumbria. Her poetry features on sonic art albums by Clutter and Some Some Unicorn. She's been included in anthologies by The Poeming Pigeon and Handstand Press' anthology of new Cumbrian writing, This Place I Know.

Dancing About Architecture and Other Ekphrastic Maneuvers edited by Oz Hardwick & Cassandra Atherton

How might we respond to one art form through another?

The conundrum, deftly conjured by this anthology's title (it's from an unattributed quote, "Writing about music is like dancing about architecture"), is explored by each of the 56 contributing poets by way of one of their own poem-responses to a piece of art, plus their commentary on that poem and their creative process.

Ekphrastic poetry — that is, poetry that



responds to art — is having a resurgence.

There are specialist journals and one-off publications that focus solely on ekphrastic work, critical studies of it, and a marked increase in ekphrastic poems appearing in new poetry collections; some writers even describe themselves as an 'ekphrastic poet'.

The artworks themselves do not appear in this book — it is, mostly, easy to look them up, though by convention, ekphrastic poems should stand up in their own right without their reference artwork.

In fact, reproduction would not be possible in some cases, as 'art' is given free interpretational rein here, with written responses to, for example, pieces of music, a video game and, in the case of Edwin Stockdale's poem 'The Afterlives of Edward II', the way the bisexual mediaeval monarch's life has been written about and dramatised.

In his commentary, Stockdale says 'I take ekphrasis in its traditional sense as the transfer of knowledge from one artform to another, rather than the more modern meaning of a poetic response to visual art'.

The book is wide-ranging in other ways: the impressive assembly of international contributors includes well-known poets, critics and editors, with key contemporary British poets such as Pascal Petit, Luke Kennard and John McCullough amongst them.

The poems are muscular and memorable, exploring a diverse range of subjects — everything from familial estrangement to ageism to the bombing of Hiroshima — and as such present an interesting collective statement about we humans, at this moment in time.

In a response to 'Painting', by his brother Tayler Holborn, Kane Holborn begins: 'I dislocate my face. / I have Cubist genetics, / built of blue neurology: / humanism made disposable', and he comments: 'Through working with ekphrasis in my poetry, I explore contemporary reactions to perceived images of my disability, relating to how I'm using the concept to write about the unseen space of disablement'.

The form the poems take is richly varied, too — there is, in addition to standard-looking pieces in couplets, tercets and so on — a large helping of prose poems; there are 'list' poems; a concrete poem — Bina's 'A Book is a River' meanders down the page to look like a river.

A poem by Janée J. Baugher that takes the form of imagined footnotes by the artist Andrew Wyeth on his own painting, Distant Thunder and, in the case of Bob Heman's 'Information', inspired by James Ensor's 1889 painting 'Skeletons Warming Themselves', a poem composed of a single line: 'Without their flesh to keep them warm they must huddle closer to the fire.'

The poets' commentaries give fascinating insights into the creative mind, particularly about pinning down an initial idea, making the book a valuable, inspirational resource for writers.

There's reassurance, too, for those wrestling with their craft. Lorette C. Luzajic confesses that her poem, 'Uncle Satan: Cerro Rico's Sympathy for the Devil', which comprises 11 numbered prose poems, took 10 years to write.

There are some lovely insights into motivation, too.

Helen Ivory, for instance, commenting on her poem 'The Original Bad Girl', in response to Rossetti's 'Lady Lilith', says: 'I wanted to write a poem in a tone that I know that Rossetti would hate!'

Addressing Lilith directly, she says:

*'You are an Enchantress; you don't wear socks
or nip to the shop for a bag of potatoes.*

This is your rectangle of pictorial space;

these are your flowers, torpid with symbolism.'

It is perhaps surprising that there are poem-and-commentary contributions by both editors, Hardwick and Atherton — but then, the publisher, MadHat Press (USA), is Atherton's own imprint (which accounts, incidentally, for the US spelling in the title and elsewhere), and I particularly enjoyed Hardwick's response to 'Electronic no.1', a short piece of music by Hawkwind, and his commentary, which concludes: 'I'm in a vacuum beyond air and there is only the language of void and imagination, glittering fragments which speak of the things for which I don't have neat words, but have been trying to articulate since 1973'.

And ultimately, this excellent book does indeed demonstrate how ekphrasis can help us re-examine ourselves, and express in fresh ways how we perceive and interact with our world.

[Buy Hardwick, O. and Atherton, C. \(eds\), Dancing About Architecture and Other Ekphrastic Maneuvers, MadHat Press, 2024 \(£19.00\)](#)

Dawn Gorman

Dawn Gorman is a poetry tutor and mentor, and works to enable a wide range of people, including those living with dementia, to write creatively. She presents The Poetry Place on West Wilts Radio, is Poetry Editor of Caduceus magazine, and collaborates widely with writers, visual artists and musicians.

Her poetry books include Instead, Let Us Say (Dempsey & Windle, 2019, winner of the Brian Dempsey Memorial Prize), two Pushcart Prize-nominated books, Aloneness Is A Many-headed Bird (Hedgehog, 2020, collaboratively written with Rosie Jackson) and This Meeting of Tracks (Toadlily Press, 2013), and, most recently, The Bird Room (Hedgehog, 2023).

Magpie and Other Stories by Sarah Hegarty



‘You get the light, before you see the sun’. So says the narrator in ‘All at Sea’, the first story in Sarah Hegarty’s collection, describing sunrise on the open sea.

It’s a striking feature of where the narrator finds herself, a setting that is the stuff of daydreams — and, perhaps as often, of nightmares. It is also an accurate description of the skilful way in which these thirteen stories unfold.

There is appropriate ‘telling’ here, but it only occurs after ‘showing’ has hooked the reader’s interest.

Hegarty’s characters occupy different places in time, setting and cultures. Some are on the run from dark deeds; others — in vain — from what is in their heads.

Many struggle to shape for themselves a present that is comforting, or at least neutral, while the past lurches about in their minds.

‘Lily’ establishes character and situation in language both controlled and lyrical. Bill

now enjoys middle-class comfort, a far cry from his East End childhood and the defining experience of a summer spent hop-picking in the 1950s. Terrible memories lurk, ambushing him on an early-morning walk in the country. Here, as elsewhere, Hegarty lays small threads of meaning: at the time, insignificant; later, anything but. Bill finds himself in ‘a narrow lane. Trees have grown across, forming a shadowy tunnel’. This idyll calls up the same scene from another time and place. Suddenly he is twelve again, reliving an experience of foul coercion.

Some characters embark on projects or quests of uncertain outcome. In ‘Green Fingers’ an English family move into a house in a Spanish town, but in a way they don’t: proper occupancy is forever pending. ‘William likes to start things’, explains Helena, his wife, to Maria, the narrator. ‘But then he doesn’t know how to finish them’. He certainly likes to start huge rows with Helena.

The story’s end sees him ineffectually digging in the rubble of what is meant to be a swimming-pool. His hired workers have gone; so, too, have Helena and the children. The scene is richly suggestive. In ‘Looking for Michael’, Jill leaves the UK to work as a volunteer at the Good Hope Clinic, Kenya — ‘To give something back’ is her official reason for uprooting herself. What she really wants, however, is closure about Michael, her son, also a volunteer in Kenya, who has disappeared.

The narrative carefully places the reader alongside Jill, privy to her ever-shifting moods and self-discoveries — not the least of which is her reawakened need to care for others, especially a little boy who hovers between life and death.

In other stories, characters are caught at a point on which everything in their past seems to converge. ‘Ring Out the Old’ is set at New Year’s Eve — a time which, like Christmas and family gatherings, is notionally joyous but can be a minefield. Ed is preparing to depart for a new life and love, which will be news to Sophie, his wife. She, meanwhile, is cooking an elaborate meal for ‘a special occasion’.

The details of its preparation unfold without hurry, emphasising Ed’s increasing agony as he waits for the right moment to tell her. But the evening slips from his control, especially when she, glowing, reveals happy news of

her own. At the end of the story, midnight strikes and Ed’s mobile rings. As with several other stories, the reader is left to ponder, in fascination, what the next, un-narrated minute might reveal.

‘Magpie’ sees Madeleine in a situation sharply expressed by Philip Larkin in ‘Afternoons’, where the speaker considers young mothers in a recreation ground: ‘Something is pushing them / To the side of their own lives’.

Husband Ben, a history teacher, is going places — perhaps, fears Madeleine, with another woman.

Her possible fate is dramatized by that of two nesting blackbirds in the garden, attacked by a magpie that makes off with one of their chicks.

But Ben was married before, and Madeleine can’t ignore the fact that she has herself played magpie in her time.

Other stories similarly range far and wide: to 1980s China, the war-ravaged Middle East, a prairie-gothic setting that recalls Carson McCullers, a survivalist encampment.

The collection ends on an upbeat — literally, with a woebegone shop-assistant defying gravity and biology to achieve what so many of Hegarty’s characters can only dream of.

All of these stories are written in contemporary mode, but their cumulative effect is, in one respect, old-fashioned: the reader can’t wait to get to the next story and, afterwards, relish them all again.

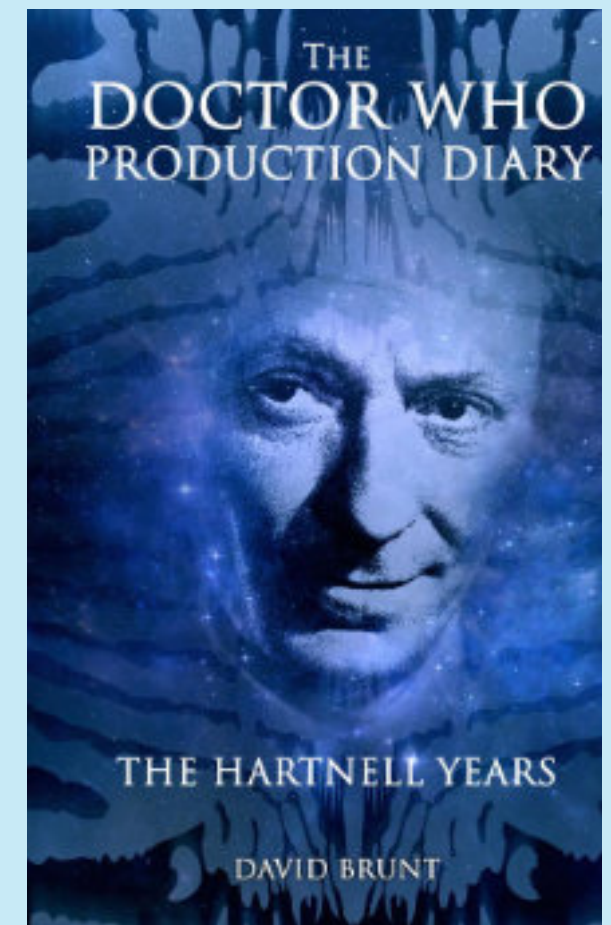
Magpie and Other Stories deserves the widest readership possible.

[Buy Hegarty, S. Magpie and Other Stories. Troubador Publishing, 2024. \(£9.99\)](#)

Michael W. Thomas

Michael W. Thomas is a fiction-writer and poet. He formerly taught Literature and Creative Writing for The Open University and for several years was poet-in-residence at the Robert Frost Festival, Key West, Florida. He has reviewed for The London Magazine, the Times Literary Supplement and The International Journal of Welsh Writing in English. His latest novel is The Erkeley Shadows and his latest poetry collection is A Time for Such a Word.

The Doctor Who Production Diary: The Hartnell Years by David Brunt



There’s a Woody Allen short story where he lampoons the publishing industry’s scraping of barrels when a topic is popular. In his case, the publishers have resorted to printing a famous author’s laundry list and scholars pontificate on the meaning of “no starch”.

In the case of this book, yet another dive into the origins of *Doctor Who*, author David Brunt studies memos, scripts, and handwritten ephemera that was created during the production of this show.

But it works There is something about the mass of detail and dates that conveys a feeling of the time and how different television production was in the 1960s.

Maybe you benefit from also reading other books on the topic, but while you start reading quite cynically, expecting to find this just ridiculously too detailed, you end up wanting the next volume.

[Buy Brunt, David, The Doctor Who Production Diary,, Telos Publishing, 2024, \(£24.99\)](#)

William Gallagher

Write for "Writing in Education"

The aim of this magazine is to explore the work of writers and teachers in educational and community contexts. Its purpose is to assist the peer learning of NAWE members and their colleagues.

We invite NAWE members to write on the subject of creative writing in education - in schools, adult education and tertiary 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 any educational setting. Please note, it is developmental work that we wish to highlight, not self-promotion. The next submission deadline is April 15, 2024

[Read our guidelines and submit online](#)

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