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NEW ZEALAND AUTHOR

NEW ZEALAND SOCIETY OF AUTHORS (PEN NEW ZEALAND INC) TE PUNI KAITUHI O AOTEAROA

Deep Reading

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Economics of Creativity

Creative industries & the Copyright Act review

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2020 SpecFic Conference

How to apply for awards

ISSUE 319

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Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa

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PAULA MORRIS


CAROLINA HERRERA


DAVID HOWARD


ELIZABETH KIRKBY-MCLEOD


JANICE MARRIOTT


VAUGHAN RAPATAHANA


VANDA SYMON


PHILIP TEMPLE

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PAULA BROWNING is CE of Copyright Licensing NZ and Chair of WeCreate. She has a lifelong love of books and was one of those naughty children who used a torch under the blankets to gain more post-bedtime reading.

ERIKA CABRALES is an aspiring game narrative designer interning at NZSA. She is currently finishing an arts degree majoring in Creative Writing at AUT and will be pursuing the Masters of English and New Media Studies next year.

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DAVID HOWARD has written *The Incomplete Poems* (Cold Hub Press, 2011), *The Ones Who Keep Quiet* (OUP, 2017), and edited *A Place To Go On From: The Collected Poems of Iain Lonie* (OUP, 2015).

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JANICE MARRIOTT writes and tells stories for children as well as co-authoring a series of books of memoir. She spends most of her time now assessing manuscripts and mentoring.

VAUGHAN RAPATAHANA commutes between Hong Kong, the Philippines and Aotearoa New Zealand. He is widely published across several genres in both his main languages, te reo Māori and English.

VANDA SYMON is the author of the Detective Sam Shephard novels and the stand-alone thriller *The Faceless. Overkill* has been shortlisted for the 2019 CWA New Blood Dagger award.

PHILIP TEMPLE is a past president and president of honour of NZSA. Bert Hingley published his novel *Sam* in 1984.

We pay tribute in this issue of ***NZ Author*** to two leading literary figures who have recently passed away – Jack Lasenby and Bert Hingley. Both have left a lasting legacy in terms of writing and publishing in New Zealand. As did Ian Cross, journalist and author of *The God Boy*, who passed away on 2 November. Cross was the first holder of the Burns Fellowship at Otago University.

This issue also reaches around the world with commentary from David Howard and Vaughan Rapatahana, two writers who have been writing and performing internationally, David with a residency at Ulyanovsk and Vaughan participating at London's Southbank Centre.

Meanwhile, we hear more about the ongoing Copyright Act review. It is heartening to know that Copyright Licensing New Zealand (CLNZ), NZSA and Publishers Association of NZ (PANZ) are doing both joint and separate advocacy with government and some of the approach to this is being determined with the help of a lobbying firm.

As Paula Browning, CLNZ Chief Executive comments: "CLNZ's Cultural Fund is helping to pay for the services of a specialist lobbying firm in developing the writing and publishing industry's approach to government during the Copyright Act review. Taking the right messages to the right people at the right time is the key to getting a good outcome from government engagement and the aim of having an expert lobbyist's assistance is to reduce some of the burden on NZSA and PANZ." We also hear in this issue about two exciting conventions scheduled for 2020: CoNZealand, the 78th World Science Fiction Convention and the NZ Game Developers' Conference (NZGDC). Erika Cabrales writes about attending the 2019 NZGDC and it sounds like a burgeoning field for writers of different genres. Of course, the other conference which we'll all want to attend in 2020 is the National Writers Forum. More on this in the March issue.

And a very warm welcome to new president Mandy Hager.

Wishing you all a productive and relaxing summer period. ■

Tina Shaw
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EXCITING BOOKS

On Thursday 12 September, I was privileged to hear David Hill, the new NZSA President of Honour, present the Janet Frame Memorial Lecture. He is a well-known and much loved writer of children's fiction. His presentation was amusing, informative and showed the depth of his passion for inspiring children to become lifelong readers. Without good books for youngsters to develop reading skills and a love of reading there would be no market for adult literature. I wonder how many of us actually appreciate this? It was also interesting to learn that American studies show that one can predict the number of future prisoners by the number of ten year olds who are not readers. I suppose similar statistics are true in New Zealand. Authors such as David Hill who publish exciting books that challenge early teens to keep reading are fundamental to our society. NZSA is to be applauded in acknowledging the importance of writing for children by asking him to deliver the Janet Frame Memorial Lecture. As writers, we should all be in awe of and grateful for David's talent. ■

Linley Jones

Sticking Together

MANDY HAGER

I'm honoured to be working on your behalf to help support New Zealand writers. It's been a hectic few weeks trying to wrap my head around the issues and processes – feels a bit like I've been chasing a high-speed train, trying to gain a handhold to clamber aboard!

The one thing that is patently clear is the incredible commitment of the people who've kept this organisation alive to support us all, not only providing valuable opportunities but also lobbying on our behalf around issues vital to every writer, no matter what stage, genre, publishing model or membership status.

I joined NZSA about 25 years ago now and still remember how much it meant to me when I was accepted as a full member. I've rarely gone to branch meetings (boring health stuff) but read everything that's sent with great interest and have felt well supported. I've always thought of NZSA as my union; the one place that has writers' wellbeing at the core of its existence and every action.

But now that I've been privy to the workings of the organisation, if I'm honest, I feel a bit ashamed. I've taken a lot of good people's hard work for granted and I'm really impressed by the passion and care that everyone associated with the running and operation of the organisation have (and continue to) put in. I'm also amazed how much is achieved on such a tight budget. It's clearly a constant juggle, something better support through membership from the writing community at large could help to ease.

> *"The one thing that is patently clear is the incredible commitment of the people who've kept this organisation alive to support us all."*

The lobbying going on right now around the Public Lending Right, an Educational Lending Right and the draft Copyright (Marrakesh Treaty Implementation) Amendment Bill is of importance to all writers; it would help lift our incomes and protect our copyright. For that reason alone, it's worth the price of NZSA membership – less than the cost of half a cup of coffee a week. Even if membership subs rise a little, which is on the cards after a disappointing funding round, the coffee analogy would still apply.

Let's stick together, then, using our collective power to make change. And go grab a writer who's yet to join and tell them why they should! ■

Chief Executive's Report

JENNY NAGLE

Nga mihi o te wā from National Office. Haere mai to our new president Mandy Hager – we are delighted and fortunate to have her advocating for us this next term.

The review of the Copyright Act continues, and NZSA is working on your behalf to advocate for your economic and moral rights to earn from your work. MBIE are reviewing submissions to the Issues Paper and have commissioned more work looking at the economic value of copyright and its effect on the creation of work, and remuneration to creators. As the Options Paper is expected to appear in the first quarter of 2020, we are preparing responses from the literary sector with a range of activities alongside CLNZ, WeCreate and the Publishers Association of NZ.

We have prepared a 2020 NZSA Manifesto, which we will reproduce in February and ensure it is widely circulated. 2020 is an election year and NZSA will engage with all major parties on issues that affect writers' rights and incomes.

Congratulations to those selected for the 2020 NZSA Mentorship programme, and to the recipients of the CLNZ Research and Writers' Grants, Prime Minister's Literary Awards, Pikihuia Awards winners, Ngaio Marsh Awards winners, Ashton Wylie Book Awards winners, Michael King Writers Centre 2020 placements, National Poetry Day winners, the inaugural Zephyr

Short Story Competition winners and the NZSA Canterbury Heritage Book Awards winners. We acknowledge members Frankie McMillan for the Peter and Dianne Beatson Fellowship, Sue Wootton who was awarded the 2020 Katherine Mansfield Menton Fellowship, Catherine Robertson for the IIML 2020 Residency and Crissi Blair as the recipient of the Storylines Betty Gilderdale Award.

Highlights of this last quarter have been David Hill's President of Honour address (listen on our website), the Northwrite conference run superbly by our Northland branch, the Pikihuia Awards ceremony celebrating the work of Māori writers and writing in te reo Māori and Lani Wendt Young's Read NZ Te Pou Muramura annual lecture, where she called out publishing as "a castle of white literature". Her lecture is free to download. Lani looked at the statistics of what is being published around the globe, but also critiqued our revered body of "classics" as being largely harmful to people of colour, with its deeply racist stereotyping and lack of inclusion.

In September, NZSA Vice President Pippa Werry and I met with Internal affairs Minister Tracey Martin to discuss the impact of Marrakesh, the need for an Educational Lending Right scheme, the necessity for MOE collective licences as a requirement for schools and the pressing need for a long overdue review of our hallowed Public Lending Right (PLR), and were encouraged by her support. Our PLR Advisory representatives Rae McGregor and Kyle Mewburn have submitted our wish list to the options framework looking to update that scheme.

With seeding funding from CNZ the new Coalition for Books will get to work in 2020. We announce the third NZSA National Writers Forum which will take place in Auckland on 4-6 September. Much more to come on this: please Save the Date! I wish you all a safe and fulfilling summer.
Ngā mihi. ■

Governance Report

VANDA SYMON

NZSA PRESIDENT

We welcome Mandy Hager to her role as President of New Zealand Society of Authors. Mandy is an award-winning writer of fiction for adults and young adults. In 2019 she was awarded the Margaret Mahy Medal for lifetime achievement and a distinguished contribution to New Zealand's literature for young people. Mandy lives on the Kapiti Coast.

BOARD MEETING

Our last NZSA Board meeting was held by Zoom on Saturday 31 August, and our next meeting is scheduled to be held in Auckland on Sunday 24 November.

GOVERNANCE TRAINING

In conjunction with our November board meeting in Auckland, members of the board will be undertaking a day of governance training. We will be taking the Not-for-Profit (NFP) Governance Essentials course run by the Institute of Directors in New Zealand which is aimed at both new and experienced board members to help upgrade their skills. We would like to thank Copyright Licencing NZ (CLNZ) who are funding the course.

BEQUESTS

The NZSA is very grateful to have been given two generous bequests from the estates of Jill Chan and Laura Solomon. We are working with the families of these two writers to find the best way to make use of their donations in a way that honours their passion and their legacy.

MARRAKESH

The Copyright (Marrakesh Treaty Implementation) Amendment Bill was granted royal assent on 12 August and passed into law. We remain very concerned about the impact of this Act on writers' abilities to earn income from their work, and will continue to talk with government representatives about the importance of copyright in maintaining author livelihoods and the creative economy.

COPYRIGHT AND PLR/ELR LOBBYING

NZSA continues to actively lobby government about the importance of copyright to writers, and the need to upgrade the Public Lending Right (PLR) and introduce an Educational Lending Right (ELR). With the erosion of author income brought about by the Marrakesh Treaty, it is vital to ensure our voice is heard in the Copyright Act Review and to ensure authors get fair compensation for their titles lent out by libraries physically and digitally. To this end CLNZ is funding a lobbyist to engage in work on our behalf. ■

> *"...it is vital to ensure our voice is heard."*

Bert Hingley
1948-2019

***Philip Temple** pays tribute to a New Zealand publishing legend.*

The death of publisher Bert Hingley in September came as a shock to the many New Zealand authors who remember both his galvanising effect on fiction publishing in the 1980s and the equally stimulating effect of his legendary lunches.

Bert was born in One Tree Hill, Auckland in 1948, raised in Mount Eden and went to school at Mt Albert Grammar. He graduated from Auckland University with a degree in English in 1970 and, apart from early spells teaching English in Italy and Switzerland, spent his entire career devoted to editing and publishing books.

In 1981, still in his early thirties, Bert became publishing manager and later director of Hodder & Stoughton NZ. Apart from building on its existing non-fiction list, he expanded the company's fiction list, started a children's list and within a few years it had become New Zealand's predominant publisher in both fields.

Bert's fiction list at that time included some of the most outstanding titles of the decade: notably Maurice Shadbolt's *Season of the Jew*, Sue McCauley's *Other Halves*, Marilyn Duckworth's *Disorderly Conduct* and New Zealand's first Booker prizewinner, Keri Hulme's *The Bone people*.

It was our loss and Australia's gain when Bert was headhunted in 1988 to run Hodder & Stoughton Australia for nearly six years and later, Hale & Iremonger, with spells as a bookseller and freelance editor before ending his career as a wide-ranging publishing consultant.

Bert not only had a nose for good books, he was also brilliant company and made every author feel like the most valuable writer on the block. Despite his absence from New Zealand for 30 years, the stimulus of his support and enthusiasm has lingered on for all those writers who knew him.

Bert is survived by his wife Cheryl, whom he first met at Auckland University, and their two sons, Benjamin and Gabriel.

Marilyn Duckworth:
Bert Hingley made a huge impact on New Zealand fiction in the eighties. He initiated the practice of releasing a hardback novel simultaneously with an identical paperback, thereby satisfying

both libraries and the shopping public. I could say he changed the road map of my life. He'd taken a brave punt on me when I hadn't produced a novel for 14 years. I admired him immensely. We all did.

When he phoned me and said he wanted to publish *Disorderly Conduct* and would publish *Rest for the Wicked* (rejected earlier by Hodder UK) at a later date, I felt as if a huge weight had lifted off me. "All the novels I hadn't written during those years had been piling up on my head, a whole shelf of them," I wrote in my memoir. With his encouragement I found myself producing novel after novel, one every year – until he suggested I might slow down a bit.

Bert was a wise man and he loved life. He became a very good friend and I spent happy hours with him and Cheryl after the move to Australia, which had left many of us bereft. His too-early death was unfair. We will miss his sparky spirit in the world.

Sue McCauley (Hammond):
When I first submitted *Other Halves* to Hodder & Stoughton the managing editor was on leave and Bert was his stand-in. He read the manuscript and told me the official editor would definitely reject it. But if I was willing to wait a year, by which time he would have retired … So I did, though sometimes I thought, "Why am I trusting this charming but overly confident young man?" Later I learned that the now-retired editor had, indeed, disapproved of my novel.

There were, of course, the legendary lunches and launches. His literary knowledge was as immense as mine was abysmal and I could tell that in public I quite often gave him reason to cringe. His way of "putting me straight" was always entirely diplomatic, discreet and helpful. He and Cheryl became our friends.

Thanks for your faith and the memories, Bert. Two float above others. He gave me a hardback copy of *The Book of Ebenezer Le Page* – perhaps the best novel I've ever read. And when I was signing the contract for the *Other Halves* movie it was Bert who looked it over, unimpressed, and went into battle for me; even though neither he nor Hodder & Stoughton stood to benefit.

Chris Else:
I first met Bert Hingley and his wife, Cheryl, in Auckland in the sixties; we became friends then but I really got to know him when we washed up together in London in 1975. Bert was working for Heinemann and he and I spent a fair bit of time exploring London pubs. I have never met anyone who was better company. He was intelligent, witty, relaxed and self-ironic, well-read in both the European classics and in modern literature, a thoroughly cultivated man but also a down-to-earth Kiwi.

I remember him recounting a discussion he'd had with a colleague about the low pay in British publishing. "Oh," the person replied, "one doesn't go into publishing unless one has a private income." Bert's scorn was palpable.

The last time I saw him and Cheryl was at lunch at Jean and Russell Haley's place on Waiheke Island in 2012. We had a brilliant time – good wine, great food and superb conversation. Russell, another great companion, is gone now, too. The world is a duller place without them. ■

Jack Lasenby
1931-2019

As remembered by ***Janice Marriott****.*

On school visits, when the inevitable question came up, "Where do your ideas come from?" Jack could have answered that he drew on his childhood and his experiences in the bush and on water for most of his fictions. But he would answer much more like the storyteller he was: "All we ever seemed to do was camp, fish, swim, sail, row, dig for gold, collect kauri gum and go on picnics."

When we each lived in Wellington – he in Aro Valley and I in Thorndon – we both wrote in our houses' attic spaces, but only Jack made a myth out of it. "I write my books up in the top of my house, where the rafters come to a sharp point … That's why my head has grown pointed, like an upside down vee, with ears stuck on the sides." Children relish and recognise a natural storyteller. They loved his school visits.

I was an unlikely friend of such a Kiwi bloke but Jack welcomed everyone who loved telling ridiculous tales. Long before the Internet craze for outrage, Jack was happily outrageous. He managed to be very polite as well. I first met Jack in the eighties, long after those heady years of the late sixties at "School Pubs", years that Margaret Mahy described as "polished and gilded", when Jack was an editor and writer of *The School Journal* and Margaret published her first stories there. But I heard of those times – great tales. The two of them were storytellers making musical magic out of the rhythms of language. What oral history we have all missed by not recording their chatter!

In the eighties he was enthusing students at Wellington Teachers' College to "read … read everything, but most particularly myths and folk tales, Māori, Greek, anything." Instead I read his early Uncle Trev stories and loved the fact that editor Jack had brought imagination and hilarity into reading lessons. While his characters were doing the craziest of things, they stood firmly in the mud, sand and water of rural New Zealand. Setting a riotous imagination in the backblocks of New Zealand was his unique contribution to our literature.

Children found him unforgettable and deeply convincing. To my son he was Pirate Jack who lived over a mountain, down a steep goat track, beside the Pauatahanui Inlet, opposite Bottle Creek. He always replied to children's letters. He

never forgot a child he'd met. They all knew he took them seriously. He knew what it was to be a child; the heartaches and frustrations as well as the mischief and adventures. He was encouraging to any children who had a story to tell.

Jack always had time for talk, though writing was what he liked doing best. When his first novel, *The Lake*, was well received he left Teachers' College, became a full-time writer in his mid-fifties and never stopped writing.

The fantastical world of Jack's fiction was always spread thick, like Waharoa butter on toast. And Jack's toast was dry sourdough, with a crunch. Here's Aunt Effie: " 'If you haven't enough room shove the dogs out of the way. Caligula-Nero-Brutus-Kaiser-Genghis-Boris, move over and make room for the kids.' The dogs bared their teeth and growled like gravel boiling in a pot."

And like good toast Jack's world sustained you. It was full of love. "There was room for everybody on Aunt Effie's enormous bed."

We think of him as a children's writer but he was troubled by that limitation. On the back of an Uncle Trev book he says, "The distinction between books for grown-ups and for kids is a wicked librarians' invention, Uncle Trev reckons." He wrote for anyone who loved to see how far they could push the limits of a story, anyone who loved language. He had a huge vocabulary. Check out the glossary in the back of *Aunt Effie* for the meaning of words like trumions, swingletree, pawl. He's even found a way to make the glossary humorous.

The example of his writing that is with me most, at this time, is *This Strange Cold Town*, a short anecdote from his real life, about parental responsibility and being a dad in a heartless new city. It was commissioned and published by Victoria University Press in their anthology of ex-Victoria Writing Fellows. It's still available on line at nzetc.vic.ac.nz

When the steep track down to his house became too much he moved into Aro Valley. He'd invite me round in the weekends, with Jim and Dawn Gorman, for roast chicken, grapes and wine and we'd always argue about everything under the sun except gardening. We agreed on that. He gave me his mother's lettuces to self-seed and spread. He understood and loved plants, the bush, the sea and hated plastic even then.

As the physical world of a great outdoorsman inevitably shrank with age, his imaginative world expanded; he took to writing dystopian YA fiction. But gloom and satire never occupied his mind exclusively. At the same time as he published *Because We Were the Travellers* in 1997 he was also creating Aunt Effie and more Uncle Trev and Harry Wakatipu tales.

When the large, sloped Aro Street garden became too much, he moved into a penthouse apartment. I was there once after a storm had blown all his (plastic) outdoor furniture down into Willis Street. Life was more confined. But his sense of humour continued, and his fascination with people. I think he got to know everyone in that tower block.

His final book, another Uncle Trev tale, was published by Gecko in 2012. He received the Prime Minister's Award for Literary Achievement in 2014. ■

Jack Lasenby was an NZSA member from 1974. He recently received a Taipūrākau Honour, awarded to our long-standing members.

Generosity *and* Enthusiasm

***Crissi Blair** is the 2019 winner of the Storylines Betty Gilderdale Award, an award given since 1990 to mark an exceptional commitment to the world of children's books.*

Crissi Blair has been writing about children's books and their makers for nearly 20 years, including seven years for the Book Council's enews *The School Library*, reviews and articles for Australia's *Magpies* magazine, for which she is now New Zealand coordinator; and her own publication *New Zealand Children's Books in Print*, among many activities and involvements in the children's literature community.

"I'm so thrilled to be the recipient of this Storylines award," says Blair. "It's a fabulous community to be part of. Having been a member of Storylines for about 20 years, and been to nearly all of the awards events to hear what the winners have to say, I've found myself a bit gobsmacked and very honoured. It has been terrific from the point of view of being able to say what I think about children's books in New Zealand, libraries and how we share books with our children and young adults."

Blair has always been a strong supporter of libraries, both school and public. "They must be lively and, dare I say it, noisy places. The days of the silent library should be well gone if we want to attract CYA and expose them to the amazing books that are available." She believes that one of the most important things for school librarians, teachers and parents is to read the books so we can talk about them in a convincing manner. "I sigh when I hear of teachers who dread taking their kids to the school library because they get told off for being too noisy, or are only allowed to borrow one book. Generosity and enthusiasm is the way to draw these young people into reading, and once you have them they need to keep on reading, getting better, broadening their tastes, growing up as readers."

Blair wants to see children reading books where they can recognise themselves and their peers – to read New Zealand books – and says there are a couple of ways to encourage that.

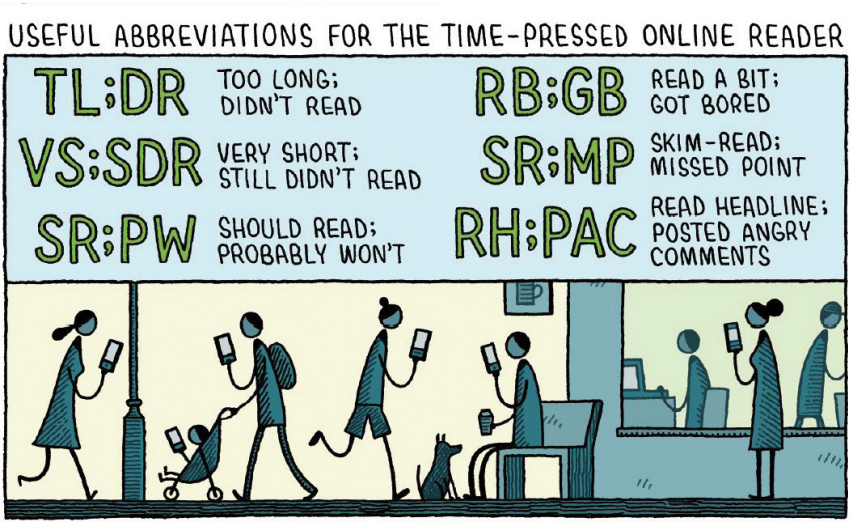
"One is to make sure the books are available in our libraries and bookshops, and to read the books ourselves so we can share them in a genuine manner, and the other is to bring our authors into schools, libraries and bookshops so they can build relationships with their readers."

She is aware of all the terrific books being published annually from her two

years judging the NZ Book Awards for Children and Young Adults. "And they can only thrive if they have readers."

Blair also has a message for New Zealand publishers. "I do wish our publishers could be adventurous in what they publish; take some more chances on something that isn't what we saw last year and the year before. I'm always thrilled to open a package and find something really special inside that I can go on and rave about to all the people I talk books with. Be brave!"

THE STORYLINES Betty Gilderdale Award honours Betty Gilderdale, a lifelong advocate and supporter of children's literature, through her academic research, work as a reviewer and 30 years' committee service to Auckland's Children's Literature Association. Prior to 2000, the award was known as the Children's Literature Association's Award for Services to Children's Literature. The award carries a monetary prize of $2000 and the recipient delivers a 40-minute address, known as the Storylines Spring Lecture, as part of the award presentation, held on 3 November 2019. Link to Blair's address at the presentation ceremony about her life in children's literature: www.storyline.org.nz ■



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Deep Reading

*We spoke to **Jo Cribb**, CE of Read NZ Te Pou Muramura, about the results of their recent research into New Zealanders' digital reading habits.*

What were you doing this morning between 7am and 10am? According to the results of new research from Read NZ Te Pou Muramura* you were probably reading something online.

The good news, as the research has found, "is that while online reading is displacing traditional reading, it is not replacing it. Both formats continue to be read by the majority of readers every week."

Using experiential sampling, in which 500 participants responded via SMS with data being collected over a two-week period, "Reading in a Digital Age" raises many interesting issues into our online reading habits and apparently we're doing a lot of skimming, meshing and stacking.

- "I find it harder to read longer and denser articles and books than I once did" 44%
- "I sometimes feel content is too long, so I don't read it when I see longer pieces online" 53%
- 61% of New Zealanders "mesh" (interacting or communicating about content they are viewing) while watching TV

**previously the New Zealand Book Council*

• 74% of New Zealanders "stack" (use multiple devices) while watching TV

Worryingly, the research highlights a growing "cognitive impatience" and loss of "deep reading" – a term coined by Professor Maryanne Wolf – the kind of reading that requires the reader's complete attention to understand the thoughts on the page.

Jo Cribb considers our behaviour around reading on the screen shows that we're becoming very distracted and that the way we read has been changing to include more skimming. Yet skimming is not always a bad thing: "I couldn't survive in my work if I read every single word and reflected on it," Cribb admits. "I just couldn't function …" So we need to be able to skim.

JO CRIBB

Yet people also need to read longer-form work and text that might be challenging to read. "That's often how you learn," says Cribb. "That's where you also get the goals, particularly in reading for pleasure, where the writer's taking you through the eyes and experience of someone else, and that's where all the great things around empathy and understanding happen, so it would be very sad if we lost that."

Such reading habits raise concerns for writers, as Cribb points out. "Obviously for the writers who will be reading this, it would be very sad if we lost that ability (of reading long-form text), because that's their craft." It's certainly worrying to hear that people are saying if content is too long they won't read it, or they're finding it harder to read. "So this research opens up lots of conversations for writers and publishers – what does this mean, if this is how your audience is engaging with reading?"

Long-term, are we moving away from reading long-form print, and how will New Zealand authors in the future respond to that?

"For us that's the exciting part, the research opens that question up, we kind of all knew that this was happening, but now we've got the empirical evidence about who's reading what and how, and there are definitely generation gaps. Those who are more likely to be engaged in the long-form novel, as we've seen in the research, are older women, and the least likely are younger men and women. One of the interesting insights of the research is that I don't think we can assume that as people get older they will change the way they read and engage with text, and I wonder if we're just basing our future thinking on that assumption … it's something we should all debate and discuss quite openly."

It seems likely that young people who have grown up in the digital age may well be establishing reading habits which will carry on into the future.

> *It seems likely that young people who have grown up in the digital age may well be establishing reading habits which will carry on into the future.*

"Being able to concentrate and read deeply is like a muscle in your brain," says Cribb, "and it's something that becomes harder if you don't do it. They call it cognitive patience, and we might be losing that. So it could be more hardwired, to skim or stack and mesh, than what we've found. We would like to see the research as a platform for discussion for those who are creating longer texts – what does it mean, and how should we respond? I think that's a lovely conversation … and there'll be many different ways forward."

Read NZ has ideas about how to take this research forward in practical terms and encourage readers.

"This research has again shown us who is least likely to read, and it is unfortunately men, and younger people – so a lot of our work programmes over the next 18 months will be focused on how to connect these groups back to the joy of reading."

For a start, Read NZ will launch a campaign that focuses on men talking to men about reading, why they read and what they are reading. Read NZ focus groups have shown that men may feel uncomfortable in a bookshop and that many are slower readers so it'll take them a while to read a book. "Much longer than the time allowed in a library," suggests Cribb, "so they don't bother going to a library because they know they'll end up with fines or losing their access to the book … There are lots of these lovely pieces from the research that we will work through to create a bridge for those groups who are less connected with books and reading."

As part of the ongoing discussion, Read NZ has invited Professor Maryanne Wolf, a neuroscientist working in this area, to speak in New Zealand in March 2020. Wolf's book *Reader, Come Home* considers the future of the reading brain and our capacity for critical thinking, empathy and reflection as we become increasingly dependent on digital technologies. Cribb notes, "Our research very much reinforces what Professor Wolf has been finding … she will create a platform for us to go to the next level of 'What does this mean for us as individuals, as parents, as writers?' We're looking forward to hosting her and continuing the conversation of reading in a digital age."

The other takeaway from the research is the importance of keeping children and young people engaged in reading. The study found that 18 to 34 year olds are much less likely to read hard copy content for pleasure. "We really have to develop the fabulous habit of reading early," says Cribb, "so we're continuing to grow our Writers in Schools programme, including a Writers in Early Childhood Education programme, so that we're encouraging that nice long approach to reading. You'll see a lot more growth in that area … so we keep our children excited about long-form reading and even hard reading." ■

The Power *of* NOW

*NZSA member **Graci Kim**'s manuscript was shortlisted for the 2018 Storylines Tessa Duder Award, and she has since signed a publishing deal with Disney-Hyperion. What makes this dynamo tick?*

NZ Author: How or why did you get into this writing gig?

Graci Kim: Three things happened within the space of a few years that changed my life, and which ultimately led me to find writing.

First, my diplomat job took me to Taipei where I was to learn Chinese full-time for two years. I was in my twenties and couldn't believe my luck.

One evening in the bustling city, my friend and I were walking across the pedestrian crossing when suddenly a strong gust of wind swept me off my feet, followed by a shattering thud. I turned around to see a concrete truck had just missed me, and had driven over a mother and her twelve-year-old daughter. The daughter died upon impact, but her mother lay crushed in the middle of the road, shrieking for her life.

I ended up holding the hand of a dying woman that night. I was the last human she felt and heard before leaving this world, and that affected me greatly. That night, I was deeply reminded of the fragility of life.

Then work relocated me to the New Zealand Embassy in Beijing, so I could put my newfound language skills to use. Then one day at work, my computer screen looked rather blurry. To my surprise, the ophthalmologist announced that my retinas were detaching. If I didn't get emergency surgery within 24 to 72 hours, I would be blind.

Luckily, I did manage to get surgery in Beijing. My amazing parents jumped on the next plane from Auckland so I wouldn't be alone for the three to four months of recovery through which I'd be severely impaired. Today, I am partially blind in one eye, and am told my "good" eye may deteriorate with as little notice as the other. But if I've gained anything from my brush with darkness, it's a deep sense of appreciation and acceptance that all things are fleeting. You have to make the most of the one body and one life you've got.

Then lastly, a short while after that, my halmoni – my nana – passed away.

While our determined immigrant parents tirelessly worked their three jobs each through our childhood, our halmoni raised us three girls. She was illiterate and uneducated; suspicious and eccentric. She also didn't speak a lick of English. Yet she raised us with enough unconditional love to power a nation. And the thing about a love like hers is that it's pure, latent energy. And energy demands to be shared.

There may still be a hole in my chest the shape of my halmoni, but her love charged me up like a battery. When she passed, I knew I would spend the rest of my life trying to share that energy with the world.

Eventually, I finished my posting in Beijing in 2017 and was due to come home to New Zealand. As one chapter of my life was coming to a close, I knew I wanted to lead a life of meaning – one that would allow me to leave the world a better place. But how in the world was I going to do that?!

With these thoughts in mind, I skimmed through an old diary entry I'd written in primary school. Kid-me had written about something that happened in class.

I had written a report about my family that I was immensely proud of. But when the teacher saw it, she took me aside and asked why I'd described my family as being blond and blue-eyed. I, in response, had been utterly confused. Yes, of course I knew we were

> *It was about the fragility of life, the power of now and about a grandparent's love that knew no bounds – the three life lessons I'd learnt in my time overseas.*

Korean. Yes, of course I knew our hair was black and our eyes brown. But what did that have to do with anything? It didn't matter what colour your skin was in real life. Didn't she know everyone in books was white? As a self-professed bookworm who knew the library stacks better than my own bedroom, I had never read a book about someone who looked like me.

Reading that diary entry, I made a promise to myself. I would use the power of my pen to write kids who looked like me onto the page – to let them know they were seen and that their voices mattered. I wanted to write the stories that kid-me didn't know she wanted and needed to read.

So as soon as I moved back to New Zealand, I started writing my first manuscript. It was about the fragility of life, the power of now and about a grandparent's love that knew no bounds – the three life lessons I'd learnt in my time overseas.

NZA: How did you go about getting a US agent?

GK: When I set out on my writing journey, I knew absolutely nothing about the publishing industry. But having run several start-ups in the past, I knew just having a good product wasn't going to cut it. I needed to put as much effort into researching the market as writing my actual book.

So I dived into the deep end. For my craft, I enrolled in online writing courses, read craft books and blogs, and lost myself in writing-related podcasts. I found critique partners, scoured the internet for mentoring programmes, joined local writing groups, and started new ones when I couldn't find the ones I wanted to join. I also read lots of books in the age categories and genre I wanted to write.

At the same time, I started to research the market. I joined local and online writers networks. Someone told me Twitter had a fantastic writing community so I created an account and discovered a wealth of information. I learnt about the New Zealand publishing industry vs international markets; the pros and cons of traditional vs indie publishing. I pored through Publishers Marketplace and Query Tracker, read the Publishers Weekly and Publishers Lunch religiously, and started following my favourite authors and industry professionals.

Finally, I worked out a strategy. I decided to tackle the US market because it is the largest kidlit market in the world, then to put my eggs in the traditional publishing basket. From having run businesses in the past, I knew marketing was going to be a personal struggle if I went indie, so I wanted the support of an established publishing house to push my books.

That led me to realise I would first need a US-based agent. With that in mind, I was

preparing my newly-completed manuscript to query through the slush pile – a process I was told could take years. That was when via Twitter, I found out about DVpit – a Twitter pitch contest for marginalised voices that have been historically under represented in publishing. Eligible writers could pitch their work during the contest and have agents "like" their pitches. Such an invitation would allow the writer to skip the slush pile and go to the top of the agent's query pile.

So in October 2018, I entered the contest with my new YA manuscript, and managed to get an offer of representation from a New York-based agent, Carrie Pestritto from Laura Dail Literary Agency, three weeks later. Carrie and I have been working together since.

NZA: How did you and your agent manage to sell your book to Disney-Hyperion?

GK: Once I signed with Carrie, we embarked on a series of revisions. I had already completed about seven rewrites prior to signing with her, but under her editorial guidance, we did some more rounds. Then when we both felt ready, we went out on submission to our first list of publishing houses with my by-then-10th draft of the manuscript.

Two months later, we received an R&R (Revise & Resubmit request) from an editor at Disney-Hyperion, asking whether we'd consider aging down the manuscript from YA to MG (Middle Grade). The editor's vision for the book really resonated with me, and so we completed the revision and sent it back to the editor.

They had a 30-day exclusive period to consider the revised manuscript, and on the 29th day, they offered a book deal. After some contractual negotiations, we agreed to a deal. And now, my debut MG novel, *The Last Fallen Star*, is going to be published with Rick Riordan Presents, Disney-Hyperion, in 2021.

NZA: You've spoken previously about embracing your Korean identity. Why was it so hard?

GK: Growing up in New Zealand as a person of colour, I faced racism in its many forms. Kids used to spit in my lunch and throw stones at me. People would throw eggs at my dad's car, flick us the middle finger and tell us to go back to our "own country". Later, as an adult, the discrimination became more subtle – hidden behind unconscious biases and engrained within institutional practices.

When you are continually told by society's words and actions that you do not belong, you eventually start to believe it. By the time I came of age, I had internalised the belief that being Korean was something to be ashamed of, something to be underplayed.

It has taken me a long time to embrace my identity, and to accept that what makes me different is an asset, not a liability. Identity is fluid. And when it comes to culture and identity, there is no such thing as either/or. I am not part Korean and part Kiwi. I am *both*.

And now, as my Pakeha hubby and I prepare to welcome our first child to the world in December, my hope is that our daughter can grow up in a country where we define ourselves on what unites us, and not what differentiates us. On this, I believe we still have a long way to go. ■

FROM LAUNCH OF *POEMS FROM THE EDGE OF EXTINCTION*, VAUGHAN FRONT LEFT.

Incendiary *Art*

***Vaughan Rapatahana** has been participating in some remarkable international festivals.*

Kia ora koutou katoa.

I am fortunate to be invited to international literary festivals. Last year in July it was Hauterives Arts Festival in France, which tied in beautifully with the Colin Wilson Conference in Nottingham earlier that month where I gave a paper. Met up in Hauterives with French jazz musician Didier Malherbe, ex-Gong multi-instrumentalist, and we ended up watching France win the World Cup in a café in town.

This year saw me participate in World Poetry Recital Night in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in September, which segued nicely to our return to Aotearoa New Zealand after spending winter back in Hong Kong (the situation there alarming for us as long-term residents) and Philippines. My wife and I have whānau in both locales.

This was a very special evening promoted by the Malaysian Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture as part of a wider endeavour to install Kuala Lumpur as World Book Capital

2020. There were poets from Malaysia itself, including six of their Poet Laureates, as well as from Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Japan, Vietnam, Singapore, Philippines, Iran, Bangladesh, France and Thailand. Spectacular costumes and traditional music accompanied the event throughout, with large backdrops displaying the indigenous tongue of the poems and the Malay language translation alongside. A damned fine repast was included, I must add.

I was especially grateful to meet up with Muhammad Haji Salleh, one of Malaysia's greatest poets, and one of the laureates at this event. We had been communicating since the 1990s, when I was working in Brunei Darussalam and had included his fine poetry in the first-ever English language collection of Bruneian poets, *Under the Canopy.*

The event was itself collated and collected into a book entitled *Puisi Dalam Zaman Tidak Puitis: Poetry in a Non-Poetic Era* and was held in the National Library premises.

In October I was further honoured to be invited to Poetry International at the Southbank Centre, London. Poetry International is Southbank Centre's longest-running festival, founded by Ted Hughes, former Poet Laureate, in 1967 and has been running biennially since then, featuring many of the world's leading poets. For 2019's incarnation the theme was disruption – which certainly struck several chords with me.

I write more and more ki te reo Māori nowadays and one of my poems had been chosen to be included in *Poems from the Edge of Extinctio*n. The launch of this important compilation of threatened indigenous language poetry was held during the festival on the Saturday evening. Others represented in this comprehensive compilation who also performed were Valzhyna Mort (Belarusian), Laura Tohe (Navajo), Hawad (Tuareg), Shehzar Doja and James Byrne (Rohingya) and Nineb Lamassu and Stephen Watts (Assyrian.) All their readings were very well received by a large and appreciative audience. During my own performance we showed a movie directed by Joanne Marras Tate, a Brazilian studying in Colorado, concerning the Te Awa Tupua Act (2017) whereby the Whanganui River has been accorded human rights and which included me reciting one of my poems, *te taiao o Aotearoa*. Further, as part of my own performance, there was a background kōauau (wind instruments) soundtrack while I read several poems, including the one represented in the anthology, *britain in the south seas.*

On the Sunday was "Incendiary Art, the Power of Disruptive Poetry", with myself and renowned poets Patricia Smith and Chen Chen, definitely a provocative trio who are out there expanding the perimeters of what poetry essentially "is". I am committed to a seismic detonation of comfortably bland poetic content; to delivery away from printed page/microphone stasis; and – ironically – to a disavowal of "standardised" formats (thus intertwining languages, playing around with fonts and so on), so this event was a perfect opportunity to attempt to combine all three aspects. Again, there was a throbbing haka and waiata soundtrack underpinning my work.

My fellow poets were outstanding – outstandingly well received and standout poets *per se* – also stretching out the existential status of poetry. Patricia Smith is powerful and emotionally searing; Chen Chen wryly and slyly comic all at once: both performance artists as opposed to dull page-turners. I was honoured to be with them on the stage. We then were asked several questions by our articulate MC and from the audience:

which probably went on longer than planned, such was their interest.

I was also fortunate to record my poem *mō Ōtautahi* for the BBC and to be involved in a *Guardian* podcast with Valzhyna Mort, a very fine poet now based in New York. We discussed writing in our own first (non-English) tongues. Extra special mention here must be accorded the British National Library chief honcho, Chris McCabe, who acted as an erudite contributor to this podcast and who not only coordinated much of the overall programme and acted as MC in several events, but also edited the anthology. More, he is a fine poet in his own right!

I went to a presentation on the Saturday titled "Exploring Poetry as Disruption" and I found the three discursive presentations there fascinating. Experimental poetry from a new generation: Iris Colomb, J. R. Carpenter and Nisha Ramayya. Audience participation and escape from the printed word page characterised these performances.

The ultimate event of the weekend was the ceremony to announce the winners of the 2019 Forward Prizes (the leading awards for poetry published in the UK and Ireland), followed by the "exclusive" after-ceremony party back in the Royal Festival Hall. Again, I was fortunate to be invited to both events.

2020 will see us travelling to the International Festival Curtea de Argeş Poetry Nights in Romania. Looking forward to this one too, as a tour of Dracula's stomping ground is included.

My thanks to the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture in Malaysia, The British National Library and The Southbank Centre, as well as the Publishers Association of Aotearoa NZ. Thank you also, of course, to all the poets I met, dined and read with. Tremendous versatility, variety, virtuosity.

Tēnā koe mō ngā kōwhiringa. ■

Taking Literature SERIOUSLY

***David Howard**, guest of the Ulyanovsk UNESCO City of Literature Residency Program, shares something of his experiences.*

The air shivers with similes.
– Osip Mandelstam

There is never one, there are only multiple destinations.

Travelling, there is no temptation to buy objects: how could they be carried in a backpack, and for what? I am no longer in thrall to possessions; I realise all things have emotional as well as physical weight. They may help some people to see but it is more likely that they will obscure the view. Now I do not live for money, which has no inherent value; I live for experience, and it returns more interest than savings ever could. Echoing Charles Olson, I believe that a poem moves from perception to perception – so does a life. By having no fixed point to return to (although I keep a post office box and rent a storage unit in Dunedin) I am forced to move forward, whatever my doubts about this or that course of action. And I believe the momentum keeps my writing vital, too.

Now I am heading to Russia. But I detour to Slovenia, where my libretto *Water Globe* is being set by Brina Jež Brezavšček for a chamber opera that will premiere in Ljubljana Town Hall this December. Once the work is done I circle through Croatia, talking again with friends made when I held a 2017 Writers' House residency in Pazin. Then I'm on the road to Belgrade so I can see the prehistoric Vinca sculptures at the National Museum of Serbia. Wonder-drunk, I tumble aboard a plane that reaches Moscow in the middle of the night. I imagine snow, echoing a line from the poet Gala Uzrutova: "The round peel of the eaten apple is slowly filled with snow."

There is no snow, not yet. I wait.

A bright September finds me at the Hotel Simbirsk in Ulyanovsk. I am the second UNESCO City of Literature resident in the birthplace of two revolutionaries, Kerensky and Lenin. Warmth is what finds me, the orange of lime-tree leaves alongside that mythical figure maintained by politicians: "the common people". Every morning I talk with a kitchenhand who learnt English by listening to rock songs. I visit the leatherworkers Aldem Brothers in a mall favoured by teenagers; the craftsman Demas, who is making a bag for my iPad, uses a translation app to share stories with me, he wants to move to America, business will be better there – I shake my head, having

worked for Metallica and Janet Jackson. The American Dream is a nightmare. The translation app is too: I tell Demas that a writer tries to speak for everyone, but the word "speak" shows on his screen as "sex". There is a pregnant pause.

A week later, outside the novelist Ivan Goncharov's house, I am approached by an elegant woman who addresses me in Russian; when I explain, apologetically, that I only speak English she observes with perfect enunciation: "How very unfortunate for you." After that I need a drink so I order a Scottish IPA at Top Hop and the barmaid, who is much younger than my son, practises her language skills on me – I watch the studs that pierce both her cheeks lift and fall. Truly, language is beautiful.

Professionally I am expanded (well, my ego is) by the attention my poetry receives. I deliver a keynote at the opening of the "Lipki" International Forum of Young Writers, where 150 young talents meet with senior editors in a series of workshops; I read at both Karamzinsky Square and the Literary Trolleybus, where locals share their poems while traversing the darkening city; I answer questions at the Literary Club of Ulyanovsk, recommending Dunedin poets Lynley Edmeades, Emer Lyons, Emma Neale, Robyn Maree Pickens and Sue Wootton; I collaborate with the composer Sofia Filyanima and we present *roll of honour* with a septet at the opening of Literary Hall.

PHOTO: DIMITRY POTAPOV

TOP: L-R: OLGA TURINA, GALA UZRUTOVA AND DAVID HOWARD BY THE VOLGA RIVER

MIDDLE: DAVID HOWARD WITH TRANSLATOR SERGEI GOGIN (LEFT) AT OPENING OF LITERARY HALL

BOTTOM: PRESS CONFERENCE

I realise all of this is not about *me*. What it really means is that the Ulyanovsk City of Literature team of Gala Uzrutova and Elena Titova (supported by translators Sergei Gogin, Danila Nozdryakov and Olga Turina) is doing its job in a country that takes literature seriously. There are almost as many memorials to Pushkin, who is a god here, as there are to Lenin. Dunedin City of Literature, which I represent, can point to numerous literary markers, including brass plaques in the Octagon. Wellington has its

seafront walkway honouring authors, while smaller centres work to promote local talent through festivals and discrete readings. Yet national authorities struggle to put a writer on a stamp let alone commission a statue to one. At the bottom of the world writers must learn to enjoy the freedom that invisibility brings.

Our literate population largely regards art as part of the entertainment industry rather than as a catalyst for personal and social growth. It does not occur to us that, in every recorded society, art arrived shortly after mankind discovered fire, that it predates agriculture let alone capitalism, that art must therefore be more central to becoming and to being human than many more "practical" activities. For me, language is nothing less than the history of being human, and art is generative: it helps the consumer to be more than a consumer, to become more fully themselves. In Ulyanovsk, the day after I was interviewed on television, I was approached by several workers on their way home; we spoke briefly, in broken English, about poetry. Yes, they do things differently at the top of the world.

"Dunedin City of Literature, ... can point to numerous literary markers, including brass plaques in the Octagon. Wellington has its seafront walkway honouring authors, while smaller centres work to promote local talent through festivals and discrete readings. Yet national authorities struggle to put a writer on a stamp let alone commission a statue to one. At the bottom of the world writers must learn to enjoy the freedom that invisibility brings."

My Ulyanovsk UNESCO City of Literature project, *the church that is not there*, is organically divided into a literary triptych. In the left "panel", *resurgent trees*, lyric fragments were inspired by the 1905 and 1947 clockwork figurines made by the Morozovs and now displayed at the Ulyanovsk Regional Puppet Theatre. The central "panel", *roll of honour*, references Russian poets. The right "panel", *Sakharov meets Oblomov (1943)*, imagines that the (future) creator of the bomb, who was working at an Ulyanovsk cartridge factory, visits Oblomov in the (former) house of the author Goncharov.

Together, the triptych offers a Cubist portrait of the Russian people (well, of *some*). I may (not) be aware that I have something to say but I need to find a way of saying to be a writer rather than an evangelist.

In Ulyanovsk I realised that to make a poem is to have, however fleetingly, a conversation with the dead. Every word has been invested with meaning by the millions who are no longer with us. This is true even if the poem is determinedly contemporary in vocabulary and technique. The act of writing is a ritual (more so in Russia than in New Zealand) and a ritual is an attempt to control the unknown. Language is revelatory; listen, it will tell all of us more than we thought possible. ■

Economics *of* Creativity

***Paula Browning** considers what it means to have a goal of making government policy based on evidence in the creative field.*

Back in the days of Sixth Form Certificate and University Entrance, I studied economics. I must have been okay at it given that I was awarded the school's prize for the subject that year. A basic knowledge of economics can be useful when working with government, if only to be able to counter-argue when economists try to get all "economic" on policy. Only looking at economics doesn't give you the 360degree, fullcolour picture of the value of the creative industries, but this hasn't stopped MBIE (Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment) from taking the most recent micro-step in the long haul that is the review of the Copyright Act and engaging a group of economists to look at whether having copyright law causes creators to create. While a goal of making government policy based on evidence is laudable, what constitutes evidence and what are the right questions to be asking, can – and should – be debated.

From the many conversations I've had with writers I can't recall anyone telling me that the first thing they did when they sat down to write was to consult the Copyright Act and make sure they were happy with the legislation. There are many factors that determine if, and what, someone will write, but copyright law isn't one of them. A quote from the CLNZ Writers' Earnings Report is a useful reference here. When asked why they wrote, authors said:

> *Having a passion or love for reading, writing, literature, books or stories was the most stated reason for starting to write. 21 per cent of writers said that they had always wanted to write or had always been writing or creating. Other main reasons for starting to write were:*
> - *A general desire to write or share stories;*
> - *Work/occupation creating opportunities or aspirations to write;*
> - *Attending workshops, courses and universities; and*
> - *Being inspired by others, such as writers, family, poets and teachers.*

No mention of copyright law in that list – and there's a good reason for that – authors, like musicians, game developers, documentary makers and other creative people, want to bring stories to readers and to audiences. Being able to earn from their work (and it is "work" – creative output meets the definition) is not something that should be called into question.

While MBIE is preparing its economics

report, the Ministry of Culture and Heritage (MCH) and Treasury have been looking at how culture (and wellbeing) might be embedded in the Living Standards Framework (LSF). Treasury explains the LSF as a policy tool that:

> *looks across the human, social, natural and financial/physical aspects of those things that affect our wellbeing – the "four capitals". It is a tool that emphasises the diversity of outcomes meaningful for New Zealanders, and helps the Treasury to analyse, measure and compare those outcomes through a wide and evolving set of indicators.*

The consultation being undertaken with MCH is seeking input on whether New Zealand should have a fifth capital – culture – or whether cultural outcomes should continue to be considered within the other four capitals which are Natural Capital (Sustainability/ Kaitiakitanga), Social Capital (Connectedness/ Whanaungatanga), Financial/ Physical Capital (Prosperity/Ōhanga/Whairawa) and Human Capital (Care and Reciprocity/ Manaakitanga). Submissions to the discussion paper on the LSF closed in September and CLNZ, NZSA and PANZ will be working to ensure that MBIE is alert to the next stages in the development of the LSF.

The disconnect between government agencies on their respective work programmes is one of my great frustrations in the advocacy role that CLNZ has. There is a little (very little) consolation in the knowledge that this doesn't only happen in Aotearoa.

The creative industries in Canada have just experienced a very similar policy process that was at cross purposes. The review of the 2012 changes to the Canadian Copyright Act – which have extracted so much value from the Canadian publishing industry – was split between two government committees. The Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage has reported to government through a (funnily enough) cultural lens, and recorded that the Copyright Act changes have severely damaged the creative industries and further change to legislation is needed to restore balance in copyright in Canada.

However, the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology, looking at the creative industries through a predominantly economic lens, has produced a report which is, in parts, totally at odds with the Heritage Committee.

Where does all this leave New Zealand writing and publishing? With plenty of work to do!

It is not an exaggeration to say that a simple stroke of a policy pen could change the landscape for our industry, and not in a good way. At a time when "fake news" is becoming more prevalent and our local media agencies are struggling to survive, a strong publishing industry is critical for telling our stories. As we head into the 2020 election, get to know your local candidates and their policy positions on arts, culture and creativity. If they're not supportive, well, you know what to do … ■

Playing the Long Game

In October, ***Paula Morris*** *gave a keynote speech at the Copyright Symposium. We are pleased to share an abridged version of that speech here.*

Kia ora tātou. I'm Paula Morris and I'm a writer. This means I'm an artist, and an inventor. It also means I'm a business. A small one, but give me time. I'm an opportunist, an entrepreneur. I'm not a charity and I'm not a hobbyist. I create things, and some of the things I create I sell.

I'm a New Zealand writer – and this is not the best kind of writer to be. The average income for a writer in New Zealand is around $15,000 a year, less than the minimum wage. Most of us need to have other jobs, because for writers of literature, you can never count on a steady income. This isn't unique to New Zealand, of course. Most writers in every country need to have other jobs. Kafka worked in an insurance company. T. S. Eliot worked in a bank. The late Toni Morrison, a Nobel Laureate, worked at a university.

New Zealand is a very small market. In book terms we are considered one of the "minor English-language literatures", which means the big English-language markets are not particularly interested in buying our work. As a publisher here once told me, the publishers of the "big" English-language literatures want to sell rights, not buy them.

For New Zealand writers this means that many of us are contained within our small local market, and in that market we're competing with books published in London and New York. That containment is much more likely to occur, of course, if we're writing about New Zealand people in New Zealand settings – in other words, creating a local literature that speaks to our readers here and helps chart our imaginative landscape, and explore what's unique and important in our culture and society.

These are the business conditions of our writing and publishing world. For New Zealand writers, we must apply our creativity to more than writing our books. We have to hustle, to make the most of what we've created. As an example, I want to focus on one of my books, and the ways in which I make money from it, and the way I can leverage it to get other opportunities and broaden my prospects.

Writers of literature are playing a long game. Unlike booksellers and publishers, our business partners, we don't have to meet targets and consider what to delete or return. Without our creative work, they're no longer in business, and without *them* it's harder for us to take our goods to market. But our long game is really, really long. We create something and then we can keep working it, keep

identifying opportunities. Beyond that, we hope that our work will outlast us. It's our legacy.

For me, a writer without children, it's my only legacy.

My real legacy is a novel like *Rangatira*. The book is based on a true story – of my Ngāti Wai tūpuna Paratene Te Manu, who went to England in 1863 with a group of rangatira. He was painted by Lindauer in the mid1880s. Paratene's life intrigued me, as it spanned the 19th century. As a young man he fought with the legendary Hongi Hika in his musket-heavy campaign of devastation. Paratene Te Manu was baptised a Christian in the 1830s, and was one of the last owners of Hauturu, or Little Barrier Island, evicted by the government in 1896, not long before he died. He was a man who was born into an entirely Māori world and died as an outsider in his own country.

He left a short oral history of his life, translated by James Cowan, some letters from his time in the United Kingdom, and some recorded testimony at the Native Land Court. These were the fragments from which to construct a story. Although Paratene Te Manu and Lindauer almost certainly did not meet in person, I decided on a linking narrative that places them in a studio together in Auckland in 1886. This was inspired by the notion that Paratene and Lindauer were both non-native English speakers, strangers, in New Zealand at the end of the 19th century.

Before I wrote *Rangatira*, it didn't exist. I created it with the two great tools of the creative writer – language and imagination – and with the addition of a great deal of research in libraries, archives and physical sites in New Zealand and England. A lot of time was spent trying to work out the puzzle of what the story was, and how to write it. It took me about nine years to do this.

So a lot of time on R and D, and support as well. Investment, in fact, from other people and organisations. Tulane University in New Orleans, where I was teaching for much of the time I was researching the novel, awarded me three separate grants to travel to the United Kingdom for research in Birmingham and London. Tulane did this because supporting faculty to publish books meant increasing its research profile, rising in the national rankings, and attracting the best possible students willing to pay $US50,000 a year for tuition.

The Sargeson Fellowship in Auckland also invested in me to write this book. In 2008 it gave me a residency for five months and a stipend, so I could complete the New Zealand research for the book and get a lot of the manuscript written.

Penguin Books invested in me as well. They carried the full expense and financial risk of publishing a novel like *Rangatira*, including paying me an advance on royalties which might not earn out.

Since *Rangatira* was published in 2011, I've earned money from it. Radio New Zealand adapted the novel for broadcast, and this ten-part series ran in 2012 and again in 2017. The novel has sold almost 4000 copies here in New Zealand, which is a good figure for a local work of literature, especially one that is Māori in content and focus. It won our national book award in 2012, which came with a $10,000 prize. Penguin sold rights to a German-language publisher in 2012, so I sold another few thousand copies there.

Every December I receive money from the Public Lending Right (PLR). Currently there are 162 copies of *Rangatira* in public libraries in New Zealand. In 2018 the rate was $3.61 per copy, so if that remains the same this year I will be paid a little shy of $585 for the novel.

> *"I'd like us all to do what we can to protect, bolster and support creative copyright."*

Copyright, to me, and to thousands of other writers around the world, is our primary way of earning money from the work we create. Without it, we'd be working for free, and which business thrives when its profits are ransacked, appropriated or redirected? I've read some of the arguments against protecting copyright, and find many of them ignorant or hypocritical. Copyright stifles creativity. I've heard that. Well: not mine. It rewards my creativity. It is the wage of my creativity; the dividend. The money I get from the PLR every December is my annual bonus.

The great news for me in October was the announcement of the first books to be translated into te reo Māori for the Kotahi Rau Pukapuka initiative from Auckland University Press. Most of the news stories focused on the Harry Potter book that will be translated. But the first New Zealand novel to be translated will be *Rangatira*. It will be published in 2021, publication, and have a new life in te reo, I believe, ten years after its first reaching a whole new generation of readers.

It's eight years since *Rangatira* was published, and it's still selling.

Rangatira is my calling card. It is a book taught at universities around the world, in indigenous and post-colonial literature courses. Scholars publish essays and theses about it. It's the reason I was invited to an Indigenous Writers Symposium in Canada and to university symposia in Melbourne and Brussels. It's one of the key reasons I was asked to join the Māori Literature Trust and to speak in our National Māori Writers hui.

So I'm not the kind of writer who sits at home fuming because I'm not making a living wage from my books. I look for opportunities – business opportunities, and creative ones, and the blurred zone that exists between the two. This is what I mean by playing the long game. If you're a writer of literature in New Zealand, then you will not see your book in every Paper Plus in the country.

Instead, you will do what you can to find a place for yourself and the work you create. This will take a lifetime. Writers should be able to reap the fruits of their labour. We don't owe our culture a favour. Other moneymaking businesses need to pay us, because like them, we want to earn money, and should earn money, because not only are we in the business of creation, we are the creators.

I'd like us all to do what we can to protect, bolster and support creative copyright.

People invested in me to create *Rangatira*. The result has been many windows opening, many connections with readers around the world, many discussions and revisions of our history. Let's invest in our art and artists. In doing so, we invest in our businesses as well as our culture. We make things possible when we encourage and enable our creative people to create. ■

Award *Alchemy*

As coordinator of the 2019 CLNZ/NZSA Writers' Awards and Research Grants, ***Libby Kirkby-McLeod*** *emailed many applicants with disappointing news. She hopes to make up for it here.*

In New Zealand, many writers rely on winning fellowships, grants, prizes or awards to top up their incomes, to allow time to write, to build their reputation or to get a project off the ground. But what happens in that mysterious process called "judging"? What is it that the judging panel is looking for? And why, ask many authors, don't I ever win?

The best answer to that last question came to me from writer Mike Johnson: when it comes to fellowships, grants, prizes and awards almost everyone who applies loses. It's just how they work. Forty-seven or 67 or 107 entries; one or two winners. But it's not hopeless – you can't guarantee a win but you can put in your best application. I talked to experienced writers and judges Joan Rosier-Jones and David Veart to find out what you can do to ensure your next application is your strongest yet.

Rosier-Jones has judged many short story competitions over the years and has been involved in awarding the Ashton Wylie Mind Body Spirit Award. She says the most common mistake is not submitting exactly what has been asked for.

"If the application requires a sample of the intended work, make certain you have something substantial to offer," she advises.

And stick to the point. "If it is a literary competition, yarns and autobiographical material do not work. Length is also important. If the competition asks for a maximum of 3000 words, a story of 100 words is not going to win, no matter how wonderful it might be."

Rosier-Jones reminds writers that all the information you give matters, whether it's about yourself or your writing project, and it needs to be relevant to the specific application. David Veart, who has been part of awarding the Sargeson Fellowship and the CLNZ/NZSA Research Grants, agrees.

"In all awards it is the writing that I am looking at and this includes the introductory material if required. While not as important as the writing sample it is still the author's work and I do judge it informally," he says.

> *"Rosier-Jones reminds writers that all the information you give matters, whether it's about yourself or your writing project, and it needs to be relevant to the specific application."*

Veart often sees applications which treat comments, summaries and personal sections on the form as if they are a second thought. Or worse, authors using those areas to complain about life as

a writer.

"There is usually a limit on the length of a writing sample; on the entry form you are being offered a chance at a few more words, so treat it seriously and at the very least you will have a warmed-up assessor reading your main work."

Your best chance of receiving a writing award lies in continuing to develop as a writer.

"The writing is above all else," says Veart. "The main question I ask is: do I want to read the next chapter? And do I want it right now!"

Fluency with language, lack of clichés in style and content, a narrative that draws her in, writing that is unique, these are all things Rosier-Jones says she will look for when judging. They are what a reader looks for too. This is especially important if you are restricted by the number of words you can submit.

"Character development often suffers from the small number of words available – a character who can speak to me convincingly despite the limitations of the format can influence the position on the judging table," says Veart.

So do your research, take your time with the full application, continue to improve your writing, and keep your NZSA membership active because NZSA resources will help in all these areas. There is a leaflet guide about applying for grants and funding applications available on the NZSA website exclusively for members to download. NZSA run the National Writers Forum and other events to upskill, and your local branch will often offer courses or events on writing.

"If the winner/s are published read the stories. Learn from them – not to imitate but to find out what works. It is ironic that so many people want to write short stories, but few read them. My advice is to read, read, read in the genre you wish to work in. Again, not to imitate but to see what works and what does not," advises Joan.

Most of all, if you don't win, don't give up. Success in writing takes perseverance.

"As a judge [of the 2019 CLNZ/NZSA Research Grants], the margin between the shortlist and successful applications this year was tiny. In other years, the unsuccessful applicants may have received a grant. Keep writing, the application will be that much better next time," says Veart.

And David Veart, like most successful authors, talks from experience. He didn't win the CLNZ Writers' Award the first time he applied. Tessa Duder has also said she applied six years in a row for the Choysa Bursary before she was awarded it. Whether you are successful or unsuccessful in your next application, you are in good company. ■

Interactive Storytelling

Furthering her chosen career path in narrative game design, ***Erika Cabrales*** *attended an inspiring conference.*

At the New Zealand Game Developers Conference (NZGDC) 2019, I went from knowing nothing about the gaming industry, to knowing nearly everything. Through an opportunity generously provided by New Zealand Society of Authors, I attended informational and inspiring talks which were tailored to the culture of the industry, the technical side of game development and the narrative structure of interactive media.

The programme was spread over four days. On Wednesday, we were treated to one morning and one afternoon workshop, with different alternatives based on what we wanted to learn about. I attended the "Writing with Ink" workshop by Jae Stuart, who coached us through the programme Ink, where a narrative designer uses simplified code to create an interactive story. In the afternoon, I went to "Marketing your Game Systemically", taken by Tim Ponting who went through the ins and outs of using code to integrate methodical marketing that would be used by the players.

Thursday and Friday were the days where the convention truly picked up. To start, opening remarks were made by Cassandra Gray, the current NZGDA Chairperson. Jacinda Ardern also provided a video message commenting on the growth of the games industry. The keynote presenter and special guest, Emily Grace Buck, is a game narrative designer from America who touched upon the culture within the games industry and how everyone can work to change it for the better.

After that, wonderful food shared with a plethora of friendly gamers from Invercargill, Auckland universities, as well as from PikPok, a game developer company based in Wellington. Then on to the various talks I attended throughout the day.

In the session titled "Skábma – using Sámi mythology to tell indigenous stories in games", Marjaana Auranen delved into the game she was developing in her company which utilises Shaman drums as both weapons and tools that are integral to the narrative.

"Workers' rights in New Zealand's games and screen industry" was a panel discussion consisting of Stephen Knightly, Cassandra Gray and Emre Deniz. They discussed the "Hobbit Law" and explained the changes coming in 2020 to benefit contractors.

"QA: What do they even do?" featured

developers Lucy Weekley, Brett Roark, Kelly Marquand, Zach Weir and Zea Slosar, and delved into the nitty gritty of Quality Assurance for a gaming company. Slosar aptly described it as, "think of the worst game you've ever played and imagine playing it five hundred times", so it's not quite as fun as everyone may think. "The folklore of video games: using narrative design to create player agency" was presented by Nick Jones, an AUT lecturer, and explored the use of environmental and adaptive narrative design techniques within a game, using *Bloodbourne* as an example.

Saturday was Student Day, the last of the four-day programme. Hosted by Victoria University, a series of talks was presented tailored specifically for people like myself who are only just starting out in their career. From unplanning your career (pursuing a creative career may not always go the way you want it, and instead may end up somewhere better than intended) to how-to narrative design portfolios, to even being passionate about what you wish to do in life – there was no end to how exciting the speakers were in their chosen topics. Nearly every talk had an inspiring speaker in their own unique way, providing both personal experience and optimism for a successful career in the creative industry, despite the gruelling process involved.

All-in-all, the NZGDC was an absolute treat. The food was mouth-watering, everyone was friendly and the talks were invigorating. I encourage anyone curious about the gaming industry to attend next year, because the experience is well worth it. ■

Passionate about *Speculative Fiction*

Exciting times on the science fiction and fantasy front, writes ***Carolina Herrera****, CoNZealand's volunteer Press Assistant.*

Wellington is the place to be next year if you write fantasy, science fiction or horror, thanks to CoNZealand, the 78th World Science Fiction Convention (Worldcon), which is being held from 29 July to 2 August 2020.

Worldcon has been bringing fans, authors and artists together since 1939 but this is the first time ever that it will come to New Zealand, and has been enthusiastically welcomed via a YouTube video by Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern.

CoNZealand offers Kiwi writers a rare opportunity to network and share ideas and creativity with more than 2000 people from around the world, all of them passionate about speculative fiction.

But what is CoNZealand exactly? And why should writers get excited about it?

It will be one of the biggest conventions Wellington has ever seen, featuring hundreds of events – exhibitions, workshops, panel talks and competitions – spread across the Michael Fowler Centre, TSB Arena, Shed 6, the West Plaza Hotel and the Intercontinental Hotel. It's not limited to science fiction, but celebrates all speculative fiction genres, including fantasy and horror.

While there'll be cosplay and themed dances, as you can expect at most conventions, Worldcon has a more academic approach with a strong focus on engagement. It is also more literature-centric than Armageddon.

You will be able to learn from top authors such as George R. R. Martin, author of *A Game of Thrones*, who will be Toastmaster, and the Guests of Honour, American authors Mercedes Lackey and Larry Dixon.

You will also be able to attend the Hugo Awards ceremony – presented annually for the best science fiction or fantasy works, these are the most prestigious literary awards in the field.

In addition, CoNZealand will host New Zealand's 41st national science fiction convention, including a ceremony for the Sir Julius Vogel Awards, which recognise excellence in science fiction, fantasy, or horror works created by New Zealanders and New Zealand residents.

While many fans are thrilled to visit Middle Earth, our members are already telling us they are looking forward to experiencing the local culture.

We want to build a programme that will showcase our local authors alongside the international visitors, and Māori and Pasifika speculative fiction writers in particular. Pacific futurism and climate fiction are among the themes suggested for our programme. You can make suggestions of other topics and panel

members you'd like to see via our website (see below for more details).

So, how can you become a part of this platform that will raise New Zealand's profile on the science fiction and fantasy stage worldwide?

CoNZealand is a not-for-profit organisation, run entirely on the passion of volunteers. All attendees and participants need to buy an attending membership, which gains you access to the full programme of events over the five days.

To get even more involved, you can become a volunteer, a panel contributor, launch your book or set up a desk in the Dealers Hall. Here's some key information to note:

- Everyone who wants to participate in the programme needs to have purchased an attending membership first. Memberships need to be bought in advance, from our website: https://conzealand.nz/registrations

Payment plans are available.

- Be quick as prices will rise in February. Memberships are selling fast, and we may have to close sales early if we reach venue capacity.
- To participate in the programme, fill in the form on our website: https://conzealand.nz/programme-participants This includes activities like book signings and readings, as well as panel participation. Keep in mind places on the programme are not guaranteed, but we'd love to see your ideas.
- To arrange a book launch, please contact our Publishers Liaison, Jan Butterworth, on jan.butterworth@conzealand.nz and provide her with contact details of your publisher.
- Sell your books in the Dealers Hall: https://conzealand.nz/information-for-dealers
- Join the crew! If you want to volunteer to help with organisation of the con, either pre-con or at-con, register here: https://conzealand.nz/conzealand-needs/volunteers

To find out more about what we're working on, sign up for updates on our website, join our Facebook community group (where you can ask questions of crew as well as other members), or follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. To get a better idea about what might be included in the programme, take a look at what happened in Dublin, Ireland, for the 2019 Worldcon: https://dublin2019.com/whats-on/programming/guide/ ■

PHOTO: JACOB MADSEN ON UNSPLASH

Down the *Editing Funnel*

When do you know your manuscript is ready for submission? ***Caroline Barron*** *looks at different kinds of editing.*

You've finished your first draft and you're *pretty sure* your manuscript is ready to submit to a publisher or agent. Who do you turn to and what do you ask for?

Having canvassed publishers, agents and editors, the resounding chorus is that, for many writers, it's a mystery what

happens at editing level.

"My clients generally don't know the different kinds of editing," says editor Simon Minto. "The general assumption is that the editor fixes the spelling mistakes and that's it. Many can be shocked at the suggestions they get back."

There are three kinds of editing: developmental editing or manuscript assessment, copy editing (or line editing) and proofreading.

If we think of editing as a funnel, developmental editing – big picture or conceptual editing – sits at the wide open part at the top. Here, an editor (or manuscript assessor) will read your work and supply an eight to 12 page report assessing the unique strengths and weaknesses of your work in terms of standard fiction elements including plot, character, point of view, setting and theme.

"The common mistake in developmental editing is the lack of an overall shape or arc," says Minto. "This should be present in almost any form of writing, whether it's a biography, a technical paper, or a thriller."

A developmental editor will also consider your audience and how well your work fits within its genre.

"Do your research," says Louise Russell, acquisitions editor at Bateman Books. "Research which publishers are publishing which books. Talk to people – what are they interested in reading about?"

Dr Paula Morris, writer and associate professor of Auckland University's creative writing programme, says that lack of depth in point of view is the problem she encounters most.

"Point of view often disappears or is reduced to explicit 'thoughts'," she says. "Action plus dialogue is a screenplay, not a novel."

Nadine Rubin Nathan, of High Spot Literary Agency, says that most manuscripts she receives aren't ready to be submitted to publishers. She advises those writers to pay for a manuscript assessment and come back with a more polished draft.

Developmental editing or a manuscript assessment is great for those who have already utilised beta reader feedback (no, family members do not count) to complete several drafts.

Note too that NZSA members can apply to win a manuscript assessment through its CompleteMS Assessment Programme, or pay a subsidised rate for a StartWrite appraisal.

Once the big picture editing is done you can move down the funnel to where it narrows, where copy editing (also known as line editing) sits. This type of editing untangles the text at a sentence level such as addressing syntax, word choice, phrasing and active vs passive language. It is at this level that lapses in consistency are addressed. A copy editor comments on the manuscript using track changes functions, which the writer can query or accept.

If you've got a publishing contract this is usually part of the process (at the publisher's expense). But if you're a first timer looking to sell your book or secure an agent, then you'll want to use a copy editor to get your manuscript as clean as possible.

"In terms of copy editing, there are two common issues I come across," says editor Nicola McCloy. "The first is the shambolic bibliography … and the second is overly complex design work within raw documents. Most formatting has to be stripped out before the designer

works their magic, which can be time consuming and costly."

Once you've polished your manuscript at a sentence level you can slide down to the narrow neck of the funnel, where proofreading sits. Traditionally, proofreading is exactly that – *the reading of the proof* – the final edit once the book has been formatted. A proofreader will scour the document for spelling, language and formatting errors – basically anything that may have slipped through the previous edits. A proofreader may work on hard copy or on screen.

If you're a writer readying your manuscript for submission, it's vital to put your work through this process, too. If you sign a deal this is covered by the publisher, but if you're not there yet, you either pay a proofreader to do the job, or ask a favour of a grammatically-pedantic friend. You could also join a writers group (physical or online) and offer to swap services with another writer.

"Proofreading," says Minto, "is often around usage and poor knowledge of grammar. Very few writers really know how to use commas correctly. The use of commas is critically important. When used properly, it means the prose is formed into its grammatical parts and will be easier to read."

The recurring issues Morris identifies include incorrectly punctuated dialogue; speech tags too late and/or propped up with adverbs; and, again, misuse of commas.

Finally, a note on the writer/editor relationship. The first rule of editing, the Typographic Oath, is *do no harm*.

"A good editor will always have your back and want the best for both you and your manuscript," says McCloy. "Engage with your editor, talk to them about why they've suggested things and, where you feel it's necessary, push back. We're not a bunch of sadists who enjoy making you feel bad – we just want to make sure that the work you produce is the best it can be."

Once you've travelled through all three stages of the editing funnel, you should have a professional manuscript that has progressed through several drafts. Now, and only now, are you ready to submit your golden, gleaming work to a publisher or agent. ■

WHAT DOES IT COST?

- Manuscript assessment: For an 80,000 word manuscript with a New Zealand assessor expect to pay $500–$800. List of reputable assessors here: www.elseware.co.nz/NZAMA/
- Copy editing is trickier to price, depending on whether the manuscript needs a light or heavy edit. Copy editors may charge per hour ($50–$80), per 1000 words, or per project. Most will do a free 500-word sample edit to ensure you are a good match and allow them to price the job.
- Proofreading: expect to pay between $40–$60 per hour.

HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT EDITOR

Research an editor's experience, industry connections and, most importantly, the genres they specialise in. NZSA maintains a list of editors and assessors: https://authors.org.nz/list-of-assessors-and-editors/ Make sure you are clear on how much the project will cost and exactly what the fee covers. NZSA recommends that you get at least three separate quotes for your work confirming price and timeframe.

Why Is It BAD?

***Jackson C. Payne** ponders what constitutes bad writing and how to learn from it.*

Beautiful railway bridge of the silv'ry Tay!
Alas! I'm very sorry to say
That ninety lives have been taken away
On the last sabbath day of 1879,
Which will be remember'd for a very long time.

I was once told in a writing class that the last word of the first line of a poem is often the most important, hanging there as a way to get to the heart of what the poet is trying to say. For William McGonagall, the author of the above verse, he's moved that idea to the title, because 'The Tay Bridge Disaster' is exactly that.

Google search "the world's worst poem," or words to that effect, and this one comes up at the very top. And there is a lot wrong with it: the irregular meter, the bland sentiment of "very sorry to say" when so many lives were lost (even though it was seventy-five, not ninety), that the numerical value of 1879 must be read as "eighteen-hundred-and-seventy-nine." But my favourite bit is the violence of "Alas!" With each reading I get to that exclamation mark and laugh. Its interruption in the rhythm from the first line is so shocking that I can't help it, which was definitely not intentional.

"I find it remarkable that McGonagall's horribleness is evident even to those of us who don't read poetry," writes Ben Lerner in his very good essay, *The Hatred of Poetry*. "Recite this poem to a friend who has no interest in – or significant experience of – verse, who claims to know nothing about it, and I wager that she will concur, whether or not she can specify its failings, that it's at least very, very bad. In this way McGonagall succeeds in failing, because his failure can be recognized more or less universally and does in this sense produce community."

'The Tay Bridge Disaster' has many of the trappings of bad writing but despite Lerner's assertion it is near impossible to agree on what constitutes it; McGonagall himself produced this poem and presented it to the world without any irony, with the belief it was at least good enough to recite in public. Although I'm not trying to suggest this disproves the existence of bad writing, it does highlight that writing, as with reading, is almost entirely individual. That is why I'm interested less in finding a consensus on bad writing and more on what we can learn from our subjective experiences of it.

I read modestly, about two or three books a month. For this reason I got into the habit of putting down a book if I didn't like it, moving on to the next so I could enjoy my reading time. But I have started questioning this practice, instead forcing myself through books I don't like, always asking the question, *Why? Why don't I like this book? Why is it bad?*

Earlier this year I read Eve Babitz's *Sex and Rage*. It was a recommendation from a friend whose taste I trust, one of my favourites, Joan Didion, had championed her, and *The New Yorker* described the book as "a mesmerising account of a young woman trying to decide what to do about her own premonitions." Not light praise.

The story follows Jacaranda Leven, surfing and partying through 1970s Los. She has a relationship with a movie star, becomes an addict, moves with the rich and famous while living in a house without a couch. After a chance meeting with a very successful literary agent, who just so happens to have read one of Leven's pieces, she's asked to write a book, which she does seemingly by accident while crippled by drunken anxiety.

PHOTO: NATIONAL LIBRARY OF SCOTLAND

My critique isn't reserved to what I would call clumsy authorial intervention. It extends to the sentence level, to Babitz's use of analogy: "Max's laugh was like a dragnet; it picked up every living laugh within the vicinity and shined a light on it, intensified it, pitched it higher. It was a dare – he dared you not to laugh with him."

A dragnet that shines a light and dares people.

Or: "The waves were 15 feet high and roared like lions and volcanoes."

Lions roar, volcanoes might roar like lions, but waves don't roar like volcanoes roaring like lions.

I wanted to take out my red pen and mangle the page, fix it. With every mixed metaphor and case of authorial coincidence, I had to fight the urge to close the book and pick up the next one, which I knew would be better. It's a hard thing to do, to force oneself through something unenjoyable.

But what it can do, like my experience of Babitz's *Sex and Rage* and McGonagall's 'The Tay Bridge Disaster,' is highlight the gap between intent and actuality. Because despite the elevation of the writing, how widely revered or individually mocked, all works sit somewhere between intentionality and realisation. And that is universal.

According to Socrates, no poetry can express the truth: "Of that place beyond the heavens none of our earthly poets has yet sung, and none shall sing worthily." In other words, a poet can never transcend the boundaries of the words themselves. But what's important, both in reading and in writing, is that we try. ■

A *Poetry* Memorial

*As **Lesley Marshall** finds, there is still no justice for assassinated Maltese journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia.*

16 October 2019 was not only my son's birthday – it also marked the two-year anniversary of when Maltese journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia was killed by a car bomb as she was driving away from her home. Ever since then, PEN has been relentless in its efforts to seek justice for her.

In April 2018 PEN members in New Zealand joined with others around the world in signing an open letter protesting against the lack of investigation into Galizia's death. In the same month 45 international journalists collaborated to complete her investigative work, publishing it as *The Daphne Project*. Later that year an award was established in her honour – the GUE/NGL Award for Journalists, Whistleblowers and Defenders of the Right to Information.

But still there is no justice for her.

Daphne Caruana Galizia was a journalist who reported on political events in Malta, particularly government corruption, nepotism and patronage, and its association with organised crime. This made her a target – she suffered death threats, her house was set on fire and her family's pet dogs were killed. The perpetrators of these violent acts against her have never been identified, so they remain unpunished.

She also endured legal threats from the corrupt politicians she investigated, and when she died there were 43 outstanding libel cases against her. She had no access to her bank account at the time of her death, since it had been frozen due to one of those cases – which had been lodged by Malta's Finance Minister. Some of the lawsuits against her are still live, though now they are targeting her husband and sons.

The Malta Independent wrote that, "For many people, looking up her blog was the first thing they did each day, and the last thing too. Now there is just emptiness. A silence that speaks volumes." Both the daily and the weekly version of her column were published as blank pages in the days following her assassination. The title of her last blog post before leaving in her car read, "That crook Schembri was in court today, pleading that he is not a crook," and ends with the line, "There are crooks everywhere you look now.

The situation is desperate." Sadly, it still is.

In the first days after Galizia's death a spontaneous memorial to her was set up opposite the Valletta law courts – initially based around flowers left by schoolchildren. Officials quickly took steps to have the memorial destroyed. Undeterred, the public set it up again, and included on it calls for her murder to be properly investigated. Again it was destroyed, and over the two years since officials have continued to demolish it, each time it has been reinstated. As PEN stated: "The unusually hostile stance of the government in repeatedly clearing the peaceful memorial in front of the Courts of Justice – which calls for those who ordered Daphne Caruana Galizia's assassination to be brought to justice – has frightening implications for freedom of expression and association in Malta."

As a response, PEN has created a poetry memorial for her, with poets around the world sending in poems to honour Galizia and her work. The initial call was for a body of poetry to be submitted before the 16 October anniversary, with many of the poems being read out during a vigil held outside the Maltese High Commission in London, and these have now all been published on the PEN website, creating a memorial that cannot be destroyed by venal Maltese politicians.

PEN would be delighted to receive more poems for the memorial, and requests that writers observe the following criteria:

- Under 100 words
- Three stanzas maximum
- The poem should make some reference to Daphne Caruana Galizia, the destruction of her memorial, or the case itself.

You can submit poems to sahar.halaimzai@pen-international.org

To read poems already submitted, including the poem below, visit https://pen-international.org/news/daphne-caruana-galizia-poetry-memorial. ■

BONEHOUSE

You may have taken my body,
scattered me with your bomb
for my son to find, part by part,
but my body was only a bonehouse.

I was more than skin and sinew,
more than blood and cells,
more than brain and heart.
I was questions and I was answers,
I was truth and I was freedom.

Listen well,
all you corrupt men:
I was love.
Listen again:
I still am.

Nuala O'Connor

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

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