

The SA Writers' Centre Goes Bush

For members, groups and writers on the Yorke and Eyre Peninsulas staff and Board members of the SAWC will be heading your way this March.



Sharon Kernot

We'll be visiting Port Lincoln on Saturday, 19 March, where writers **Sharon Kernot, Ray Tyndale, Malcolm Walker** and local writers **Diane**

Hester and **Alison Manthorpe** will present a series of panels, workshops and talks. A week later, Saturday 26 March, **Jude Aquilina, Steve Evans** and **Ken Vincent** will be in Moonta, where they'll team up with Copper Triangle writer **Roger Norris-Green**.



Ken Vincent

The visits will comprise morning and afternoon sessions. Two panel discussions will start the day off – 'Books I Love and Books I Hate' and 'Tips for Writing and Publishing' – followed by lunch. The afternoons will consist of a series of presentations. Port Lincoln will host three two-hour workshops: 'Poetry' with Ray Tyndale, 'Writing Short Stories' with Sharon Kernot and two one-hour spots with Malcolm Walker – 'Marketing Yourself' and a 'Meet the Author' talk. Moonta's afternoon workshops



Jude Aquilina



Steve Evans

comprise 'Poetry' with Jude Aquilina, 'Short Stories' with Steve Evans and 'Self-publishing: Production and Promotions' with Ken Vincent.

Sessions will cost \$20 for the general public, \$15 for pensioners and students, and \$10 for Eyre Writers and SAWC members. Bookings can be made through the SA Writers' Centre on 8223 7662 or via email at sawriters@sawc.org.au



Ray Tyndale

Focus on Your Project with Peter Bishop



Peter Bishop, former Creative Director of Varuna, has been acknowledged by many of Australia's published authors for his invaluable

help with their books and publication, both fiction and nonfiction. Peter is now freelancing and would like to trial a professional development program for aspiring writers ... with our help. We are fortunate to have Peter offering his expertise for a week in May, working with two groups of 6 writers who will in turn give him feedback on his proposed program. He writes:

These will be writers working on, or thinking about, a major project. In the

two groups I'd be working with writers on the basis of their projects: the what and the why of the project; encouraging them to write something new from the heart of the project; exploring and extending possibilities; thinking about what it is we are doing when we sit down and start to write. I'd like this to be a selective process – mainly to make sure the writer is capable of the long-term commitment a major project requires. I'd ask for a couple of paragraphs about where the writer believes the work is coming from and a sample of writing.

Potential participants will have to commit to a week's focus on their work and attend two sessions on consecutive weekends (beginning Sat 21 or Sun 22 May) from 2 till 6pm and one mid-week (Wed 25 or Thurs 26 May) from 4 till 7pm.

Cost: \$110 for the three group sessions. Please email your expression of interest to director@sawc.org.au

One-on-one Consultations

For anyone not able to participate for the week, Peter has made himself available for one-on-one consultations on Tuesday 24th and Friday 27th May, from 10am till 4pm. **Cost:** \$55 for a 45 minute consultation. Please contact the SAWC to make a booking and submit 10 double-spaced pages of your work.

Pizza & Wine Networking Dinner

In honour of Peter's visit we will be holding a networking dinner at the SA Writers' Centre on Friday 27th May from 6pm onwards. **Cost:** \$33 includes pizza and wine.

Centre Information

Thanks to the following people and organisations who donated books or journals to the Centre:

- **Adeeb Kamal Ad-Deen**, *I Say the Letter and I Mean My Fingers*, HarperCollins, 2011.
- **Eleanor Ahern** for *Trust a Thief*, Eleanor Ahern and Ben de Quadros-Wander, Era Publications, 2011.
- **Ian Crouch**, *The Shaping of Destiny: A Pyrrhic Victory – Volume I*, Eloquent Books, 2010.
- **Finger Magazine**, iss. 1, January, 2010.
- **FreeXpresSion**, vol. XVI, no. 11, November, 2009.
- **Frank Gemignani**, *Selected Poetry: Notes on Life - Part I*, 2nd Edtn. 2010.
- **Rosanne Hawke**, *Marrying Ameera*, Arabic Scientific Publishers, 2010.
- **Meanjin Quarterly**, vol. 70, no. 1, Autumn, 2011.
- **Wagga Wagga Writers Writers Inc**, *fourW twenty-one NEW WRITING*, fourW press, 2010.
- **The Write Angle**, iss. 34, February, 2011.

Once again our APOLOGIES

If you sent us an email between February 8-11 and didn't receive an answer it's because our internet connection went down yet again. Please send us the item again if it's important. We apologise for any inconvenience but the problem was beyond our control.

Have you got a hearing impairment?

The SA Writers' Centre is a deafness friendly location. We have a Hi FM Hearing System which works both as an amplifier and a loop system that people with a hearing aid can tune into.

SA Writers' Centre Life Members

- **Max Fatchen**
- **Gillian Rubinstein/ Lian Hearn**

Our Thanks

Thanks to Henry Ashley-Brown, Lyn and Tony Brooks, Sarah Clay, Jo Dey, Coie, Nicki and John Dikkenberg, Joanna Goldsworthy, Cathy Jones, John Malone, Gay Sanderson, Joel Shayer, Anne Timoney Jenkin, Ken Vincent and Margaret Visciglio for their assistance in mailing the February newsletter to all our members.

Disclaimer

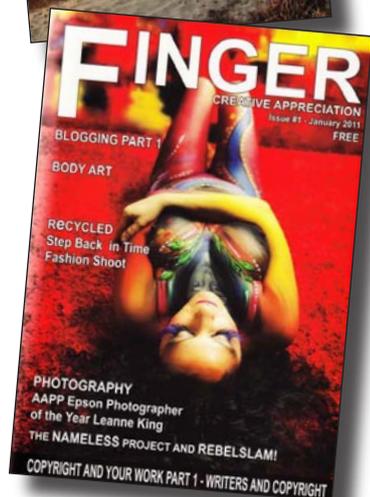
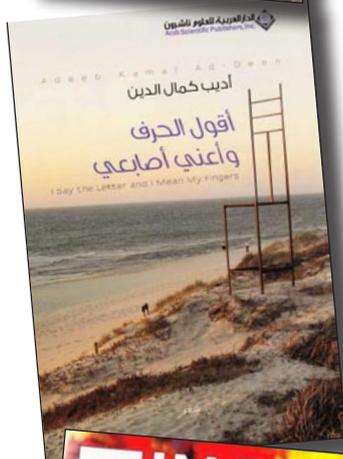
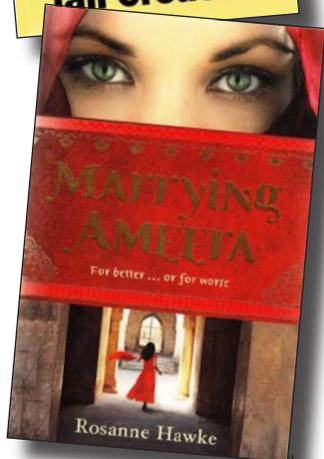
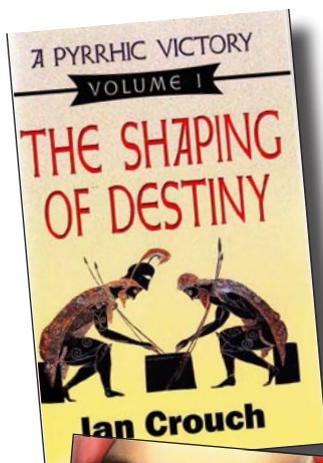
The information in this publication is presented in good faith as a service to SA Writers' Centre members. While the information is believed to be correct, the Centre takes no responsibility for its accuracy. No liability is accepted for any statements of opinion or any error or omission. Advertising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

Wheelchair/Lift Access to SAWC

Wheelchair access to the SA Writers' Centre is available at the 26 York Street rear entrance. Alternatively, come in from Rundle Street via Caffè Brunelli, proceed towards the toilets and take the door to your left at the end of the passage to reach the lift.



Thanks to SAWC sponsor:



April Workshops



Successful School Workshops

with Peter McFarlane

Saturday 9 April, 10am-1pm

Writers can earn a substantial supplement to their royalty income by working in schools.

Peter McFarlane will share five of the many

workshops he has run in a host of schools over the past 18 years. These poetry and prose workshops will be fun, practical and non-threatening as he takes everyone through the processes he uses and explains the teaching, learning and professional principles that inform them.

Peter McFarlane's 26 books include novels, short stories, poetry and works on the teaching of poetry and fiction. *My Grandfather's Horses* is a collection of poetry; the co-edited *Blue Light Clear Atoms* a poetry anthology for senior students; *Rebecca the Wrecker* the first of seven books for younger readers; *Kart Girl* the third in a trio for ten to fourteen-year-olds; and *More Than a Game* the most recent of four works for young adults. With a previously long and successful career as a teacher, Peter was very much in demand around Australia as a speaker and workshop leader in schools and universities when he became a full-time writer.



What Every Writer Should Know – And Most Never Do

with Colin Falconer

Saturday 9 April, 10am-1pm

Do you want to write and have trouble just getting ideas? Do you start well and then your stories don't go anywhere? Are you bewildered by the very idea of how to get published when you've finished something? This workshop is designed to tell you the things you absolutely have to know, but which many writers never learn. Such as the 'elevator pitch' and why authors should understand this concept at least as well as screenwriters. Learn too the vital connection between *Cinderella*, Shakespeare and *Atonement*, and why this knowledge will make you a much better writer – perhaps even get you published. You'll also find out the one thing no creative writing course ever teaches – but that it is essential to understand – the publishing industry.

Colin Falconer has been a professional writer since 1984. He started life as a freelance journalist and worked in TV and radio before becoming a full-time novelist in 1989. His twenty novels have been published in the US, UK and Australia and translated into seventeen languages. His latest novel, *Silk Road*, will be published by Corvus Atlantic (UK) in October.



Plotting Your First Fantasy Novel

with Jody-Ann Brockelbank

Saturday 9 April, 2pm-5pm

The challenge facing fantasy writers is how to beguile the well-seasoned genre reader. Stories need to be engaging as well as entertaining. In this workshop you'll learn how to structure a compelling story, using structure, characterisation and world building. A key feature will be the use of conflict and how the interaction of characters, events and environment builds a suspenseful plot.

This workshop is for those who want to start a fantasy novel or have a partial or completed draft. Exercises are designed to develop a firm grounding for a new work or to gain skills in improving an existing work.

Jody-Ann Brockelbank was one of ten selected nationally for the inaugural Orbit-Queensland Writer's Centre Manuscript Development Program for Speculative Fiction Authors in 2008. She is now working on a novel in this same trilogy. She has an Advanced Diploma in Professional Writing at TAFE for highest overall achievement in professional writing and is currently an instructor for the subject 'Write Fantasy' in the same course.



Photo courtesy
Sunday Mail

Writing Winning Media Releases

with Miranda Starke Young

Saturday 9 April, 2pm-5pm

Journalists receive hundreds of media releases every day and, like publishers, can take just seconds to decide whether to read on. In this session, learn how to write an effective media release for your book or launch and what to do with it once you have. Draft media releases may be submitted in advance for critical feedback to sawriters@sawc.org.au

Miranda Starke Young is an award-winning marketing communications professional and *Sunday Mail* columnist. She has extensive experience on both sides of the media fence as head of Marketing and Communication for the Art Gallery of South Australia and as a producer of breakfast and morning radio programs, among previous roles.

Workshops: \$55 for SAWC members or \$77 for non-members

Bookings: 8223 7662, sawriters@sawc.org.au or www.sawc.org.au

The Nonfiction Market with Stephanie Marsden

Nonfiction covers the who, what, why, when, where and how of real life. Get it right and you'll find it sells more readily than fiction. The key: research your market, assess its needs correctly and, quite simply, fulfil them – in a well-presented manner and always on time.

Perform like a professional. When researching a topic that demands solid facts and figures, don't be afraid to contact the media liaison or corporate communication departments of the universities, institutions, manufacturers or retailers you consider most useful. That's what they're there for, and they can supply you with loads of data and even organise interviews with the most relevant and quotable experts, such as the senior researcher, chief statistician or national buyer.

Articles

Consider this. If you decided to derive your income from making kitchen cabinets, you would not construct a unit to your own design, in the colour and dimensions of your choice, and then expect to find a customer and kitchen to match, would you? The same applies to nonfiction articles. Find out what the editors require, check that they accept freelance submissions and construct your product accordingly. Saves time, effort and cost for all concerned.

First step: look at current issues of men's and women's magazines, trade and special interest periodicals, freelance opportunities in newspapers and the latest writers' marketplace yearbooks.

Avoid duplication: ongoing market awareness is vital. It pays to study back issues for subjects and angles already covered.

What will sell? Tune in to trends and pick a different approach to a subject that has already proved enduringly popular, one that still has impact and contains the essential 'you' factor.

Explore: relationships, sex, image, diet, lifestyle, rags to riches, travel, motivation, inspiration, human drama and frailties,

survival skills, personalities, how-to, secrets of, problem solving and anything humorous. Unless you are a qualified expert, avoid giving serious advice on money management and health issues. Let those who are qualified speak for you. Their contribution, which must be acknowledged, costs nothing and enhances your reputation.

Books

First step: regularly browse the titles in the retail stores; not only what is currently on offer, but the bookshop 'biggies' and 'bombs' over the past year or so. As with articles, submit your idea to the appropriate publishers and have a polished synopsis and the first two chapters ready to go. These are your showcase. Compilation books can work well; remember *Life's Little Instruction Book*, Dr R Brasch's attractive *Why Do We Celebrate ...?* series and Anne-Marie Eliseo's gem *Adelaide Mostly for Free?* The possibilities are limitless.

Before mailing your article or book idea check that the manuscript:

- carries an irresistible title such as: 'All men are animals: Ten ways to turn yours into a pet' or 'The paranoid's pocket guide: one hundred things you never knew you had to worry about!'
- is submitted to the right person at the right address; a preliminary phone call will supply that information and should be followed up with a fax, email or brief letter stating what you have to offer. Multiple submissions are okay at this stage.

If invited to submit your manuscript, ensure it:

- is the required length
- contains no spelling or grammatical mistakes (unless deliberately added for effect)
- opens with a paragraph that grabs attention
- has a logical beginning, middle and end, with components an editor can remove easily or alter to fit the format.

It should be accompanied by a brief covering letter stating 'as requested' and, if applicable, giving a little of your background, and a stamped self-addressed envelope. If specific submission instructions have been given, they must be followed. Otherwise:

- prepare a title sheet giving your address, contact numbers and word count
- include the title, your name and page number written as 1 of ... on the top of each page and either more follows or END at the bottom of the pages
- double-space your work, allowing wide margins
- present your printed manuscript, one-sided only, on white A4 paper

Tips

Adopt the same style, tone and structure of articles in your target magazine and make sure your subject doesn't clash with the advertisements ('Board games are back!' next to a Playstation advert).

Humorous titles like 'When kitchen gadgets go bad' and 'How *not* to ...' (make your own wine/pack for that European holiday) can appeal in the right market.

Short cut: to obtain case histories or anecdotes, use 'letters to the editor' and radio talkback. Explain that you're putting a book/article together and provide a PO box number. Respect privacy. Aim high, by all means, but when establishing a track record as a freelance writer new to the marketplace, no publication or payment is too small. Be bold and create work – perhaps offer yourself as a columnist.

Get organised: keep updated files on your chosen subject, fed frequently with information and ideas from radio and TV, newspaper or magazine cuttings, library sources and your own research. This helps you to stay more focused and at the same time flexible if a change of angle is needed. Check facts and figures obtained second-hand. Don't squander time and sweat on no-hope ideas.

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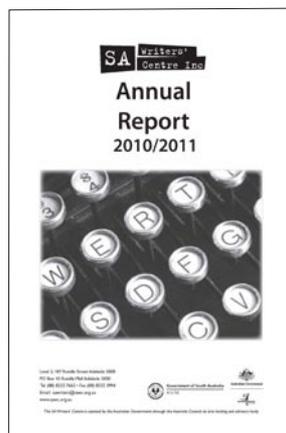
2011 Annual General Meeting

Notification of the SA Writers' Centre 2011 AGM

Please join us for our Annual General Meeting (AGM) on **Monday 16 May, 2010**. The AGM will be held in the Seminar Room of the **SA Writers' Centre**, 2nd Floor, 187 Rundle Street, Adelaide at **7.30pm**. You may also like to join Staff and Board Members at Caffe Brunelli from 6pm.

Call for Nominations

The SA Writers' Centre Board consists of eight members. The term of office is two years, with four positions becoming vacant each year.



Continuing members for 2010 are **Steve Evans, Mag Merilees, Ken Vincent** and **Sandy Verschoor**. Nominations for the four vacant positions must be made in writing, by email or post and addressed to the Director. Nominations must be received by **4pm, April 29, 2011**.

Nomination forms will go out with the May newsletter. Individuals nominating must be financial members.

The New Website!

... continued from page 4

Discipline yourself: set aside 'writing time', always keep a notepad and pencil near to jot down ideas and information immediately; keep a sent-and-sales diary and all receipts; and use log books to record writing-related phone calls and travel. The internet can be a time waster or saver, depending on how you use it.

When you hear or spot a witty expression, or a fascinating fact or item that can be adapted, add it to your writer's toolbox. For example: 'from sperm to worm', 'when you look at a speaker, your comprehension improves by thirty per cent', 'from all crawls of life'. No clichés unless, of course, you play with them. And use a good thesaurus to harvest a sparkling vocabulary. If your customer is paying, say, \$500 for 1000 words, that's 50c a word. Make every one count and you'll be asked for more.

Stephanie Marsden is a former freelance journalist, columnist, digest writer and radio producer.

This article originally appeared in *The Handbook for South Australian Writers*, published by the SA Writers' Centre.

The verb to 'google', so speedily incorporated into our lexicon, says volumes about not only the speed at which we adopt new technologies but also about how we use language to familiarise ourselves with new worlds. Prior to Twitter previous usage of the word 'tweet' was confined to my referencing a rather syrupy ShaNaNa song and the occasional encounter with a sparrow. To paraphrase a more accomplished musician (feel free to disagree) – 'The times they are a changin'' – and it's a brave new virtual world out there, a world of tweets and blogs, Facebook and Google. Whether we like it or not there's a generation of writers and authors coming through who know nothing else. We may lament the steady encroachment of print-based technologies, the rise of ebooks and e-publishing, Kindle, the plethora of blogs out there on the web, the 420 characters limitation inflicted upon us by one Mark Zuckerberg, the often drab inanities of Twitter, but the inevitable is upon us. But, as an acquaintance of mine used to say, 'Get with the program, chicky-babe!'

Bearing in mind all of the above, the SA Writers' Centre has been exploring these new(ish) technologies, testing the waters to see what works and what doesn't, in order to meet these challenges, improve our efficiency and increase our membership.

So we're rather chuffed to announce, finally, that our new website, launched by Peter Goldsworthy, is now live and online. Why not take a few minutes and have a look at what it offers members?

We'll slowly be adding new features during the year as we build on its strengths and eliminate weaknesses. Most new sites go through a teething period and we welcome feedback from our members. Let us know what you think – what works, what doesn't and what extra features you'd like to see incorporated.

We will keep you informed about changes through the newsletter and hopefully have a short but regular column dedicated to explaining some of the site's new features.

You'll find our homepage at <http://www.sawriters.org.au/>



One Woman's *Two and a Half Men*

Lia Weston investigates some of the dos and don'ts of comic fiction.

As writers, one of the few statements we can probably all agree on is that art is subjective. There's wriggle room within that definition, too; you can appreciate (or learn to appreciate in some cases) the work that goes into a particular piece even if you can't stand the end result. I, for one, will never enjoy clown portraits, regardless of how lovingly they're airbrushed onto velvet or rendered in cross-stitch so minute the artist went blind doing the red nose.

Comedy, though, is a different beast. There is no slow burn in comedy: it is governed purely by instinct. A pratfall, a double take, a whiplash comeback – if these things make us laugh, they do so instantly. What makes assessing it tricky is the fact that what appeals instinctively to one person doesn't necessarily appeal to the next: one man's *Black Books* is another man's *Two and a Half Men*, just as one person's *The Catcher In the Rye* is another person's *Twilight*. (I can already hear people shrieking at the comparisons. Forgive me.)

You can imagine, then, my mixed emotions at being asked to write a piece on comic fiction. Flattered? Absolutely. Beset with terror? That too. After all, no one can claim authority on *what-makes-things-funny* – at least, no one who has taken their medication. With that in mind, I offer: Lia Weston's 'Totally Authoritative Guide on What Makes Things Funny.'

Comedic writing works best when the language is precise. Flabby prose only distils the joke. I'm a huge fan of dry humour, and it's the combination of polite, crisp language and the needle sting violence of the punchline that make it work so well. The shock heightens the humour. Bill Bryson, by all appearances a mild-mannered gentleman who enjoys countryside rambling and campaigning against littering, is so good at this. To wit (ho ho!):

The fog had gone. The air was now still and clear, and the sky was bright with stars ... It was all most fetching, but I was far too cold to appreciate it. I dug shiveringly through my backpack and extracted every potentially warming

*item I could find: a flannel shirt, two sweaters, an extra pair of jeans. I used some woollen socks as mittens and put a pair of flannel boxer shorts on my head as a kind of desperate headwarmer, then sank heavily back onto the bench and waited patiently for death's sweet kiss.*¹

Though the imagery of Bryson transforming himself into a human laundry basket may make you smile, it's the last six words that deliver the gasp and blow. (He's also an expert at knowing exactly when to curse, and why it's an excellent idea to use such language very, very sparingly. This is probably why Christos Tsiolkas doesn't write comedy – intentionally, anyway.)

Regardless of style, comedy needs a kernel of truth at the heart of it – it's the anchor that lets us appreciate the joke. Even in absurdist comedy, which some people would consider to be defined purely as having no relationship to real life, there's a

'The sharpest observations, the ones that make us wince even when we're laughing, are those that skewer not only our failings but our sad attempts at covering them up.'

core of genuineness we need to be able to relate to in order to make it work. Arthur Dent is the human anchor for the *Hitchhiker's Guide* series – the straight man in the dead parrot sketch, if you will. Without his Everyman link, there's little for the reader to relate to and the writing would be in danger of collapsing under the weight of its abstraction. Absurdity itself is tricky to get right: too much of it and the work becomes bloated and weak; too little and people will wonder what the hell you're on about. There's a very fine line between free-form comedy and incoherent rambling, and truth is the lifeline that connects them. (A priest, a donkey, and an Irishman walk into a bar. 'What'll you have?' said the bartender. 'Don't ask me,' said the donkey, 'I don't even know what I'm doing here.' See? Very easy to get wrong.)



Similarly, use 'quirk' with caution. So often, How-to-Write advice says, 'Make your characters quirky! They need to be compelling! Wacky! Or else no-one will like your book and you'll never get published and you'll be working at the department of health and social services forever and even your go at editing the departmental newsletter will pass by unappreciated and unnoticed and it's all because your characters aren't *quirky enough*.' I repeat: quirk with caution. Your reader can spot a fake instantly. Characters who have moments of genuine oddness can be compelling, but someone who likes to lick batteries at lunchtime and only wears cerulean blue purely for the sake of it comes off as a complete prat on the page. *Who is this wanker?* the reader thinks, vowing to kick him in the shins if they ever meet him. This is not, ideally, the reaction you want as a writer. Unless you're writing a novel about a complete prat.

It's hard to write truthfully about people without being a serious observer of the way they behave and, more importantly, the way they *think* they behave. Hypocrisy is a goldmine. The sharpest observations, the ones that make us wince even as we're laughing, are those that skewer not only our failings but our sad attempts at covering them up. To use a TV reference, BBC's *The Office* was a perfect character study of one man's struggle with self-perception versus reality. We love self-deluded characters. We practically salivate when observing puffed-up buffoonery, waiting for the moment that they're taken down, preferably with force. To sharpen your pen, cultivate intense curiosity. Once you've figured out why people do the things they do, you can start

to make fun of it. Austen was a master of this and I'm always surprised that she's not listed as one of the great comic writers more often ... but that's another essay.

Nothing makes my heart sink like an 'HILARIOUS LoL LoL OMG SO TRUE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!' email forward. Guaranteed to fulfil none of the subject line promises, it tends to fall into one of two camps: 'women are smart and funny, while men are crap at taking directions' (if it's from a woman) or 'why beer is better than a woman' (if it's from a man). Thinking of unleashing your own home-grown tellin'-it-like-it-is just-sayin'-insert-painful-and-dated-cliché-here comedy on the world? Then I beg of you: don't tell gender-based jokes.² Look around you. 'Life coach' is considered a legitimate career choice, Tony Abbott leads a political party and doggles exist: we live in a very odd world. Surely 'My husband couldn't find the milk in the fridge with a map and a sign that says, "Here Be Milk"' is not your A-Grade material. While we're talking clichés, the following phrases should also be struck from your lexicon forever: talk to the hand; I don't think so; you go, girl!; go [insert name], go [repeat name]; actually, any variant with 'go' in it. (And if you're someone who forwards anything with 'LoL' in the subject line, please stop. Your friends may never admit it, but they're currently deleting your emails without reading them.)

Comedy is not desperate for your approval, and the reason why most amateur stand-up is singularly awful to watch is because the person on stage is dying for you to laugh. 'I'm wacky! Check out my funky hair! Please, love me! Wait – don't leave! Did I tell you the thing about how a beer is better than a women?' It's the same with the written word. We've all seen examples of a potentially perfect punchline ruined by lumpy, heavy-handedness. It's like riding a wooden cart along a bridge and watching pieces of it fall off, ricocheting into the crevasse below. Throwing more stuff at it (bigger reactions, another layer of hilarity) doesn't work. 'Mayday! Mayday!' the reader thinks. 'We're going down!' Yes, you are, and you're taking everyone with you. Do not over-explain the joke. Actually, don't explain the joke at all if you can avoid it. Comedy that goes overboard appeals to five-year-olds and the kind of people who line up to see *Big Mama's House IV: Still Milking A Dead Horse*. Presumably,

neither of these people are your target audience. Good comedy requires a delicate touch. (I won't say 'subtle' here, as not all comedy is subtle. Again, an essay for another time.) Convoluted circumstances where you force your punchline into existence don't work. If your humour is dry – in addition to Bryson and Austen, Stephen Fry, Garrison Keilor and Lisa Lutz are very good examples of this style – it's always better to pull back. Clever humour is organic, and the best kind sneaks up into the work and sucker-punches you. (There's that violence thing again.) Similarly, use metaphors and similes sparingly. Lately, I've been finding writers who seem to have only just stumbled upon the power of the simile and are so excited by it that they'll use it as a comedic crutch again and again and again. ... like (something) on acid! ... like (celebrity) on a bender! (Though not a book, pick up any issue of *Women's Health* and choose a page at random; I can almost guarantee there'll be one on there.) When used correctly, a well-chosen metaphor can be devastating. Over-use them, however, and your reader will think they're the only weapon in your arsenal. Your work will be devalued as a result.

'To sharpen your pen, cultivate intense curiosity. Once you've figured out why people do the things they do, you can start to make fun of it. Austen was a master of this and I'm always surprised she's not listed as one of the great comic writers ...'

Finding your own voice is really important. Imitation may be the sincerest form of flattery, but it's deeply irritating if all you can be is a pale copy of the original. Everyone has influences that shape and form their style – your job is to take the best aspects from yours and marry them with your individual take on life. As a character trait, I believe optimism is helpful to comedians (which is odd, seeing as so many of us suffer from depression); the ability to see the funny side in pretty much anything is a boon to the comedic writing process. The mantra, which has gotten me through many difficult moments, is that an awful day today will make an excellent anecdote tomorrow. The trick, of course, is to work out which anecdotes people

actually want to hear about, choose your words very carefully, and deliver the joke without expecting applause. Remember: no one likes comedy that begs. These notes are just a rough guide to what I've personally found works – and, more importantly I think, what doesn't work – in my own pieces. In the end, all I can write is something that makes me laugh, and if someone else finds it funny, that's a bonus. Plus, there's nothing more gratifying than someone telling you that you're funnier than *Big Mama's House*. Praise I'll take to the grave.

¹ Bill Bryson, *Notes From A Small Island* (Harper Perennial, 1997)

² If you take only one thing away from this article, let it be – *don't do this!*

Lia Weston was born in Sydney but spent her formative years in Adelaide. After an adolescence at an all-girls' school and a stint at Adelaide Uni, she found herself facing the world with nothing more than an Arts degree and an irrational hatred of berets. In between subsequent hospitality and administration work, she honed her writing skills by ghosting her friends' essays and creating rhyming couplets to entertain her father. Lia then set herself a challenge to finish her unfinished novel. The result, *The Fortunes of Ruby White*, was published by Simon & Schuster in July, 2010.

Thank You

The SA Writers' Centre would like to thank *Finger Magazine*, Omnibus Books and Wet Ink for donating material for our O-Week Student Promotion Kits.

What's On



Poetica March Program

Poetica is presented by Mike Ladd on Saturday at 3.05pm and repeated 3.05pm on Thursdays.

- 5 Mar Guillevic: features the life and work of French poet Eugene Guillevic
- 12 Mar Gull in a Green Storm 1: part 1 of a double feature on Francis Webb.
- 19 Mar Gull in a Green Storm 2: Francis Webb continued.
- 26 Mar Both Worlds: selected works by American nature poet, Mary Oliver.

Website: www.abc.net.au/rn/arts/poetica/

Tues 1 Mar: Friendly Street Poets

Poetry readings will be held from 7 pm until late at the SA Writers' Centre. It's open mike with a 4-minute time limit, including introductions. \$5/\$4 conc. with free wines & juices. Guest Poets: Sharon Kernot (SA), Candy Royall (NSW) and Desiree Gezentsvey (NZ).

Tues 1 & Tues 15 Mar: New Writers' Group

Campbelltown Writers' Group will host their first meetings from 6-8pm at the Campbelltown library, 171 Montacute Road, Newton. Membership is free and open to all ages. To register your interest in joining this newly formed group please contact Ursula Hickey on 8366 9293 or uhickey@campbelltown.sa.gov.au

Tues 8 Mar: FSP Rebel Slam

Poetry readings: 3 mins at mike; 2 rounds; 2 pieces. Book in at 7.00pm for 7.30 start. Entry \$5/\$4 conc. Tuxedo Cat@Electra House, 131 King William Street.

Sun 13 Mar: Hills Poets

The next meeting will be from 3.30 at the Crafers Inn. Please ring Jill Gower on 8339 5119 for any other information you may require.

Thur 17 Mar: North Eastern Writers

North Eastern Writers Inc. meet on the third Thursday of the month in the Tea Tree Gully Community Hall, Memorial Drive Tea Tree Gully at 7:30 pm. Prospective members welcome. Ring Ken Vincent on 8380 5348

Fri 18 Mar: Book Launch

You are invited to the launch of *Arriving Adelaide*, a collection of Migration stories by Susanne Blaschka, Diana Chessell, Rita DeLuca, Cate Stellar and Alexander Theodoros, edited by Diana Chessell. A publication of the 'writing migrant stories' group of the SA Writers' Centre. 4.00- 6.00 pm at the Atrium, SA Writers' Centre. RSVP & enquiries: 0415 052 174.

Tues 29 Mar: Andy Griffiths

Meet and hear multi-award winning and thoroughly entertaining children's writer Andy Griffiths present 'What Body Part is That?'. The only fully illustrated stupid guide to the human body featuring the biggest, the smallest, the funniest, the stupidest and The Most Disgustingest parts of your body. 6.30pm - 7.30pm, followed by book signing, at the Domain Theatre, Marion Cultural Centre. Free event. For bookings call 8375 6855.

Sun 27 Mar: Book Launch

Ginninderra Press warmly invites you to the launch by Ann Nadge of the book *Facing Cancer* poems by Brenda Eldridge, 2pm at East Avenue Books, 53 East Avenue, Clarence Park.

Mon 28 Mar: Book Launch

Valerie Volk's new verse novel *A Promise of Peaches*, published by Ginninderra Press, will be launched at Mostly Books, Mitcham Square, Belair Road, Mitcham at 7.30 pm by the Honorable Grace Portolesi, Minister for Multicultural Affairs. For catering purposes, please reply to vjvolk@bigpond.net.au

Mon 28 Mar: Book Launch

SAWC members and friends are invited to the launch of Jo Gilpin's book titled *On the Breast Handbook. Planning for Breastfeeding Success*. This book, written for the general public, aims to increase parental knowledge and confidence by re-examining what makes breastfeeding work well for mothers and babies. 6-8 pm at SA Writers' Centre. Refreshments Provided. All welcome.

Imagine a world without books or film, or any of the arts for that matter ... what would it look like?

The SA Writers' Centre supports published and emerging writers. We also assist and encourage new writers. Who knows when we'll discover a South Australian Stephen King or the next Vogel winner?

As a not-for-profit organization we welcome tax deductible donations or bequests. Why not become part of a 'Giving Scheme' to support one of our programs?

If the SAWC isn't here to encourage, support and nurture writers, who will be?

Desert Writers 2011 June 25-July 2

Walk and write the Larapinta Trail near Alice Springs, using the senses and elements to access the creative power of your writing. Supported camping and walking through spectacular desert country with Indigenous guides, taking in the Beanie Festival and finishing at Hermannsburg community. Medium fitness required. www.intotheblue.com.au or phone 0414 929 768.

Opportunities

Carclew Grants

Applications are now open in the 2011 scholarship program for artists aged 26 and under for arts activity/projects occurring 1 July-31 December 2011. Closes **Tuesday, 15 March**. Details at www.carclew.org.au

The Write Angle

The Write Angle literary magazine is seeking submissions of unpublished fiction and nonfiction, opinionated articles on subjects of general interest, nostalgic writings, amusing personal anecdotes and poetry. Please send hard copy to Coral Hartley, Publishing Editor, 210 Pinelands Road, Sunnybank Hills, QLD 4109 or email chspoton@optusnet.com.au in the body of an email, no attachments. Payment in cash or kind for quality unpublished submissions.

Cordite Poetry Review

Submissions now open for *Cordite 36: Electronica*. Visit www.cordite.org.au/ submissions for full details.

New Novelists' Circle

This group is for anyone who is writing a novel and wants support. They offer a nurturing environment for writers at different stages of achievement. Meets 2nd Monday of each month, 6.30pm-8.30pm at the Box Factory, City. \$2 fee. Contact Sandra at msogrady@bigpond.com or phone 0416 260 185

Arts SA Funding Round

Independent Makers & Presenters: Project Grant applications close **Friday, 18 March**. The Richard Llewellyn Arts & Disability Trust grant closes **Thursday, 31 March**.

Gay & Lesbian Contributions

Contributions sought – stories and anecdotes of personal journeys – for a paperback anthology. Contact soniafriedrich@virginbroadband.com.au

PLR & ELR Closing

Creators and publishers are invited to submit title claims to the Public Lending Right (PLR) and Educational Lending Right (ELR) before 31 March, 2011. For more information visit http://www.arts.gov.au/books/lending_rights

Writer Required

Assistance required to convert a stage play into a novel. The play, about a young girl forced to marry an older man and set in Africa and Australia, is already written and edited and will be produced in June. Contact James at dakthonidit@yahoo.com.au

Australia Council Sessions

Staff from the Literature Board of the Australia Council will be available for one-on-one meetings at the SAWC on **Thursday 24th March**. Half-hour sessions will be available to discuss any questions you may have about applications in the Residencies, New Work, Fellowship or Publishing and Promotions categories.

New Writers' Group Formed

Campbelltown Writers' Group will host their first meetings from 6-8pm at the Campbelltown library, 171 Montacute Road, Newton. Membership is free and open to all ages. Contact Ursula Hickey on 8366 9293 or uhickey@campbelltown.sa.gov.au

Finger Magazine – Submissions

Finger, Adelaide's funky new free street magazine, is looking for poetry, prose and artwork for its next edition. For details go to www.fingermagazine.com.au

Faber Academy (Sydney)

Allen & Unwin are presenting a 6-month 'Writing a Novel' course with authors Kathryn Heyman and James Bradley. Course begins **March, 2011**. For details go to <http://www.allenandunwin.com/faberaacademy/coursedetails.htm>

Poetry Submissions Wanted

Blemish Books is seeking suites of poetry (15 - 25 poems) for iss. 2 of their Triptych Poets series. Submissions close 31 March. For details go to: www.blemishbooks.com.au/triptych.shtml

Bus Shelter Poems

The Booranga Writers' Centre wants writing about or inspired by the city of Wagga to be displayed in bus shelters around Wagga. Closes **14 March**. Selected poets will be awarded \$200 each. Go to <http://www.wagga.nsw.gov.au/www/html/5202-public-poetry-contest.asp?intSiteID=1>

Young Writers' Opportunity

Express Media will present National Young Writers' Month in June 2011. They're looking for one young ambassador from each state to recruit participants. \$1500 for expenses. Go to <http://www.expressmedia.org.au/index.php/about/people/positions-vacant/>

CALEB Prize

The CALEB Prize for faith-inspired writing – 1st prize \$1000 – is now open. There are 3 categories: nonfiction, fiction, poetry. Submissions close **June 30**. Entry fee is \$25, plus 5 books. For details and entry forms see www.omegawriters.com

State Theatre Young Playwrights

The 2011 Young Playwrights Award (formerly Young Guns) is open to anyone aged up to twenty-five years. Submissions due 1 June. Winners each receive \$500 cash, a 3-play subscription, a week's dramaturgy on their work and a staged reading with actors. Go to <http://www.statetheatrecompany.com.au/>

Emerging Writers' Festival

Like to be a part of the Emerging Writers' Festival, as a presenter, performer, host or panellist? Email Lisa Dempster explaining what you write and why you write it at director@emergingwritersfestival.org.au

Positive Words Magazine

Next issue is seeking hard copy submissions only on any theme or on 'Winter'. Send SSAE to the Editor, Sandra James, PO Box 798, Heathcote 3523, Victoria or email positivewordsmagazine@live.com.au

Young Writer Required

Confident young writer wanted to work on story about an ultra-competitive athlete who gets injured at the start of his professional career. Contact Bradley at b_knights86@hotmail.com

Call for Short Film Scripts

The Film & TV Department of Adelaide College of the ARTS is seeking short film scripts by third year students for production in mid 2011. For details contact Colin Reck at colin.reck@tafesa.edu.au

Eleanor Ahern's children's book *Trust a Thief* was published by Era Publications as part of their Deep End series.

David Cookson's 'Rosa', won equal 1st prize in *Positive Words* November mini comp. His short story 'Memoir of a Home Brew Sceptic' was highly commended in the Yarram Agricultural Society's Competition and the February edition of *The Write Angle* features a centrespread of his poetry.

Mike Dumbleton's latest book *Jet-bike*, illustrated by Roger Roberts, was published by Era Publications.

Anne Jenner's short story 'Flying Arms and Barking Knees' won 1st place in the Best of Times Short Story Competition #10.

Mike Hopkins's poem 'Last of the Cat Poems' was chosen as Friendly Street Poem of the Month for December, 2010.

John Malone's poems 'Eruptions' and 'What I Saw on the Way' was published in *Alphabet Soup* [WA]; 'My New Pet' and 'Children Lost in a Fairy Tale' were published in *The Scrumbler* [UK].

Kristin Martin's poem, 'My Dearest Love', was published in *Positive Words*, February, 2011.

Bradley McCann's short story 'Slipping Away' was published in the December issue of *Connotation Magazine*.

Denis McGill's poem 'Libido' won him the 5th heat of the 2010 Poetry Slam and finished high up in the state final.

Max Merckenschlager's poem 'Encounter With Whales' was awarded first place in this year's Poets By The Sea Festival 'coastal theme' competition.

Mag Merrilees' memoir about her father, 'The Bone Garden', appears in issue 31 of *Griffith Review*, 'Ways of Seeing'.

David Mortimer's poem 'Au Fond du Temple' was published in *The Adelaide Review*, December 2010 and previously on the SA Opera website 2010.

Dorothy O'Neill's story 'Love, Clown-Style' has been published in *Aussie Stories for Women*, Strand Publishing.

Jane Paech's travelogue *A Family in Paris: Stories of Food, Life and Adventure* will be published by Penguin Books later this month.

John Sabine's essay, 'Nutrition today: the ELF and the Law', was published in the February 2011 issue (#34) of *The Write Angle*. His poem with a similar theme, 'A little will do you good', appeared in the same issue.

Annette Siketa's novel 'Double Take' received a Highly Commended in the recent Atlas Publishing Competition.

Anne-Marie Smith's short story 'A Visitor's View' was published in *The Write Angle*, iss. 34, February, 2011.

Mij Tanith's novel *Three Seasons*, set in Adelaide and the Adelaide Hills, was published online in 2010 by lesbian-ebooks.

Zenda Vecchio's poem 'Visit: Adelaide to Canberra' was published in *Positive Words*, her short story 'White Bird' in *Island*, iss. 123 and she received a Highly Commended for her short story 'The Lady Medea' in the Ethel Webb Bundell Literary Awards.

Valerie Volk's short story 'Incident on the A2' won a *Studio* fiction prize and will be published in the next issue of the journal. Her poem 'Another Doreen' received an Honourable Mention and will be published in the anthology of the Toolangi Festival's C. J. Dennis Poetry Competition.

rob walker's poem 'Plympton Gopher' was broadcast on *Poetica* in late January; his poem 'gm food' was in the online magazine *The Group*; his micropoem 'beyond black & white' appeared in *Cordite Poetry Review's* Creative Commons edition; 'slater' appeared in the *Science Made Marvellous: Earthly Matters* anthology.

Judy Wesolowski's poem 'Red Rose' won 1st place in the *Positive Words* End-of-Year Short Story and Poetry Competition.

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Mar 9: Kinglake Flash Competition ●

1st Prize £500.00 and a Kindle 3G, 2nd Prize £150 and a Kindle, 3rd Prize £50.00 and 7 runners-up at £20.00 each. All winners included in an anthology. Details at: www.kinglakepublishing.co.uk

Mar 11: The Neil Gunn Writing Competition ●

This is the 11th Neil Gunn Writing Competition for adult prose and poetry. Theme: A Wrong Turning. 1st prize £500 each category. For details see the Highland Council website: <http://www.highland.gov.uk/leisureandtourism/libraries/neilgunn/>

Mar 24: Black Dog Institute ●

The Black Dog Institute's national and NZ writing competition on 'Postnatal Depression, Men and Women - Personal Experiences and the search for real answers'. 1st Place \$2000; 2nd \$1000, 3rd \$500. Details at <http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/media/writingcompetition/index.cfm>

Mar 30: Stringybark Flash Fiction Award ☺●

The Award is for a short story (1000 words) relating to Australia or Australians. 1st prize \$500 and publication. Other place-getters are also published. Entry fee \$8.50 (discounts for additional stories) Full details at <http://www.stringybarkstories.net/>

Mar 31: Kernewek Lowender Writers' Competition ★☞

Theme is 'To Awaken in a Strange Place'. Adult Section: Entry fee is \$5 for first entry, \$2.50 each for subsequent entries. Adult short story up to 2500 words and adult poetry up to 50 lines. Prize money \$100 each. Young Writers: 12-18 yrs, max 2500 words (\$50 prize). Under 12, 1000 words (\$25). Young Poets: 12-18 yrs, to 50 lines (\$50). Under 12, to 30 lines (\$25).

April 15: Voices on the Coast ☺●

Voices on the Coast, a youth literature festival, is seeking entries for an unpublished manuscript by a previously unpublished author. The story should be aimed at children aged 8-13 years (max. 30,000 words). 1st prize \$1500, 2nd prize \$500. Guidelines at www.immanuel.qld.edu.au/voices

April 23: Positive Words Short Story & Poetry Competition ☺☞●

Short stories up to 2000 words; poetry up to 48 lines. Unpublished entries only. Entry fee 1st prize \$100; 2nd prize 12 month subscription. \$3.60 per entry (4 for \$12.00). Cheques, money orders or the equivalent in unused stamps. For entry form please send SSAE to: The Editor, Sandra James, PO Box 798, Heathcote 3523, Victoria or email positivewordsmagazine@live.com.au

Apr 29: Campbelltown 2010 Literary Awards ☞★●

Five categories according to age, ranging from 5+ to 65+. Theme is 'They were the best of times, they were the worst of times'. First prizes range from \$500 to \$200, with silver and bronze prizes valued at between \$300 to \$50. Entries must not exceed 2500 words and must have a connection to Campbelltown. For more information and entry forms go www.campbelltown.sa.gov.au and click on 'Recreation'.

Apr 30: Positive Words Mini-Competition ☺●

Poems of 10 lines or less, short stories in 100 words or less including the word 'Second' at least once. Entry fee: \$1.20 in unused postage stamps. Prize: 6-month subscription. Send to: The Editor, Sandra James, PO Box 798, Heathcote, Victoria 3523. For details email positivewordsmagazine@live.com.au

Mar 11: 2011 Kingaroy Eisteddfod Literary Competition ☺★●

Entries must be original and unpublished. Numerous categories. Prizes: ribbons, cash, prize cards. Entry fees: age classes \$5.00; open \$10.00. For entry form and competition conditions go to <http://sites.google.com/site/eisteddfodkingaroy/home>

May 20: Bush Lantern Award 2011 ★☞●

Bundaberg Poets' Society - Open Section: 1st prize \$200, 2nd \$100, 3rd \$75. Entry fee \$8 or 3 poems \$20. Junior Section for primary and secondary students. Prizes from \$50 down to \$10. Free entry. For guidelines and entry forms email Sandy at lees@fastel.com.au

May 20: Peter Cowan 600 Short Story Competition ☺☞●

Open theme. Max 600 words per story. 1st prize \$200; 2nd \$100; 3rd \$50. Entry fee: \$5 (3 for \$12, 5 for \$20) For guidelines and entry forms go to http://www.pcwc.org.au/index.php?p=1_10

May 30: Eastwood Hills Literary Competition ☺●

Category 1: Short Story (max 3000 words) 1st prize \$200, 2nd \$100. Category 2: Free Verse Poetry (max 80 lines) 1st prize \$150, 2nd \$50. Category 3: Traditional Poetry (max 80 lines) 1st prize \$150, 2nd \$50. Category 4: Memoir (max. 1500 words) 1st prize \$150, 2nd \$50. Category 4: Pauline Walsh Award for Short Short Story (800 words max) 1st prize \$100, 2nd \$50. All categories

open theme. Entry fee: \$5 per entry; \$20 for 5 entries. Guidelines and conditions at <http://hillsfaw.webs.com> or (02) 9869 2715

May 31: Boree Log Award for Bush Verse ☺●

Ballads to be written in perfect rhyme and metre, maximum 80 lines and with an Australian bush theme. 1st prize \$100. Fee: \$5 per entry. For guidelines: <http://hillsfaw.webs.com> or (02) 9869 2715.

Mar 31: Positive Words Mini-Competition ☺●

Poems of 10 lines or less, short stories in 100 words or less including the word 'Crossword' at least once. Entry fee: \$1.20 in unused postage stamps. Prize: 6-month subscription. Send to: The Editor, Sandra James, PO Box 798, Heathcote, Victoria 3523. For details email positivewordsmagazine@live.com.au

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Please note: competitions are listed in order of closing date

Key

- ☺ competition listed for the first time
- ★ competition with sections for young writers
- ☞ SA Writers' Centre holds the entry forms
- the entry form is available on the Internet

Entry Forms: ☞ Entry forms 20c each or send one business-sized stamped self-addressed envelope, plus one loose 60c stamp for every TWO competitions.

