

## OPEN MIC

### SPOILER ALERT

Alessio Arbustini

The first time I had read Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None* I was about twelve years old. I enjoyed this book since the first page, and I was so excited that I spoke about it to a friend of mine. He smirked and immediately told me the name of the murderer. At the time I didn't know, but I had just suffered my first spoiler.

In these days of continuity (TV series, cinecomics) the act of spoiling is very often considered a deadly sin, but not everyone feel it in the same way. For some people it is the ultimate act of disrespect towards a story, other people just doesn't care that much about it.

Who's right? Is it just matter of personal idiosyncrasy, or the spoiler actually ruins a storytelling? And also: is a movie that stands only on a final big plot twist a weak movie? A solid storytelling is a spoiler-proof one?

I'd like to find an answer to these questions by taking as example two narrations very different from each other: the TV series *Lost* and Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*.

It may seems a strange juxtaposition, but I believe it will be the right one for this topic.

Hush now, I won't say more. Probably I am supposed to draw the conclusions of the speech right here, into the paper proposal, but I won't. Yes, I do hate spoilers that much.

### EUROPEAN IN AUSTRALIA, AUSTRALIAN IN EUROPE

Inez Baranay

This paper offers readings and commentary from samples of my body of work.

The theme of Europe - the meaning of Europe, the experience of Europe - which I have turned to in recent years, in fiction, memoir, and essays, is present in my earliest work. It appears in my earliest short prose, published in the 1980s, some of which looked at the migrant experience; the migrant experience

is explored further in an early novel (*Pagan* 1990). My parents migrated to Australia in 1950 with me as an infant; I grew up with a sense of being a foreigner that become an essential part of my sense of self. I present readings from my work - novels, stories and memoir - that are about Europe as seen from the point of view of various characters (from my fiction) and myself (memoir and essays).

There was a kind of tribalism among Europeans in my Australian childhood. I spoke Hungarian at home, some of the others spoke Latvian, Lithuanian, Russian or “Yugoslav” and so on, but We made up an Us. Until I was in my twenties I did not think I could have a really close friendship with someone who did not have an immigrant background. With that in common you knew about things perceived and taken for granted among Us that They had no idea of. When the anglos said We they assumed they made universal statements; they simply did not perceive that they excluded Us. Their We meant We Real Australians. We remember the Anzacs. We eat meat and two veg for tea. We call London home. We put up a picture of the English Queen.

We migrant kids in Australia made up a One Europe long before we ever heard of the European Union.

I will end with some reflections on the way a sense of European identity has shaped or influenced the writing, and ask some questions about the use of English as a common language, and about Creative Writing in English by non-native speakers.

## RIVISTAPP EACWP

**Elisa Botticella & Antonio Díaz Perez**

My idea is to develop a literary app, that is an app giving his own users the possibility to download and read daily a short narrative text. A five-minuts-long story, perfect to be read in the metro or while having breakfast. Every text will be written by students from creative writing schools belonging to European Association of Creative Writing Programmes, and it will be already selected and edited by schools themselves; they will be written by most brilliant students, the voices of tomorrow European novel. At the same time, a translator team will translate the text in their own language, so that the same text will be published the same day in different european languages. The app will be paid just when downloaded, and the price of 1 euro, and it will be renewed every year. From the moment an user dowloads the app, he will receive a short story everyday. Every month will be dedicated to a different literary genre: for example, June could be the detective story month, July the thriller one, and August the travel literature month. This way we can offer a wide variety of genre, that can satisfy a big number of readers. In order to promote the app, the first day of every month a text produced by a “guest” will be presented, that is a text written by an expert who used to study or is a teacher in one of the partecipant schools. It will be a present from a famous novelist to disseminate teachings and techniques that can be learned in this institute. With this job we want to encourage reading, of short tales too, of literary texts through digital devices we use everyday to communicate ad to entertain. Moreover, by using

possibilities ou “fast times” offer for contents distribution and sharing, this platform could become a net for professional exchange between students from European creative writing schools and literary translators. Young talents who, thanks to this showcase, will be able to show their works and to have a first contact with their audience, in order to be read, judged and shared.

## USING LEARNING PRINCIPLES IN THE TEACHING OF CRATIVE WRITING

**Gale Burns**

Reviewing some new and old principles of the way we learn, this participatory session will explore how these can be best applied to the teaching of creative writing. These include the dynamics of building a safe learning environment, allowing students to review their current knowledge, dealing with past learning challenges and working with emotions.

These principles when applied can allow students to overcome past challenges such as repeating mistakes, writing blocks, discouragement and over self criticism, reclaiming for themselves the joy of writing.

## THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S FICTION FESTIVAL MATERA, UNESCO SITE AND EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE 2019

**Mariateresa Cascino**

*The world was made in order to result in a beautiful book.*

Stéphane Mallarmé

The Women’s Fiction Festival is a literary festival – the only one in Europe dedicated to women’s fiction, held in Matera since 2004.

The Festival includes: the writers’ conference; master classes held by best selling authors on aspects of the craft of writing fiction; creative writing labs (creative writing, scriptwriting, short story writing, therapeutic writing); the book market, events and readings with best selling authors and the Baccante Literary Prize.

At the international writer’s conference it is possible to meet top editors, from Italian, European and American publishing houses: Einaudi, Piemme, Mondadori, Sperling & Kupfer, Feltrinelli, Rizzoli, Sonzogno, Marsilio, Amazon, Penguin Books, Harper Collins, Faber & Faber, Simon & Schuster, Kensington Publishing, Grand Central, St. Martin Press, Bitter Lemon Press, agents, publicists in a friendly and relaxed setting.

The participants come from different countries: Italy, France, USA, Germany, UK, Sweden and more. It's a learning and networking experience where it is possible to get updates about the latest development in women's fiction, digital market and self publishing trends. During the three days of the conference, writers will meet with publishing pros, fellow authors and experts in various fields.

Every day the WFF offers workshops on the craft of writing by best selling authors to stimulate creativity, voice, structure, characterization, plottin. For writers of mysteries, thrillers and suspense, the briefings are held by crime experts and law enforcement officers, crime scene analysts, FBI agents, cybercrime experts.

At the WFF, participants can ask for personalized consulting sessions given by publishing pros.

Next edition: Equi-libri, 28th-30th September 2017

## THE GESTURE OF THE MANIFESTER FALKNER

Writing as a deadly serious, highly political undertaking.

Writing and thinking against the centre.

Talking via manifestos.

The manifesto as a document of poetic and political intent.

The manifesto as a declaration of artistic will.

The attitude of an author writing manifestos.

FALKNER investigates the gesture of the genre of the manifesto, the gesture of the manifester. The performative dimension of language, the intentional impetus of texts. Tactics of confrontation via the manifesto. Wanting to do things with words. Sentences as powerful hymns! Through rhythm, repetition and the play with sound FALKNER spurs a movement within language itself, which – true to the genre of the manifesto – relies on proclamation.

Besides these formal aspects and the possibilities of an intentional text, FALKNER is concerned especially with the attitude of the manifester: the claim of his/her nearly totalitarian view of the world and its creation. FALKNER's artistic work ethic is an absolutely clear, unprotected and hardly bearable glance onto the world, to confront oneself, to expose oneself to what is terrible, violent and repressive in the world. And to give this confrontation expression. The one who manifests is the one who does not fall silent. First and foremost, to manifest means not to be silent, but to speak. FALKNER intends to show – via a manifesto – to which extent life, violence, suffering and love are usually inconceivable behind the facades of verbal constructions. The revolutionary impetus of the manifester is the creation of an utopia as a perception of what is missing.

FALKNER will also talk about her class at the vienna poetry school (sfd): *THE MANIFEST. THE*

*MANIFESTER. To put yourself up against the wall is to play a deadly serious game...*

The class culminated in a performance lasting several hours from sfd's balcony and was titled *an angel went up in flames*.

The following year the material of this performance was used for the class *video poetry. ways of documenting performances*. It was about developing dramaturgical conceptions that facilitate the transformation of material deriving from a performance lasting several hours into an independent product (video clip, short film). The film created was a short documentary (*video poetry*, DVD, 25 minutes, vienna poetry school/materials 2010).

## PROFESSIONAL BEFRIENDING: PEDAGOGICAL JOB SHADOWING BETWEEN CARDIFF UNIVERSITY (CREATIVE WRITING MA AND BA) AND THE LANGUAGE CENTRE OF JYVÄSKYLÄ UNIVERSITY (CREATIVE WRITING COURSE)

**Terhi Forssén**

We would like to disseminate – and promulgate – the experiences gained in the academic year 2015-2016, travelling to each other's university and shadowing and participating in each other's pedagogical work.

We will present our experiences via a discussion platform and also include activities.

### Discussion

1. What we learned by:

- ✓ following each other's teaching sessions in another country
- ✓ observing creative writing students in a foreign country
- ✓ experiencing the working environment / atmosphere in differing pedagogical sessions
- ✓ participating in reading events in Finland/Wales
- ✓ translating each other's texts?

2. We will discuss the practices and exercises that we shared and now use in our own teaching practice, and will encourage the present participants to set up a similar mini-cultural and pedagogical exchange by sharing best practice and writing together.

### Activities

- a) Participants will be invited to exchange a favourite creative writing exercise with another teacher (from another country) and a favourite literature text or guide-book on creative writing.
- b) Participants will be asked to share a memory or story of an important place abroad: something unusual, strange, dangerous, cultural, or sensuous. This might be something that happened today, this week or in the past.

c) Participants will be asked to either write a short snatch of their own memory, catching descriptive detail, using the senses and thinking about the deeper implications of how places elsewhere, beyond and unknowable impinge on us – or they will be asked to write their neighbour's story, stealing and adding imaginative extras.

If time, we might ask people to think about working on a translation of the first sentence or two of each other's work.

## A POST MODERN BIOGRAPHY

**Lorna Gibb**

This paper will reflectively consider the process of writing traditional literary biography, what it entails and what is necessary in terms of narrative and scholarship to convince and beguile readership. It will go onto to look at what happens when these devices and strategies are used within fiction writing. The novel *A Ghost's Story* (Granta, 2016) used traditional biographical techniques to write an account of a fictitious character, Katie King, who nevertheless has a strong trail of historical 'evidence' to support/give credence to her historical existence.

The question of what constitutes a biography, and/or biographical writing is brought to the fore and the notion of believability, as well as established truth, proposed as defining feature. If writing commercially, while depicting and delineating the life of another or others, it is essential to engage as well as to convey, and this paper will show how biographical techniques used within fiction can be one means of doing this.

## PLAY FOR VITAL STAKES: CREATIVE WRITING IN THE LANGUAGE CENTRE

**Paul Graves**

I will discuss how L2 writers of English, university students from a broad range of academic disciplines with no explicit literary ambitions, can benefit from a creative writing workshop. I have been running such a workshop at Helsinki University's Language Centre since 2009. Participants develop not only specific writing and speaking skills but also a new autonomy in their writing voices and critical views. Furthermore, many participants find or recover a joy in writing itself when granted authority, emotional investment, and a sense of playfulness in English that they rarely experience in other language courses or in the types of writing they practice within their own fields of study. I focus on discovering best practices for participants who have stated language needs and goals chiefly in the areas of academic and professional English. I am also interested in how the workshop's language-learning goals limit, expand or otherwise alter its traditional aesthetic goals.

## THE TEACHER IN A VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT: SKILLS AND RESOURCES

**Ana Guerberof & Franco Chiaravalloti**

Since 2009, the Escola d'Esriptura in Barcelona offers two types of courses: the on-site classes and the on-line courses. The school started the on-line courses by offering the Creative writing module but due to the success of this initiative, it soon added more courses. Currently, there is a wide range of options available: Novel I and II, Short-stories I and II, Writing and Editing, and Micro-stories. One of the key advantages of the on-line courses is that students can enrol from anywhere in the world, they do not need to live in a Spanish speaking country or in a large city. As a consequence, the school in Barcelona has now students from so far away places as Singapur or Mexico. Moreover, the on-line modality offers the flexibility of completing the course any day of the week and at any time of the day. And this is specially important for adults working full time while at the same time, for example, raising a young family. For some students, this alternative might be the only one available in order to fulfil their desire to enrol in a creative writing class. Logically, it is a much sought out option for students. However, is it a viable environment for teachers? Do teachers have the same role on-line as they have in a classroom? What techniques work better on-line? What do teachers prefer? In this paper we present the results from a survey carried out among the teachers working in the on-line environment in the Escola d'Esriptura that looks to explore the similarities and differences between the two type of courses, and to find out which tools and skills are best valued among the students and teachers. In summary, we set out to gather more data on the virtual environment in on-line creative writing courses from a teacher's perspective, as well as to share some data that we have collected from the students about their preferences and opinions on the on-line environment throughout the years.

## SPREADING THE WORD: USING STORYTELLING AS COURSEWORK ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

**Tim Kelly & Alyson Morris**

In 2010 at Coventry University a collaboration between teachers of creative writing and law led to the introduction of the short story as an optional alternative to the legal case study as a form of coursework submission for assessment in the Law Department. Dr Steve Foster, Head of Coventry Law School, tracked the impact of this project over a number of years and found a range of positive outcomes: students choosing to write a story performed better vis-à-vis students who chose to write a case study in terms of literacy, accuracy and grades.

As the successful outcomes of the introduction of storytelling in the Law School became known, a number of lecturers from across the University approached the authors of this paper to trial the

introduction of short story writing in their subject areas. Currently storytelling is being used in ten different disciplines across the University as an optional alternative to or replacement for more traditional forms of assessment such as the essay, report or case study. Disciplines range from nursing, to nuclear energy to international crime and positive outcomes have not been limited to literacy, accuracy and grading, but have included increased subject knowledge, greater depth of research, increased collaboration and a general improvement in student engagement.

This paper explores the effect of introducing storytelling across the disciplines at Coventry University and in particular the impact this has had on the lecturers and students involved. It suggests ways of spreading the word about the positive impacts of introducing creative writing across the curriculum and contributes to the increasing move at University level to use varied assessment modes in order to accommodate different types of learning for a more diverse range of students.

This paper fits neatly into a number of conference topic areas in terms of its cross-disciplinary nature and in relation to “ideas, experiences, methods, philosophy, pedagogics and results concerning creativity, or teaching of writing.” It is both practical and theoretical.

## THE WORDS ARE PURPOSE/THE WORDS ARE MAPS

**Seraphima Kennedy**

Imagine you are somewhere in a lit landscape. You are armed only with these words. Where are you going?

Taking these two lines from Adrienne Rich’s famous poem *Diving into the Wreck*, this workshop aims to unblock stiff writing and fire up the imagination through an interdisciplinary combination of video, maps, music and structured writing exercises.

Using examples from contemporary poets from the UK and US, this multidisciplinary workshop will guide participants through a series of landscapes and stories.

Participants will be encouraged to write freely in response to a series of structured exercises before sequencing this into a poem. Some collaboration may be encouraged, and participants will be encouraged to read their work aloud.

## WIDER DAS GLATTE – AGAINST SMOOTHNESS

Orhan Kipcak

“The smoothness,” writes philosopher Byung-Chul Han<sup>1</sup>, is “the signature of the present. It connects the sculptures of Jeff Koons, the iPhone and Brazilian Waxing”. He further argues that there is a connection to the smooth politics of neoliberalism – scratches, fissures, even cracks are hard to bear in our culture of polishing each and everything: the rougher economic and social realities become, the more concealing and smoothing tools have to take effect. Viewed like this, smoothness becomes a hostile element.

Following this thesis, the vienna poetry school (sfd) realised an internet-based poetry class for the poetic roughening of such polished surfaces. The aim: the production of poems against smoothness, poems with built-in errors and poetic interfering frequencies – because, according to the dictum of the project, only cracks and dents reveal to us the truths hidden behind pretty appearances.

German speaking writers followed the invitation to participate in the online-class and 188 texts were produced. The class was led by Fritz Ostermayer, artistic director of the vienna poetry school, who reviewed and commented on the contributions. The participants were established and non-professional writers. The broad formal range of the texts corresponded to the very open requirements: explicitly political literature as well as experimental forms and texts that artfully celebrate imperfection; existentialist, didactic, etc. texts.

A selection of the results was visualised by media design-students of the FH-Joanneum, University of Applied Sciences, Graz under the guidance of Orhan Kipcak. The students of this university are educated in designing time-based media. Most of them specialise in animation, motion graphics and 3D-visualisation. Working with artistic or literary content is unusual for them, therefore, the project provided the students with new experiences. In a seminar, held in co-operation with sfd, they were prepared for the project. They were introduced to the text of Byung-Chul Han and to different traditions of visualising lyric poetry (projects by Gerhard Rühm, Konrad Bayer and H.C. Artmann). For creating the movies, the production and post-production studios and the equipment of the University were used. The outcome: 23 very rough short and shortest movies. They were shown already at a media exhibition of the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation and at the Cinema Next festival. More screenings are planned.

Of course, the quality of the project lies in its controversial topic that combines aesthetic and political aspects in an original way. Another advantage is its great didactic impact: it involves a wide audience – poets, writers, moviemakers, animation artists. Additionally, the application of online technology demonstrates a state-of-the-art version of telelearning in the creative field. Finally, the project is a good example for the co-operation of a non-formal creative writing institution with a university.

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<sup>1</sup> Byung-Chul Han, *Die Errettung des Schönen*. S. Fischer Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 2015.

## AGAINST EXPERTISE

**Ferdinando Morgana**

When in March 2016 AlphaGo (the Google AI) beat 4 games to 1 the Go world champion Lee Sedol, many people remembered the victory of Deep Blue, the (IBM computer), against the world chess champion Garry Kasparov at the end of the Nineties. But the AlphaGo victory means something much greater, because Go is a game that has many more variables than chess. On a single goban chessboard there are  $4.63 \times 10^{170}$  different possible positions, and from this we can figure out the enormous complexity of the game.

AlphaGo proved unimaginable capacity and has exceeded the Polanyi Paradox, which affirm that we know more things than we can explain.

Unlike chess, no one can explain how to win a Go games at the highest levels. Even the most skilled players are not able to access the knowledge that allow them to play so well. The phenomenon has been known for some time and it concerns everyone, not just the players in front of a chessboard: we do not know exactly how we get the coordination required to drive a car, or how we can distinguish one face from hundreds of other faces, even though we do it all the time efficiently. The scientist and philosopher Michael Polanyi described the phenomenon effectively: “We know more things than we can explain”. For this reason we usually describe this condition as “the Polanyi Paradox”.

Thinking about the relation from Polanyi Paradox and writing is the ground of my speech. Writing fiction and teaching how to write fiction are two complex activities, for which I think we can apply the Polanyi Paradox. We know more things about writing than we can explain, so how is it possible to teach it?

After a few example and explanation of what is the Tacit Knowledge, and the distinction between “say” and “show”, I will address the Dunning-Kruger effect, which show us the boundaries of expertise and its perception: plus one does not know anything about a subject, has no real ability, he believes to know everything about that subject, on the contrary, the more a person is an expert in a topic unless he is certain.

Usually we face complex problems and complex systems with the expertise, we fully rely in expertise, thinking it is the only way to get some solution to our problems or questions about world. But my point is that expertise can not be the ultimate answer to complex systems, which we always will explore only in a few part and not in the whole. At the same time writing fiction, like playing Go, is a complex ability authors can't manage enough to access the knowledge that allow them to write so well.

The conclusions will suggest the abandonment of the myth of expertise for those matters that involve an high level of complexity, so even in the teaching of writing, in favor of a return to the practice and teaching by the example.

## A RADIO PLAY CLASS AND ITS SYNERGETIC INTERCONNECTEDNESS WITH THE MEDIUM RADIO

**Fritz Ostermayer**

Besides aesthetic/literary positions of current radio play making, the lecture primarily debates the strategies and opportunities of a poetry school to introduce “experimental” works into the (structurally conservative) medium radio. As a concrete example serves the co-operation of the vienna poetry school with Ö1, the “classic-radio station” of the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation ORF.

Each year, a competition of short radio plays organised by Ö1 and named “Track 5” proves anew that the joy of taking narrative and formal risks in the literary genre of radio plays has long given way to a secured and “well-behaved” narration – despite the editor’s desire for a variety of styles and topics. We wanted to send a signal against this artistic backlash: with a “micro-drama”-class which draws on traditions of the avant-garde from DADA to punk. By playing with trash and camp to our heart’s content, we also wanted to polemise against the return of psychological narration in “new” radio plays. Useful tools for this: humour and emotion.

Based upon Sam Peckinpah’s film classic “Bring me the Head of Alfredo Garcia” our class was called “Bring me the Head of Wolfgang Bauer”, named after the well-known Austrian dramatist and Peckinpah-fan whose absurd and likewise grotesque humour was intended to be our model and inspiration.

Even though our strange micro-dramas eventually did not make it onto the winner’s pedestal: At least we got a lot of airplay, additionally, we received positive reactions from a young and open audience and – last but not least – increased attention for our vienna poetry school.

More will be told on that...

## ODE TO THINGS: EVOCATIVE OBJECTS IN A CREATIVE WRITING CLASSROOM

**Tatjana Portnova**

Sometimes in a creative writing classes we work with the imagination of our students and forget the importance of the real objects. How can we use a hotel bell, a feather, a mask, a toy or even a watering can when teaching creative writing? The present reflection pretends to demonstrate how the real objects used in a classroom stimulate our narrative creativity by activating our senses.

## HOW TO BUILD, LEAD AND GUIDE A CREATIVE WRITING COURSE WITH A LOT OF NATIONALITIES AND LANGUAGES (AND CULTURES) IN ONE GROUP?

**Erik Vanhee**

Report of a good practice, a course in Antwerp (BE) “writing about your life” with non-native speakers and local residents as buddies. We tell about our experiences with writing assignments, guidance and feedback, group dynamics, results, etc.

We worked with political refugees, newcomers, migrants, and in prisons with inmates of non-Belgian origin.

- ✓ How did we turn creative writing into a pleasant activity for non-native speaking or shortly educated people? How did we put on a story about their own experiences with them?
- ✓ How did we get them with simple incitement to writing their own life?
- ✓ How did we give them constructive feedback and let them grow in authenticity and writing level?

We worked with simple forms of journal writing, life writing and short poetic texts, putting together small steps in developing their writing skills.

We tell about our methodology, appropriate didactic and methodical tips to writing assignments, group dynamics, organization, conditions and so on.