

SESSION 10: MAKING YOUR MARK

Part 1: WRITING LESSON

PRACTICAL PUBLISHING INFORMATION

& WHAT IS NEXT?

“Don’t ask yourself what the world needs.

Ask yourself what makes you come alive and then go do that.

Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.”

– Howard Thurman

Well, we’re in the last session of my Writing Mastery program, and it’s time to (a) review what you’ve learnt, and (b) start looking ahead to what you are going to do next.

REVIEW

Beginning with the Writing Lessons aspect of this book, we’ve

- * busted the Talent Myth (no such thing; it’s about love),
- * overcome Writer’s Block (just give your creator free rein during and then apply your brilliant – and kind – editorial distinctions after your ideas have been put down),

- * united said Creator and Editor (self-as-team),
- * honoured our Creative Voice (start from where you are),
- * identified Sources of Support (writing clubs etc.),
- * discovered our Foundational Character (you),
- * learnt the old writer's adage, 'Show Don't Tell' (action, senses, detail),
- * gone the extra mile with Language (impact, originality, mood),
- * met our Inner Genius (honesty, syntax), and
- * considered the Question of Plot (what then? what if?)

I often play the Billy Joel classic, 'Piano Man', at this point in my class as it provides a wonderful mini-summary of much of the material we have covered. The lyrics are incandescent, such as this phrase, which is a powerful demonstration of 'showing instead of telling' and of striking originality: *'making love to his tonic and gin'*? Not 'hanging on to his glass', but 'making love' to it. That image shows us *how* he relates to his drink.

How about *'as a smile ran away from his face'*? or *'when I wore a younger man's clothes'*? or *'can you play me a memory'*? or *'sharing a drink they call loneliness'*? These are all remarkable lines. So succinct, so evocative.

Billy Joel's use of senses and detail is also masterful: the mood in the bar is *'sad and sweet'*, the piano *'sounds like a carnival'* and the microphone *'smells like a beer'*.

He writes characters you can imagine in just a few words: *'John at the bar is a friend of mine/he gets me my drinks for free/he's quick with a joke and to light up a smoke/ but there's some place/that he'd rather be'*; *'Paul is a real estate*

novelist/who never had time for a wife'. The clients, the manager, the waitress – all come to life in a few words.

And finally, he writes honestly, authentically, his dialogue hitting the true note of the vernacular: *'they put bread in my jar'*. All of these elements ensure that Billy Joel's writing stays clear of the mediocre. Instead it resounds with the masterful, and heads into the realm of 'genius'.

INTEGRATION

This is probably a good time to pull out one of your earlier pieces of writing and either rework it or reapproach it, applying everything you have learnt.

One of Gabriele Ricco's students was asked to write about herself in the first session of that clustering-focused program. She began her piece with the fairly distancing, formal statement: 'My image is developing in the public eye. Growing into a career position where I face hundreds of persons a day, I can feel my confidence stretching; my character demands a more polished self-esteem'.

Her second version, at the end of the program, begins like this: 'In my heart it is always winter/and the dinner is always cold.'¹ Such arresting images and ideas. She goes on to unfold a story about her childhood, *about her inner child*, a story that comes from her heart, and strikes at the reader's heart – much more profoundly than her 'report' about herself, much as it was a fluent and informative piece of writing.

So let's go back to the very first session and see what you can do this time.

¹ Ibid. pp 24-25

EXERCISE: Integration

i) Choose a previous topic and respond to it ‘freshly’, without looking at your first effort. Cluster or mind map first. Remind yourself to trust and accept your writing...

ii) As you’re jotting your notes or writing, remember to show this scene through action, senses, detail. Give us the ordinary tangible things that bring the moment to life. Allow the feeling of your piece to dictate the rhythm, body language, mood of your piece of writing.

iii) Then rewrite/edit, looking for the energy. Allow your ‘clunkometer’ to warn you when something is messy or unnecessary.

iv) Now ask yourself: ‘How has my writing changed? How has it improved? How else do I want to improve as a writer?’

VOICE

If your response is that your writing is still not ‘good enough’ or not sounding as you want it, then consider this exchange between two Australian award-winning and best-selling authors:

Helen Garner: “I’m sick of my style.”

Miles Franklin: “Your style won’t change till you do.”

The ‘Part Twos’ all the way through this book have been about you, your story, your perceptions, and as those aspects of you evolve and mature, your writing ‘voice’ will evolve and mature also. To make up the sort of writing voice you want would be

contrived. You can certainly model on other writers/styles as an exercise, to develop flexibility and learn about language, but don't fall into copying. Allow your own authentic voice to speak. Your voice/style is an expression of who you are.

And while we're on that point, voice can change from story to story. I once wrote a short story called 'Loving 'Em All'. It came through in a very strong, chatty voice that I had never used before in my writing, and never did again. Likewise, my story 'The Prince Who Would Not Grow' was narrated in fairy-tale style, not my usual voice at all. Mediums claim that they are 'channelling' other spirits or past teachers; I suspect that all writers are engaged in some sort of channelling, but whether we are bringing through the voice of another being or simply the voice of another part of ourselves, I don't know. I do know that when I'm in the flow, in that 'sweet zone', it is almost like taking dictation...

PARTY TIME!



During the final session of my Writing Mastery course, we gather around the table for a bit of a celebratory party while we are doing the completion exercises. I believe it's important to acknowledge and appreciate our achievements, so now's the time to bring out the bubbly (apple cider or plain water for me), the chockies, the dip and nibblies – and also your Character Notes from the first session. If you are working with others, this is a great time to share those pieces– especially if you wrote about each other before meeting properly. Sometimes my students have been uncannily accurate in their innocent 'Character Notes' descriptions, and sometimes way off. It's all good for a giggle.

This is also when I turn 'teacher-ish' and ask each person what they have tackled from their list of 100 Things. And we revisit outcomes – what they wanted to have achieved by the end of the course, and what remains to be achieved. Then I ask what they would like to do now?

Someone usually has their eye on the prize, publication, which brings us to the meat of this session.

GETTING PUBLISHED

The realm of publication is truly when the need for self-esteem kicks in because getting work published is no land for the faint of heart. The business of getting published is a program unto itself, and I cover that material in greater depth during 'Writing It', my six-month course during which participants focus on their own projects. But let's touch on the main points now. I'll give you a general picture and then speak in detail about my own experiences publishing *The Mastery Club* in Part 2, 'Acting on the Dream'.

The journey of becoming a published author is as wholistic a process as the process of writing itself. No matter what our gender, we each have a masculine and a feminine side, and certain tasks call more strongly for one of those aspects of ourselves. The writing itself is a feminine process, it's an 'inward', creative, dreamy process, and the rewriting, as you know, calls for a more masculine approach, where we must be objective and decisive. The publishing journey is where the masculine really comes into its own, especially if you choose to self-publish, since it is an 'outward' process in which you must take action out in the world, be bold, assertive and decisive, put yourself forward, etc. The feminine continues to play a role however, because it remains important to listen to one's intuition (tuition-from-within).

OPPORTUNITIES AND MINEFIELDS

There are many traps for the unwary in the publishing game. Every person who owns a computer is now capable of producing their own book, but the critical issue is distribution. You might be able to 'make a book' but can you sell it? Can you 'get it out there' or are you going to end up with boxes of books in your garage, boxes of books hidden under pretty cloths as makeshift coffee tables, boxes of books supporting planks as makeshift bookshelves for other people's books...? Be clear about what you want to achieve, and take responsibility for learning everything you need to know.

On the other side of the equation, every second person is selling a 'how to be a best-selling author' product or service. 'Writing a book gives you credibility!' they declare, 'and it's so easy. Just follow our how-to-write-a-book-in-seven-days

technique and then buy our how-to-get-published-program and we'll help you achieve your goals much faster than going through traditional publishing avenues which only pay you a pittance anyway.' There's certainly some truth to that, and some of these organisations will be good but others will be dodgy. Beware! Do your research and 'know thyself' (and thy goals and values), and then you will make the right decision for you. Hopefully what I'm about to share will help...

PUBLISHING & DISTRIBUTION OPTIONS

First be clear about the difference between a printer and a publisher: the printer is paid for taking a set of files and turning them into as many books as you wish to print while a publisher takes responsibility for printing *and* distributing your book; the publisher takes on the financial risk of producing your book, and also, consequently, a larger percentage of the reward.

A distributor gets your book into bookstores and takes a significant chunk of the retail price of your book. Distributors want to have an agreement in place as much as six months before receiving the book because their catalogues are planned that far in advance. If you are self-published, they also like to have input into your cover design. Some publishing companies are also distributors and others work with distributors.

The book trade consists of various categories of books:

- i) **Trade** = 'general public' books distributing through bookstores and retail outlets,
- ii) **Text** = educational books that are distributed primarily through universities, colleges, schools and specialist bookstores,

iii) **Scholarly and Professional** = highly specialised books targeting highly specific markets, and

iv) **ePublishers** = making books available via the internet. This is a significantly growing portion of the market.



Supposing that you choose to approach a **traditional publisher**. You have several choices. You can target the large international publishing houses, such as Penguin, Random House, Harlequin, MacMillan, Scholastic, Allen & Unwin, Hay House, Simon & Schuster etc., or the small professional publishing houses like Axiom Books, Hinkler Books, Wilkins-Farago, Text Publishing, Scribe Publications, etc. There are many companies to choose from. *The Australian Writers Marketplace*² is a great resource, listing many publishing companies as well as newspapers and magazines,

² Originally compiled by Rhonda Whitton 1997 and now updated and edited annually by Queensland Writers Centre. 'Every contact you will ever need to succeed in the business of writing.'

agents, and other literary organisations and opportunities. An updated edition is released every year. There are similar products available in overseas countries.

Or you can approach a **vanity publisher**. A vanity publisher produces the book for the writer for a fee, and the writer manages his own marketing and distribution.

And then there's the **self-publishing** option, where the writer takes responsibility for the whole adventure: production, marketing, distribution etc. There are pros and cons to each choice.

TRADITIONAL PUBLISHERS

The pros of approaching a traditional publisher: They are experienced in production, marketing and publicity and have established distribution networks. If they accept your book, they will require you to sign a detailed contract and commit to paying you a percentage of sales, called royalties. Most publishers, but not all, will also pay you an advance against your future royalties. The Australian Society of Authors recommends that an author be paid royalties of 10% of net retail price (vs of wholesale price). Small publishing houses naturally have smaller budgets and smaller networks. All publishers genuinely are looking for good new material – the thrill of discovering the next amazing writer is why they are in this game.

The cons: Many established publishers don't accept unsolicited manuscripts, which means that the aspiring author often has to have an agent. The whole process of sending manuscripts out to agents and publishers takes ages – anywhere between six weeks and three months to get an answer. There's also red tape that can trip you up, for example, one editor loves your manuscript but leaves the company before

doing anything with it, and the next editor has different priorities so your project is returned. Handing over to a publisher means losing control of your project, a much smaller percentage of sales, and no guarantees regarding marketing or publicity if you're an unknown. The big marketing budgets are spent on the big names, and some of the small publishing houses don't pay an advance at all.

HOW TO APPROACH PUBLISHERS

- Do it yourself

First research the company's requirements. One thing they can't stand is receiving manuscripts that don't fit their market, such as sending fantasy novels for kids to a publisher that only does non-fiction for adults. They will all have Submission Guidelines on their website – do what they say! Sometimes they prefer a phone call enquiry first and sometimes they virtually forbid phone contact and just want you to refer to their website for Submission Guidelines. Often their site will announce that they are 'not accepting unsolicited works at present'. There are always exceptions: they will usually look at material from published writers at any time, and an agent or good review from a manuscript assessment agency may well open a door for you that would be closed if you were part of the anonymous 'general public'.

If they are accepting unsolicited manuscripts, there are some hoops to jump through: The publisher will usually require you to send a proposal, which typically includes a covering letter, a synopsis of your project, the first three chapters, chapter breakdown of the entire book, character descriptions, your author credentials, and sometimes even a marketing rationale/plan in which you explain what makes you different from the competition. An excellent resource, if you are planning to

approach a publisher yourself, is *A Decent Proposal* by Rhonda Whitton and Sheila Hollingworth. I also recommend that you become a member of your state Writers' Centre and the national Authors Society for industry information and legal advice.

Manuscript Assessment Agencies can be useful, especially if you receive a positive report that you can include in your submission, but, in the words of Euan Mitchell, author of *Self-Publishing Made Simple – The Ultimate Australian Guide*, 'this is still only the opinion of one person who may or may not be part of your target audience' – and they will charge you several hundred dollars. Mitchell also shares that 'Structural editors at publishing houses can be brilliant, but they can also make mistakes, give poor advice or be out of touch with the tastes of readers. Why not go directly to your target audience and ask them to review your work? The advice I received on the structure and style of *Feral Tracks* from two senior publishing personnel was almost directly opposite to that of two reviewers who were part of my target audience.'³

I tend to opt for the 'target market' feedback also.

- Go through a Literary Agent

Literary agents represent writers to publishing companies. They understand this world – have often worked for publishers themselves – and should have good negotiation skills. They can make wonderful partners if they really care about you and are skilled at what they do. Agents take a percentage (10-15%) of your royalties (and closer to 25% on foreign deals negotiated) but can negotiate a much better advance and publishing deal than the average 'mere writer'. You want an agent who

³ Hardie Grant Books, 2000, p. 27

will go into battle for you, so be aware that they will be picky themselves – i.e. looking for material they genuinely love. It's not just a job to a good agent. (NB. 10% of 10% - so your \$1.00 per book royalty, for example, becomes 90 cents).

VANITY PUBLISHERS



A vanity press will publish anyone who pays the fee, no matter what the quality of the writing or the value of the product. You might count that as a positive or a negative. In the book industry, and certainly by writers' organizations, it's considered a negative, and there is no kudos to the author in being published in this way, however it offers anyone a chance.

The Pros: You retain the profit (after paying their fee) but you don't take all the risk as they are experienced in the production part of the process. Occasionally, if they think the book has potential, a vanity press will offer a 'partnership deal' in

which some of the costs are reduced, but this is not necessarily a great advantage.

Go through the agreement with a fine toothcomb.

The Cons: They are likely to inflate prices significantly. They exist on fees from producing the book rather than proceeds from sales of the book, so they offer the writer no guarantees regarding getting their books into bookstores and usually don't have anything to do with that part of the process at all. Their literature might say that they will assist with marketing but usually this just means listing your book in a trade catalogue, or perhaps on a website that might not even get much traffic. If you've ever come across 'Authors Wanted' ads, they are usually from Vanity Presses. Warnings about them abound in the book trade, which recognises their danger to gullible would-be authors.

The good organisations genuinely want to make it easier for the beginner writer and offer good services; the shoddier companies are in it for the money and will allow projects to go through to publication with only very light editing that doesn't address structural flaws in the work or pick up on the errors; they are also likely to produce amateurish-looking books.

BEST-SELLING-AUTHOR PROGRAMS AND CAMPAIGNS

A brief word about this intriguing option. Organisations that promise to deliver your book to best-seller status are sprouting everywhere. They are a form of vanity press, in which they sell you a program that will guide you to 'authorly success'. The idea is that you will create joint ventures with various businesses that have big lists (databases) and you will launch your book on, for example, Amazon, at a particular hour on a particular date, and each of these JV partners will urge their list to buy

during that window of time. The spike in sales that follows on from this strategy can often tip a new book into the ‘best-seller’ category, albeit briefly. However... is that really a best seller or just a fun result from a slick marketing campaign? It’s up to you to make that judgement.

The other strategy is to orchestrate sufficient pre-sales of your book to take it over the 10,000 copies sold mark, which is approximately the ‘bottom’ criteria for ‘best-seller’. (Some say it’s 5000 but I prefer to use the larger number.)

Sometimes these organisations take on the editing and book production for you, and sometimes they merely give you tips and are more oriented toward marketing advice, especially via the internet and joint ventures. Again, check this option out very carefully. Without a doubt some of them will be shonky and others will be genuine. They tend to offer free seminars in which they inspire you with stories about their own or their clients’ success, and then they reveal their fee (significant), which they will often radically discount in order to win customers.

One of the comments often made by these ‘how to be a best-selling author’ establishments in their seminars is that you should never start writing a book without a publishing plan. I disagree. *It depends on your outcome.* Many of the people who come to my courses are writing for their joy, creative expression and satisfaction, and that is just as important, if not more so, than publishing success. There are ‘ends values’ (what you want to get at the end, eg. money and recognition) and ‘means values’ (what you want to get in the process of doing the thing, eg. pleasure and insights), and many people are writing primarily for means value. Those establishments invalidate that entire group of people, so don’t be daunted by them if you just want to leap in and write and are not ready to

contemplate the ‘business side’. You don’t need a publishing plan first if you are writing for your own satisfaction, but don’t be an ‘airhead’ about it either, imagining that you will write your manuscript and then be discovered by a publisher as soon as the ink has dried on your final words, only to be rocked to immediate fame and fortune. That is *extremely* rare. Most writers have quite a bit of ‘chop wood and carry water’ to do before they hit stardom, if ever...

If you are writing for commercial purposes, then making a publishing plan first is probably a very sound idea but even then, it’s not essential. The critical questions are: are you planning to approach traditional publishers or to self-publish? Are you writing fiction or non-fiction?

-> If you are planning to approach traditional publishers, they will probably want to see at least a sample of your writing before signing you on and looking at publishing plans with you. And while self-publishing definitely calls for some grounded planning, whether fiction or non-fiction, if writing the book *anyway* is important for you, just jump in and do it. Your project may even change significantly during the writing of it, so this is a good thing to do. Besides, you will learn heaps in the process.

-> If you are writing non-fiction, the value in an early publishing plan is more relevant since the market is easy to target and research. It can be much harder to predict responses to fiction or to make plans before a book is written.

Since the ‘write-a-best-seller’ organizations are approached largely by unknown individuals with a desire to self-publish, they are probably wise to recommend that you do some research in order to determine if a market for your book actually exists out in the world, or only in your imagination. I haven’t done so, choosing to trust in my intuitive sense of the market, or simply because I wanted to

write the thing for my own satisfaction anyway. Many speakers decide to write a book in order to have something to sell 'from the back of the room'. These kinds of books, while offering some useful information, are often 'glorified business cards' – their authors are usually not looking to make money from book sales; they'll frequently give their books away because their eye is on the business that might follow, such as consulting or coaching work, rather than on the \$10 or \$20 they might make from the sale of the book.

Often these organisations will tell you that you can - in fact, should - write your book in only a month or a week, and if you're taking more than that, you're taking too long. Again, I disagree. It depends on your outcome. If you want to produce a work of quality, you need to be prepared to invest *yourself* in your work. Real books take longer than a week or even a month to write because they take you on a journey. You go deep inside yourself. You do research. You work at it. You pay careful attention to language and sequence, making sure that each word counts. It's the difference between the slow cooking movement and junk food. If you've ever read the Acknowledgements Page of other author's books you'll recognise a common phrase – 'and thank you to my longsuffering partner and children who patiently did without me for months/years while I wrote this book'.

Do your research. If you are considering one of these organizations, have a look at the kinds of books they have produced and check that they match what you have in mind.

Results from bestseller campaigns: I haven't gone down this road and I'm sure that every possible outcome exists, from total success – your book on bestseller lists and then perhaps a major publishing company picking you up – to insignificant

results. I'm aware of some people who bought one of these programs and achieved four hours of bestseller status on Amazon. That equates to a few hundred books being sold during that four-hour window, but what happens after that is anyone's guess. Sales could dwindle and vanish altogether, or the book might have achieved the kick-start it needed to trigger strong ongoing sales. Another business that followed such a plan was quite disappointed by the lack of sales that ensued, despite the promises and large numbers that would be exposed to their book.

SELF-PUBLISHING

This is where you handle the entire process of production and distribution yourself.

The Pros: you are in complete control of your project and can do it exactly as you want to. You are much more flexible than an organisation, and can change strategy/approach as rapidly and often as you choose. All the profit and rewards are yours. As the writer, you are much more committed to the product than a publisher who will cut his losses and move on if a book is not selling well. (Apparently you have as little as six weeks to make an impact before bookstores decide they won't bother to reorder, and if they don't, distributors and publishers lose interest also.)

The Cons: you pay for everything and you take all the risk. The lessons/consequences are all yours too. You can't pass the buck. If you are ignorant and/or don't do your homework properly, you will wear those consequences. There is quite a bit of stigma in the publishing world if you choose to self-publish because you didn't have an external expert (= a publisher) saying 'yes, I think your book is good enough. I'll invest in it'.

The drawbacks include that issue of stigma and the burden of managing all the administration and distribution yourself. Also many bookstores won't stock a self-published author's books, they'll only deal with conventional publishers and distributors, and distributors themselves are very wary of self-published authors – with reason. Such individuals often produce poorly written and poorly designed books, and, to be quite honest, it *should* be difficult for those books to get into stores!

EXERCISE: Purpose/Outcome

What do you want to achieve? Are you writing for pleasure or to produce a short run for family and friends, or do you have your sights set on larger (national, international) markets? If the latter, do you want to approach a traditional publisher or do it yourself? And if you want the control and extra profit of self-publishing, are you prepared for the work and all the drawbacks?

EXERCISE: Publisher's Proposal – Synopsis & Pitch

Even if you're planning to self-publish, it's worth writing a 'publisher's proposal' because it helps you get clear on the uniqueness of your project for marketing purposes. Take some time to write a synopsis of your book and several pitches – Whitton and Hollingworth recommend three: a seven word pitch (what type of book you've written – i.e. genre), a 25 word pitch (what your book is about) and a 70 -100

word pitch (an overview of themes and storyline)⁴. The aim is to describe the essence of your project in an attention-grabbing manner.

EXERCISE: Publisher’s Proposal – Covering letter

Once you are clear on what your product is (!), have a go at writing a letter to a potential publisher. Introduce yourself and your proposed book and let them know why this book is needed in the world, why you believe it is worth their time to read it, and why you have the background/credentials/skill to have written it. Be succinct and impactful – no more than one page. They will be judging you as a writer from your covering letter...

FROM MANUSCRIPT TO BOOK

This book has focused on writing stories, and on the process of tuning in and fine tuning, so there is a lot that hasn’t been covered, such as the role of research. I’m going to assume that you have written your book and feel you are now ready to publish.

Hire an editor first. DON’T EVER think you can publish a book without having it professionally checked for grammar, spelling, punctuation and even the general things like clarity and sequence of ideas, to say nothing of impact. I’ve seen too many self-published books that are littered with minor errors or make inappropriate statements or whose sequence is confusing. Definitely pay someone to check your work.

⁴ *ibid.* pp 31-33

Let's say that you have decided to self-publish. Preparing a book for printing requires all sorts of 'detail decisions' to do with layout, such as choosing your font, size of text and section headings and even where the page number goes (centred? to the right? top of page? bottom?). If you're type-setting yourself, you'll soon find yourself faced with the issue of 'widows and orphans' – widows are lone words from the end of a paragraph that start a new page and orphans are the first line of a paragraph that occurs at the bottom of a page, while the rest continues on the next. Very messy. Individual lines have to be unnoticeably shrunk and expanded to make everything fit aesthetically on the page. Then there's the cover – are you going to do it yourself or hire an artist or desktop publisher? If you're going to compete with thousands of other books in a store, your cover *must* be eye-catching and clear.

Another responsibility when self-publishing is to organise details like the copyright statement, the ISBN and barcode, and your National Library Cataloguing number. Every book that is published in Australia for sale must have all of those elements. Nowadays when you register your book there is a 'New Author' item you must check to avoid the situation of a beginner author called John Smith riding on the success of an established author called John Smith. This is because there is such a glut of new books on the market since it's become so easy to self-publish.

You also need to be able to talk Printer-Speak, which means deciding and providing 'specs' – gsm (paper thickness), stock (= type of paper), perfect binding (usual type of book spine) or saddle-stitching (stapled), case bound (hard cover) or spiral – to the printer in order to be given a quote. There are two types of printer: offset (traditional method of printing in which ink is transferred from a plate or stone to a uniform rubber surface, and from that to paper) or digital (via computer

file), and advantages and disadvantages both ways. The cost of a print run depends on its size, including the number of pages, since about four pages are printed on one sheet, and if it's colour or black-and-white.

A proof reader is just as essential as an editor. It's very difficult to view one's own work objectively, and even four print runs down the track I have found small errors that still snuck through in *The Mastery Club*...

I highly recommend Euan Mitchell's book, *Self-Publishing Made Easy*. It was our bible when self-publishing *The Mastery Club*. This book goes through all the steps from writing through publishing to publicity and marketing from manuscript to book launch and publicity, and provides many great distinctions. Another great book that concerns itself more with marketing is *The Well-Fed Self-Publisher* by Peter Bowerman⁵.

FROM BOOK TO READER

There are several national distributors who can get your book into bookstores around the country but they are usually biased against self-published books and even if they do accept your book, the sales rep. will give it a mention when it's new, and probably not again after that...So don't fall for the dream that a distributor will continue to promote your book to stores. If a bookstore owner reads your book and falls in love, they will likely 'hand sell' it (recommend it to people who ask for suggestions); if not, they will probably only pay attention to it if it is the subject of great reviews or publicity, or if customers start asking for it. At the very least, you

⁵ Fanove Publishing, Atlanta, Georgia, 2007

must make sure that your book is listed on the sites that booksellers go to when looking for a title, such as 'Title Page' and Thorpe-Bowker.

If you want your book to be available in libraries, you'll need to let their specialist distributors know about it and register for PLR and ELR (Publishing Lending Rights and Educational Lending Rights), so that you can receive a royalty from the loan of your book through libraries, or photocopying in schools. In Australia, CAL (Copyright Agency Limited⁶) provides the service of tracking those payments for you. They now have CALdirect, an online facility for members.

And, of course, you'll need to provide an internet presence for your book. That means a website and probably also a Facebook page, etc. You'll also want to consider eBook applications such as the Kindle and iPad... This area is a minefield. Do your research and get your own advice!

A book becomes a best-seller either by virtue of extraordinary public response (word-of-mouth referrals) or by virtue of committed marketing and publicity. You can tackle traditional media (magazines, radio, T.V.) by sending your book to reviewers and doing everything you can to land interviews. Or bite off one of those 'best-seller programs'. Or you can hire a publicist. Publicists will do their best to achieve media attention for you, but there is a fee and there are usually no guarantees. It's easy to be burnt by an enthusiastic publicist who waves a glittering CV loaded with famous names. However you can't do everything, so this might be the bit you choose to outsource. And you can always hit the speakers' circuit or run seminars and sell your book from the back of the room. Which probably calls for a business coach as well...

⁶ www.copyright.com.au

RESPONSE FROM READERS

You'll get all sorts. Some readers are going to love it and rave. Others will smile nicely when you come into the room, then talk about something else. The same is true of reviewers – some will love it, some will hate it. Take it all with a grain of salt. Graeme Murphy, Artistic Director of the Sydney Dance Company for over 30 years, and the father of contemporary Australian dance, says, you “must dismiss the good as well as the bad reviews if you want to dismiss the critics.”⁷ Dr Demartini says (in rhyme), “Take no credit, take no blame, just stay focused on chief aim.” If you get elated or cocky or gloat about good results, you are likely to attract a suitably humbling circumstance to balance you out, so remain centered and committed to your greater purpose, whether the feedback is positive or negative.

CELEBRATION

That's enough serious stuff! We're in party mode, remember? This next exercise is whatever you make it. You can make some real decisions about what you'd like to have happen in your future writing career, or you can be as wild and free and absurd as you like, but above all, allow yourself to dream big.

Dr John Demartini asked Wayne Dyer how he could become an international speaker, and Dyer told him to introduce himself as ‘an international speaker’.

Demartini was confused – ‘but I'm not’ he protested; Dyer insisted that he take the bold course, explaining that he was just ‘being a prophet’. So... prophesy the literary success you would like to experience. Use language consciously to transform your life. May the sky be the limit!

⁷ p 115 *Dumbo feather – pass it on*

EXERCISE: Jacket précis

Write a jacket précis of you as an author – you know the sort of thing: ‘Amanda Great was born in Brisbane in 1972. She is the author of six novels, two books of poetry and one book for children. She lives in Byron Bay with her husband, three children and two cats.’

But allow yourself to also ‘take the world by storm’ or be ‘the winner of the Booker Prize/Pulitzer Prize/Nobel Prize for Literature...’ or ‘[divide your] time between the Greek Isles and New York’. Go for it! Make it up and HAVE FUN.

EXERCISE: Shared letter

If you’ve been working through this book with others, have each person rip off a fresh sheet of paper and write their name at the top of the page. Then pass it to the person on your right and, taking the sheet of the person on your left, write them a comment about how they have



contributed to you during the course of this program. You might like to share ‘something I like about you as a writer/person’ or ‘how you have contributed to the course/affected me’. Continue around the circle until you have written a farewell/completion comment on each person’s sheet.

SESSION 10: MAKING YOUR MARK

Part 2: Life Story Work

ACTING ON THE DREAM

*“I always sign my book with the words ‘Act on your dreams’
because that is what this is all about.”*

– Liliane Grace

MY STORY

In each session of this book, Part I was about you as a writer; it was about expressing yourself and refining that expression so it is more impactful. Part II was about you, the person, and applying those same principles to your life for the purpose of personal growth.

MY EXPERIENCE WITH *THE MASTERY CLUB*

The idea for *The Mastery Club* came to me in bits and pieces, firstly just as the desire to write about universal laws for kids, because I was inspired by that material and I had become a mother. I wanted to provide my own children with great information, and the best way to give information to children is through story. The title came to me quite early in the piece, before I had a story. Then my son and I read Harry Potter, and, watching his friends begin to don cloaks and brandish wands, I began to

wonder, *what if kids knew they could do magic for real?* Most juvenile fiction falls into one of two categories: it's sheer fantasy or confrontational reality. But how many kids have a magic ring or a dragon in their back yard? Most have earth-problems – bullies, difficult family members, lack of friends... So what if they learnt how to do real magic? What if they applied the principles of personal transformation to their actual lives?

I began to play with the possibility of two children coming together: one is engaged with magic and fantasy and the other has been brought up learning about universal laws. Together they form a club and apply those principles to their own lives... I began to write but kept getting stuck in my planning process – until I surrendered to a new character who had appeared one day in a burst of free writing, and threatened to take the story in unexpected directions. Finally trusting this new impulse, I began to see how it was going to draw together all of my original aims, and leapt into the writing. From first idea to final full stop was something like eight years, but the focused writing took only five or six months, in two and three hour bursts early in the morning before my children got up.

When I was close to finishing, I started reading the book to my children so that I could gauge their reactions, and when I'd finished, my partner read it. That was a turning point in our relationship as he saw its potential and from that point became a co-parent of this baby. I then sent the book out to friends of all ages for feedback, and made changes here and there in response to their comments. During this period our bookkeeper suggested that we send the manuscript to some clients of his who were running a personal development program for kids. One of the directors of that program was Robert K, a businessman/consultant who read the

book and was guided, during meditation, to offer his assistance to me. He ended up giving me an hour of his time on the phone every Friday morning at six a.m. for one year. Amazing. Rob had no book industry experience, but the emotional support he offered in playing the role of sounding board was invaluable. During one of our conversations he mentioned that he also had a dream to publish some books – children’s picture books about modern day leaders who followed through on a childhood dream, to be called ‘The Champion Series’. Later we embarked on that adventure together, but that’s another story...⁸

In September 2005 I approached a large mainstream publisher that specialised in personal development titles. This company was not yet publishing children’s books but I had learnt that they were discussing that possibility, and I was confident that my book was a perfect match with their market. I also had a Foreword written by one of their authors, so I decided to propose *The Mastery Club* as the book they could use to launch their children’s range. Several months later they returned my manuscript, unread, I suspect. I looked at other large companies but their websites all said they were ‘not accepting new authors at this time’ or ‘try again in three months’...

So I contacted a literary agent who loved the first four chapters and approached another large company on my behalf, however the editor there said it wouldn’t appeal to teens and declined. The agent, who had not yet signed with me, dropped the project at that point also. (So beware of agents who will only represent you if they score a win straight off! You want someone who is going to believe in your project and continually go out to bat for you *despite* rejections.)

⁸ *The Boy Who Barked*, about Dr Demartini, and *The Boy Who Found His Pulse*, about Don Tolman, were self-published in December 2008.

I then approached three small publishing houses and they were each interested but said they didn't have a strong enough youth market so didn't feel they'd do my book justice. Despite these rejections (if you've been keeping score, we were effectively up to about six rejections by now), the enthusiasm and regret of the last three houses were good for my confidence. At this point D and I began to consider self-publishing, which had always been my interest anyway. I knew I could handle sales, marketing and distribution, and I love to have some control over my creations! I also knew that D could manage the printing and production side of things.

The Mastery Club is a fictional story/self-help book. Generally speaking it is easier to self-publish non-fiction, because the target market is easy to find and communicate with. Since I was active in the personal development world I knew I could market my book there. It would have been much more difficult if it was pure fiction. As it is, I classified my book as non-fiction in the National Library System because I was deliberately teaching through story, which makes my book more didactic than the average novel, and my writer's ego didn't want to have my book judged against more literary style novels as it would certainly not measure up on those grounds. Its chief value (and purpose) is in the ideas being communicated.

So we took the risk of self-publishing, which instantly put me into the 'probably dodgy' self-publishing camp. It was a calculated risk. I was confident of my product and of my market, and I had been a member of writers' organizations for over twenty years, so I had enough background industry knowledge to not be a complete novice. But we had to make sure we produced something excellent, and I gave considerable thought to planning how I would market my book.

I wanted a particular book distributor, since they specialised in the personal development market, but they rejected *The Mastery Club* as they thought it would appear to be juvenile fiction (which is not in their line), even though four of their regular bookstores were backing me and had promised to order copies. This distributor referred me to a couple of vanity presses, one of which offered us a royalty partnership deal, but when we crunched the numbers, we decided that we could do the layout etc. more cheaply ourselves, and I was confident that I could sell my book... So we rejected *them*.

In January 2006 we started down the path of self-publishing, which is a bit like having a baby. When you become pregnant you know that your whole life is going to change, but you have no idea what that means...

The first step, since I would not have a publishing company's editorial staff working with me, was to make sure my book was skilfully edited, so I hired Tim Marlowe, an editor and a long-time student of metaphysics. I thoroughly enjoyed working with him, though our intense focus on grammar and punctuation during the editing cycle generated dreams about semi-colons... The lovely Jenny Zimmerman was my first reader. I chose her as she wasn't active in the personal development community and was a masterful writer herself. She loved the book and read multiple drafts, a kind of proofreading role. (I re-read multiple times as well, but... well, there have been mistakes in each print run. This has *amazed* me.)

We modelled the appearance of our book (size, paper stock, typesetting, etc.) on *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, and have since been told by a number of bookstores that the look of the book is excellent. Often self-published

books are printed on glossy white paper, while your mass-published books appear on a more 'newsprinty' stock – we opted for the mass look.

The cover. Being a book for youth, I asked my twenty-year-old niece, Jessica, to do the cover art, and that was quite a process. She is a very skilful artist, but it was a case of the blind leading the blind. It took months for us to get it right, and in the eleventh hour we made a critical change, however I've remained happy with our final decisions. Aside from the artwork illustration, we also had to choose a font for the cover, design the front and back cover and the spine, and write the blurb on the back. We befriended the local bookstore owner, who joined us in comparing our mocked-up covers with the others on the shelf. It was in his shop that I realised that my original subtitle wasn't sharp enough, and changed it.

The inside. Not only must you typeset your book, but you also have to design the imprint page, which is where the author and publisher information goes, as well as the copyright statement. Then there's the contents page and acknowledgements and on and on it goes.

I achieved my Foreword by Dr John Demartini quite unexpectedly. He was speaking at a convention I was attending (the health company). I hopped into his book signing queue and told him I was writing a book for children that was aligned with his books, and when I finished, would he read it? I was quite amazed when he said yes and gave me his PA's email address, and I boldly promised to send him the manuscript in three months' time. I was only about one-third of the way through at that stage. Three months and one day later I emailed it to him, and then my family headed off on a holiday for ten days. I didn't expect to hear from Dr Demartini for ages as he speaks some 300 days of the year, so I was completely surprised and

delighted to arrive home to an email from John congratulating me on my book. He had volunteered the Foreword. I had been hoping for a line or two of endorsement.

Printing. Our original quote was for about \$6000 for a print run of 2000 copies of my 250-page book. How to fund it? We could dip into our savings or get creative. We opted for the latter, and I was blessed to be introduced to Rob K's mentor, John Canary, who suggested that we offer advertising space in the back of the book to aligned companies. We came up with a pre-sales offer: a bulk purchase (100 or 200 books) of half-price books and a thank you in the form of advertising space at the back of the book in exchange for their up-front dollar. These sponsors could give the books they purchased away or resell them at full price and double their money. This strategy has covered each print bill.

We gave printing in China some thought, but the quote we were given came up even with printing in Australia once we added in the freight costs and considered the time lost in transit and the potential for miscommunication. We also considered 'print on demand' (POD) briefly, but decided that the unit price would be too high and it would be almost impossible to achieve a bookstore presence. (Distributors to stores buy in bulk.) This scenario is beginning to change as large companies begin to offer POD books. We actually contemplated a process for printing and binding the book at home – thank God we didn't!

Later we decided to also produce a bookmark when the comment was made that we should have made our website etc. more prominent in the book, and should even have had a tear-away mail-for-info slip.

When the manuscript has been typeset and proofread, it's time to send it to the printer to be made into a book! They send back the proofs to be checked. This is

the last chance to pick up errors or make changes. Very scary stuff. Changes can be costly because proofs are made from printing film so these must be re-made.

Once we'd approved the proofs, the waiting commenced, and finally half a dozen advance copies arrived, followed by 50 boxes, each with some 40 books packed inside, which is when the storage challenge kicked in. This was all very exciting and nerve-wracking. We stored in all cupboards, bedrooms – every available space in the house, and we did the box-coffee-table thing too...

The other really exciting moment was when our website went live. Realising we'd need one, we had started to explore this when a new mother to our home education group heard about my book and offered to make the site for me – for free. Since we were operating on the smell of an oily rag, this was a very welcome offer, and Wendy picked up on the colours in the cover of my book and created a lovely, clean, simple website that delighted me. Later we realised that we needed to be able to make changes ourselves, rather than being dependent on an outside person, and we took over the management of the site, changing to a Content Management System. Interestingly enough, after making the website Wendy never returned to the home education group. It was almost as if she had just turned up there that day to meet me and make my website... My website continues to evolve and I am grateful to have it representing me at all hours to people from all over the world. It was partly via my website that I landed a publishing deal with Anahita-Verlag, a German publishing company.

The book launch is your book's birthday party. I'd been to others in the past, which usually consisted of up to 30 guests, wine and cheese, and a well-intentioned but often not very interesting guest speaker. An author friend of mine who had been

successfully published the traditional way, said a launch would be a waste of money and I shouldn't bother. But this was a major milestone so I wanted a party! I invited a couple of hundred people, hired a beautiful hall and a caterer, organised some entertainment (a young singing relative), and was honoured when the compelling speaker and NLP Master Trainer, Marvin Oka, agreed to be my guest speaker. 150 people came – the space was filled to standing room only. It was fabulous. We filmed the event and sold books and even had to call on guests to help at the sales tables.

Immediately following the launch of my book I sent copies out for review, and while I didn't achieve much mainstream attention, I was delighted when the reviews that were written (in my target market publications) were all enthusiastic. Six months after my book was launched I met a professional publicist with a glowing CV full of celebrities' names who gave me the impression that she would have me on morning TV within a couple of weeks. I wasted a few days feeling anxious about this but nine months later I had achieved all the book reviews and interviews that had occurred thus far, and we parted ways. Some time later I met another publicist, a lovely fellow who saw my potential and wanted to help, however while we became great friends and I appreciated his enthusiasm, we had differing views about how to present my story, so we called it quits but remain good friends.

It's costly to advertise so marketing my wares meant finding a multiplicity of ways to promote my book. I brainstormed markets and followed up every lead I was given, even flying interstate at my expense to speak to a VIEW Club (Voices, Interests & Education of Women) so that my book could be part of their Christmas Book Drive. This is the 'investing money in yourself' element that every entrepreneur needs to

do. I door knocked at bookstores until we sold out that first print run of 2000 books in five months, at which point I reapproached my chosen book distributor, Brumby Books, to let them know how I was going. They had an agreement emailed to me the same day, so... no more door knocking. They took over distribution to bookstores.

One of the sponsors of my second print run is Ludwina Dautovic, founder of the Red Tent Woman, and her motto is 'shameless self-promotion': talk to anyone anywhere at any time. Dr Demartini describes the elevator speech he used to give when publicising his new chiropractic clinic: he would enter the lift last, then, instead of turning to face the doors and watch the floors numbers light up, he would remain facing the other travellers and start promoting his wares. I did the same sort of thing in the Ladies toilet at a seminar – turned to the person behind me and talked about my book. Marg Tacey, an author herself, now stocks my books and at one point co-organised a talk for me in Shepparton where she lives.

I began to speak at Rotary Clubs and other service or special interest groups, I phoned libraries, I contacted schools, I wrote articles... And I came upon those best-seller campaigns and developed a kind of love/hate relationship with them. On the one hand I wanted the outcome – who wouldn't? – on the other hand, I was wary and unwilling to dive into all the internet marketing that was required. And speaking to others who had experienced them, I discovered that they had flaws. Even when one is promised that one's book will be exposed to hundreds of thousands of qualified people, and it seems that the numbers are going to stack up, it doesn't always turn out to be a lucrative experience. So, as ever, keep your feet on the ground, be careful, do your research. If you're drawn to the rose-coloured specs, just

flick them off every now and then to have a look at things in the bright light of reason.

THE GOODIES

Writing is like cooking – once you've made the meal, especially if you've been creative and excelled yourself, you don't want to watch it go cold on the table with no-one enjoying it. As writers, we want someone to read, enjoy and benefit from what we have created. So the many beautiful and appreciative testimonials that began to flow in from readers completed the loop and made the difficulties and anxiety and hard work (with negligible income) along the way all worthwhile. Occasionally I would hear about someone starting up their own Mastery Club, inspired by my book. I received requests to speak or teach, and even, eventually, interest from film producers.

A year after my book was out I took the risk of sending it to the Independent Book Publisher Awards in the USA. The entry fee was US\$80.00 but the outcome was that I was awarded a bronze medal in the Youth Fiction category, which was a huge buzz, and has been very helpful in raising my book's credibility. There's nothing like a shiny sticker on the front cover to grab attention... By that stage, we had sold out our second print run; a third followed, and for the fourth we added the words 'Australian Best Seller' to the cover as we had sold over 10,000 copies, no mean feat for a virtually unknown self-published author in the Australian market. Since then, my book has been published in Mandarin in China, Taiwan, Macau and Hong Kong by Oriental Press, and sold in excess of 2000 copies in the first three months.



I am profoundly grateful to my (now ex) partner for supporting me in this adventure, by paying the bills while I followed my dream, by tackling the production of the book, and by providing all the technical support I needed to keep my business afloat and growing. If he hadn't been willing to play along, I would have had to make some very different decisions. I'm also grateful to my children, Jeremy, Emma and Lesley, who have tolerated a very distracted mother at times...

YOUR STORY

At the beginning of this book, I said that you would benefit just by doing the exercises; you didn't have to want to become a professional writer. Now that we are here, at the end, I hope that you have grown in confidence, unleashed your creativity and sharpened your skills. And whether you wish to write for publication or for your own pleasure, or are now complete and ready to do something else, may you follow your bliss and be blessed. When I finally decided to do what made my heart sing, magic happened, doors opened, and synchronicity played a part. And, so that you don't get overly excited, shit happened, doors closed and there were lots of delays and mulberry bushes (*'round and 'round the...*).

So... if you choose to take your writing seriously, will you take the time and spend the money to educate yourself? Will you learn from those who are more experienced AND trust your intuition? Will you take any rejection on the nose and keep going – over and over? Will you be persistent to the point of stubbornness? Will you believe in yourself? Will you take (calculated) risks? Will you be unstoppable? Will you be patient until the street smarts kick in?

My father has an extraordinary ability to see what can go wrong with almost anything. I used to call him negative until I realised the value of being able to anticipate what could go wrong and prepare for it. (I still call him negative sometimes.)

Achieving your dreams calls for a balance of idealism (the dream or vision) and realism (practical steps, strategies and appropriate expectations). Remember to appreciate what you have achieved and to focus on the 'good' when you are feeling overwhelmed or frustrated. And remember that if you love what you are doing, that

love will translate into energy and enthusiasm and carry you through whatever lies ahead.

EXERCISE: **If I knew I couldn't fail, I would...**

THE LAST WORD

If you've been wondering about regular writing practice – what writing habits to set for yourself as you go forwards, then remember that, again, each writer is different. Some writers insist that it's essential to write every single day. I know that Toni Jordan sets herself a word limit of 1500 words that she must write before she is allowed to climb into bed. At the 1500-word mark, she stops writing, even if she is mid-sentence, because this gives her a juicy place to continue from the following day. I'm not drawn to that sort of regime, but I do agree with her when she says that it's also important to have non-writing days during which the subconscious mind can organise and integrate experiences and ideas. Once again, experiment and explore until you find the balance that works for you.

The last word is 'trust'. Trust yourself, your writing, what you are drawn to do. Love and trust yourself, and may your journey of self-discovery unfold magic in your life.

Do not lose hope—what you seek will be found.

Trust ghosts. Trust those that you have helped

to help you in their turn. Trust dreams.

Trust your heart, and trust your story.

– from Instructions by Neil Gaiman

THE END

P.S. I'd love your feedback to this e-course. Please let me know what you thought, how you felt, how your writing evolved, and anything else you care to share.

P.S.(2) If you'd like some assistance with your writing projects, whether you need an editor or a writing coach to keep you on track, please reach out to me. I'd love to support (and challenge!) you in realising your dreams. You can email me directly:

liliane@lilianegrace.com or book a free chat at <https://lilianegrace.com/book-your-free-15-minute-chat/>

PICTURE CREDITS – all from Visual Hunt

Session 1

- 'Balance' by Liber
- 'Pianist' by Joe Shlabotnik
- 'Writers Block' by Nathan Gunter
- 'Writer' by Nivekhnmg
- 'Girl Writing' (x2) by pedrosimoes7

+ pic of me with my first published book, *The Mastery Club*

Session 2

- 'Tapping a pencil' by Rennett Stowe
- 'New Classroom' by Editor B
- 'Smile' by Dick Sijtsma
- 'Creative Independence' by Nattu
- 'Man in suit' by Amtec_photos
- 'Mindmapping' by Sir Wise Owl
- 'The writer' by Nick Kenrick
- 'Grief' by that one chick Mary
- 'Can love return' by Pat McDonald

Session 3

- 'World War II' by Fishin Widow
- 'Ugly' by Anna Briggs
- 'Woman Writing' by Pedrosimoes7
- 'Mother Nature' by Patrick Verstappen

+ YinYang gif from my files

Session 4

- 'Rocomadour' by Desplanche
- 'Listening' by Chris (Aka Moi Vous)
- 'Audience' by Boellstiftung
- 'Creative Life' by Abundance Thinkers
- 'Friends Forever' by Ahsan Saeed

Session 5

- 'Angry' by Geir Valhorsen
- 'Delicious spring frittata' by Tatiana12
- 'Writers Sign' by AVR Dreamer
- 'Berries' by melolou

Session 6

- 'Conflict' by VH_Manalive
- 'Irish spinner' from the Library of Congress
- 'Vagabond' from Internet Archive Book Images
- The Art Bible from Internet Archive Book Images
- 'Hippies still' by Cyro Masci
- 'Gypsy Joker Protest Run' by Roy Lister
- 'Something Foxy' by Seanie 2322
- 'Grandparents' by Mr Moss
- 'Mirror-projection' by H Kopp Delaney

Session 7

- 'Grammar' by Katie Krueger
- 'Sperling' by Kurt Stocker

- 'A Beautiful Day' by L Watt 93
- 'Intimacy' by Charlie hey
- 'Under the Cherry Blossom' by Trey Ratcliff

Session 8

- 'Maunu Kapu' by im me
 - 'Ugliness and nonsense' by Jean Louise Mazieres
 - 'Creative Hair' by Trey Ratcliff
 - 'Creative Writing?' By Joshua Siniscal Photography
- + a scene from my daughters' rite of passage event

Session 9

- '12:41' by Theen
- 'Aristotle' by eden pictures
- 'Young writers' by hanss
- 'India series' by Nick Kenrick
- 'Migrant mother' from the George Eastman Museum

Session 10

- 'Bookstore' by Natalia Romay Photography
- 'Party' by funcca
- 'Vanity' by violscrapers
- 'Love' by ladybug

+ me with the original The Mastery Club and the Mandarin version.