

NEWSLETTER

Summer's end, corner in sight...



My last two summers have been the busiest ever. This summer, I've worked...well, excessive hours. Writing is at least one-third of my work time now, and this summer, writing that full first draft, it has been substantially more than that. It has felt like a constant juggle. But to have a completed first draft is most definitely worth all the fabulous sunrises I've seen (the sunrises not being quite enough in their own right...). The rest of my time has been divided between teaching and editing for Oolichan and Coteau publishers.

But there was a time in my life when I cut hair from nine (or earlier!) until six, seven, eight...sometimes later. And when I went home (winter months, in a lovely steamy urban bus or walking over a windy bridge) it was all I could do to fix some simple thing for supper, do a spot of laundry, and drop into bed. Later, I had three young sons. I've taught full-time, been a full-time student, juggled parenting with a minimum of childcare—if at all. The past two decades have had *many* sunrises...and my body now wakes me up at about 5 a.m.. Alarm clock? What's that?

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Working-Life thoughts...

in this issue:

The summer rumbled and roared and, in the end, thumbed its nose at me and took off around a corner at high speed...so no newsletter for August. Felt very odd, I have to tell you. The good news, for me, was that after a couple of disappearing acts on my part, away from my family for two days here and another three there, I pulled off a complete first draft of a project (172 pages, for those of you who need to know this sort of thing!)

Sometimes you just need to go somewhere and write and set priorities. You'll know when that is and what you have to do. Do it. (I hope my missing newsletter serves to inspire you!)

I've had a couple of writer/readers step forward with pieces to share in this newsletter.

Kari-Lynn Winters is a repeat guest. She writes here about finding value in a non-writing (though "bookish") day jobs. And **Annie Bane**, in Denver, is new to these pages, and I'm pleased she's taken the time to answer a few questions about publishing and promoting her work, a novel titled *Peace Noise, the Winds of Discovery*.

Enjoy!

Alison

WORKING-LIFE THOUGHTS CONTINUED...

What could be further apart than hairdressing and writing? (Though that said, I know a number of artists who earn a living or partial from this.) Some define “genius” as being able to hold two disparate thoughts together in one’s mind. No, I’m not saying I’m a genius! But there is something to what comes of connecting the differences; it is rewarding and invigorating to find or forge paths between what can appear to be rather at odds.

The positives of a 10 or 11 hour day spent cutting, colouring, and shaping hair as far as creating stories was concerned, were that I spent a substantial chunk of my life listening to stories—listening to what makes some humans “tick.” One client had to book a hair colour to coincide with her menstrual cycle...and there was a time that day was already booked and she had a meltdown. Or there was the string of lies a client insisted on telling her young daughter to avoid the truth about covering her own grey hair.

The not-so-positive: it is a job that drains on all levels. There were clients who expected me to be a shrink...but they were no less exhausting than those who expected me to be a comedian. I was always grateful for the very small number who liked to close their eyes, and wished me to be quiet as I went about the task of actually cutting hair. Intellectually it is not particularly stimulating work—although there were those few individuals who made it so. And of course, it’s very physical without any of the stretching or cardio needed for a healthy life. In other words, at the end of the day, I was exhausted physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Rita Mae Brown, in her wonderful book about the writing life *Starting From Scratch: A Different Kind of Writer’s Manual* talks about how important it is to have a “bread-and-butter” job that does *not* involve text in any way. She recommends fixing old houses and cars (!) Anything that isn’t “writing.” And I understand why. But back in those days, a bit of “other writing” sounded quite good to me.



Maybe the choice of second job—if you can have a choice—has to do with knowing yourself and the sort of writer you are. What energy can you put out all day or night...and still have some “writer” in you at the end of it? What sort of activity “feeds” your story ideas *and* your language? Does your imagination benefit from lots of exercise...or from rest? (Might this relate to being introvert or extrovert? I wonder.)

You can get very hung up on the idea of writing every day. I know that’s what I tend to preach when I teach and talk. But if you work shift work or require a lot of flexibility, it may be different for you. There may be elements of your “day” job in which you can really use your writing. Or think of “creativity” in broader terms. Bring creativity into your day. That may be a matter of slowing down more than anything else. Slowing down, being still, is—to my mind—not negotiable in a creative life. Perhaps, more than the internal-knot of combining the writing life and some sort of “other job,” is this Thing of giving ourselves time to slow. Even if you have only half an hour a day, make it a slow half hour.

“...work is nothing but this slow trek to rediscover, through the detours of art, those two or three great and simple images in whose presence [your] heart first opened.”

Albert Camus

TWO “BOOKISH” PROFESSIONS

BY KARI-LYNN WINTERS

Just Different Enough: A Comparison of Two “Bookish” Professions

It is fair to say that I have two professional jobs. I am a published children’s author and I am an assistant professor in the faculty of education at Brock University. These two areas take up the majority of my professional/non family time, and while they are distinct, in many ways they are also similar. Let me explain.

Being Alone and Being Together

Though I have written collaboratively in the past (e.g., *aRHYTHMetic: A Book and a Half of Poems about Math* written with Tiffany Stone and Lori Sherritt-Fleming), there is still a lot of “alone” time in my author job. There is time to think, reflect, rewrite, and daydream. I often feel inspired to write in the mornings. I like to wake up slowly in a quiet and peaceful setting with my cuddly and sleepy cats, my tea, my computer, and my ideas. This feels like “my” time—a special time of the day. It seems strange to think that my publishers, my agent, and fans want me to make room for these three hours per day (5 a.m.-8 a.m.) of alone time. It is the only way that I can continue to write thought-provoking, imaginative, and humorous books.

However, if all I did was write, I would feel lonely. My day job provides collaborative time—social experiences that not only inform my writing but help me celebrate it too. In the classroom, I use children’s literature at every opportunity with young children, youth, and adults. Books offer students opportunities to better understand areas of the curriculum from language arts to math and from science to social studies. Children’s literature engages students, encouraging them to hear the voices of diverse characters, to better visualize a variety of situations, and to feel connected with the lived experiences of others. The teacher candidates that I instruct and advise come to see books as

flexible, powerful teaching tools. But understanding literature in this way takes sharing, discussions, collective inquiry and arts-integration. Therefore, teaching teacher candidates with children’s literature is very satisfying, and always collaborative. Indeed, on my teaching days, I am never alone.

Audiences and Being in Front of Others

As an author and an assistant professor, I try not to be didactic. In both areas, being pedantic is not only off-putting, it creates a sterile, imposed environment. Besides, I want people to come to children’s literature more authentically, because of the joy and the connections it offers.

As an author who performs her books internationally, I strive to be present with my audience while being entertaining and informative at the same time. This means that I can talk about a range of diverse topics, interweaving a fabric of stories as well as my own ideas, and beliefs. As an author—a guest in the school—I am not responsible (to the same extent) for the behaviour and/or the learning the students assume. Another difference is that a school or library is paying to hear about me and my creations; I have found that in my author role, people do want me to talk about my own thoughts, beliefs, and inspirations, especially in relation to the books that I have written.

Being an educator means that I am always in front of people. Here, I strive to be engaging, rather than entertaining. I am more restrained in the ways I act and what I say as an assistant professor. Standards of practice and university policies dictate the ways that I must behave and interact in my professional life. Also, I am restricted both by the mandated curriculum and with the inclusion of my own ideas. Here I need to be more careful about sharing my thoughts, beliefs, and inspirations.

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KARI-LYNN WINTERS ... CONTINUED

The students are there to develop their own ideas, not merely to hear about mine. And I am held accountable for their learning, their behaviours, and ultimately, their future teaching.

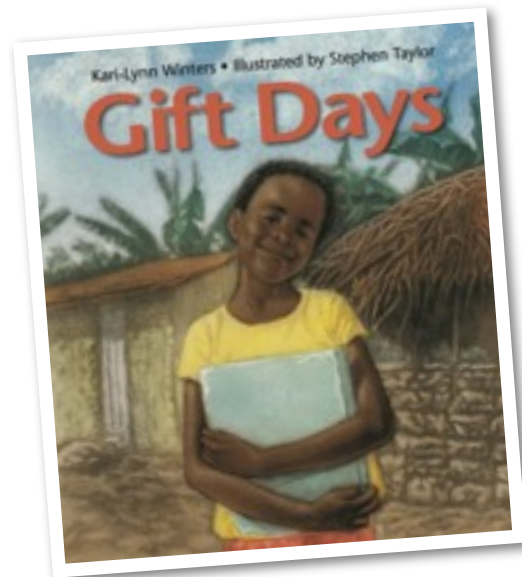
Editing

I spend a lot of time editing. As an author, this happens constantly and throughout the day. In fact, I spend far more time editing/re-writing than writing the original copy. The importance of being a great editor cannot be overstated. When in author mode, it is helpful to be slightly scattered—to be moving between tasks and leaving some half finished for the time being. The chaos makes for a very creative energy and environment.

As an assistant professor, I only allow myself to edit a little and always before the class. This is because I want to be present with my students. I want to hear where they are and what they are understanding about the topic. Editing in this situation would be inappropriate because it reads as being confused or oppositely, being too much of a perfectionist. (Imagine if I was your teacher and I re-wrote or re-stated a sentence seventeen times just to make it sound right.) This doesn't mean that I don't adjust my lesson plans to accommodate student learning, but that I don't filter everything I say or do in the classroom. Additionally, being scattered and moving from task to task would frustrate students and appear very unprofessional.

Sometimes I look at my day job and feel as though I am not getting enough creative writing done or that my creativity is being stifled. Like many people, I am exhausted and drained at the end of a day of work. On these days, I sometimes feel bitter, thinking, "These jobs are just too different." These are the days that I remind myself that these two professions are just different enough to feed each other, to help me live a fuller life, and to inspire me to be a better writer and a better

teacher of writing. Having two distinct (similar) professions takes time, but without each one, my life never seems whole.



Bio

Dr. Kari-Lynn Winters is an award-winning children's author, playwright, and academic scholar. Sixteen of her picture books have been published or accepted for publication. A natural storyteller and trained actor, Kari-Lynn continues to be invited to perform/present at literacy conventions and festivals all over the world. Kari-Lynn is also an experienced teacher of writing, who has taught a range of students in Canada and the United States, including pre-school, special education, primary and intermediate, high school, and university teacher education. Kari-Lynn recently accepted a position at Brock University as an Assistant Professor. Her research interests are children's literature, drama in education, and multimodal forms of authorship. More information can be found at www.kariwinters.com.



BRAVE NEW WORLD

BY ANNIE BANE

When I decided in May 2011, to pull together the four separate novels that I had played with and never finished since I started publishing my work in the 1980's, I was still an idealistic writer. I believed that by writing *purdy* words with a set of characters you would step in front of a bullet for and a plot that takes you to some special place deep in your memory bank that I had a chance of publishing my first work of fiction. That was before I heard the newest buzz word in publishing —*platform*.



One does not just write now. One builds a social media platform from which to launch what you write. I liked the old days better. I have a new collection of “Dummies” books and a new respect for how stubborn I can be when I set a goal. From *Facebook*, I have gotten to know my grandchildren from a whole new perspective. On *LinkedIn*, I am connected with the director of an art festival in Wisconsin and other playwrights. My blog is a challenging way to find my niche in the market and speak to readers I could not reach any other way.

I have a great deal to learn and try to chip away at it daily, but I am becoming a *techie*...often kicking and screaming, but there it is. The October 2012 *Writer's Digest* says one must blog if one wants a career in writing. I have become a blogger.

As for my actual work in writing fiction, I have found a whole new world of creativity.

See my Web Page: www.anniebane.com for a list of credits of my prior nonfiction published work, as well as, more about my novel *Peace Noise, the Winds of Discovery*. Fiction was a brave new world for me. However, a plot that had been rumbling round inside my head for years insisted to be set free. Last spring, I pledged my mornings to literature, shut the door, and set to work.

It took almost exactly one year to finish writing my novel. Research included a trip to my childhood home in the oil fields of north central Wyoming. The first of a planned trilogy, this novel traces three generations from the homesteads of the plains of Wyoming through the oil boom of the 1920's to the *Manhattan Project* in 1940's Los Alamos, NM, the birthplace of nuclear power and the *Cold War*.

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BRAVE NEW WORLD — CONTINUED



It is the story of energy and the people who committed their lives to bringing America into the 21st century. You'll find more on my [blog](#). I would love your comments. Let's talk about writing and how it works in today's hi-tech publishing. Let's talk about characters, plot, and point of view. Let's become the best writers we can be.



Above: Annie and camper on research trip to WY

Below: Morning Glory Pool in Yellowstone

Right: the Tetons in Jackson Hole, WY National Park

Annie Bane lives in Denver, CO. **Peace Noise, the Winds of Discovery** is her first work of fiction, and she has published nonfiction since 1988, including **Bonsai Days: the Art of Living after Trauma**, based on her work with traumatic brain injury survivors in Colorado Springs.

She has travelled to the Highlands of Scotland, marveled at the Northern Lights in Fairbanks, Alaska, and stood at the Berlin wall at the height of the Cold War. Her greatest joy is to share that array of life experiences on the written page.

Man is so made that he can only find relaxation from one kind of labor by taking up another.
Anatole France 1844-1924

Doing what you love means dealing with things you don't.
David Shore

Fall Workshops

September 10 Writing for Children
3 months long, and each writer will complete 3 works as well as 1 re-write, with additional and optional exercises...as well as the usual articles and discussion to create inspiration and community.
Check out [the details](#)

September 10 Life Writing
8 weeks long, also three assignments, which can be discreet pieces in response to the readings and suggestions OR portions of works-in-progress.
Details!

Write with any questions... alison@alisonacheson.com