

LBF under a cloud, but not me!

Matthew Seal

Maybe I was the happiest person at the Fair this year? So little business done and so many overseas visitors, including most of the expected SA contingent, prevented from attending at all, courtesy of that ill volcanic cloud from Iceland. Yes, being able to arrive at all was fortunate. But to be there with my good wife and also to be honoured by PEG at the SA stand made it a special, gratifying day, writes Matthew Seal, PEG's first Honorary Member.

It felt a bit like being a grandparent is said to be – I haven't had that honour yet, but certain other people are getting closer to helping us realise it – so, all the fun of parenthood and none of the pain. A strange feeling to go to an almost empty LBF and enjoy the quietness!

American journalist IF Stone put it well for the honoured aged: 'If you live long enough, the venerability factor creeps in; you get accused of things you never did and praised for virtues you never had.'

PEG, you are doing fine, and you have never accused me of anything. Indeed, you have thanked me and the other pioneers for getting it all going. Personal initiative is one thing but is helped if there is momentum already, and in the early 1990s it was happening informally already with IPASA, if any of you remember that far back. PEG was able to grow in an encouraging zeitgeist.



Four 'literary jewels' at the conferring of Honorary Membership of PEG on Matthew Seal in the Networking area on the SA Market Focus Pavilion at the LBF (left to right): Julie Bruton-Seal, Matthew Seal, John Linnegar (PEG Chair), Diana Coetzee (then chair of PEG's Gauteng branch committee)

PEG began by offering a framework for would-be networking editors. Networks are full of holes, clearly, but what counts is the threads that bind them. Over these PEG years it is the many people who have contributed the threads of survival that deserve praise rather than those who gave the initial push. And the way you have spread all over the country, linked with other interest groups and kept the freshness – all are admirable (said he with a grandparent's pride).

Managerially speaking, I think the principle of giving the odd acknowledgment along the way is a good one. I spoke at our little ceremony at the LBF of the virtue of being 'PEGged' in person rather than too late ('PEGged out'), and would now like to offer a slightly more literary

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Some of the members of PEG's Exco, caught at their meeting in August. Back, from left: John Linnegar; Simon Nye; Carin Thirion; Elyn Barry (obscured). Front: Sukaina Walji; Linda Pretorius; Isabelle Delvare; Kathy Gibbs. Absent: Juliet Gillies and Lia Marus

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thank you along these same lines. In 1930, WH Auden wrote in tribute to his friend Christopher Isherwood (no doubt with lots of ironical subtext): Let us honour if we can / The vertical man, / Though we value none / But the horizontal one.

And lest the honour go fully to my head, I have also found a literary caution to heed. This time it's Shakespeare, from *Love's Labour's Lost*: 'O, they have lived long on the alms-basket of words. I marvel thy master hath not eaten three for a word; for thou art not so long in the head as HONORIFICABILITUDINITATIBUS.' (And yes, I am still editor enough to have checked the apostrophes in the title as well as the 27-letter word itself.)

Thank you, PEG, for the honorary membership and for the certificate. I am thoroughly chuffed, and I don't care if the word isn't in Auden's or Shakespeare's alms-basket. ♪

A very closed book

Sharon Rubin

My reason for visiting the Book Fair was to meet publishers who could employ me as a freelance Permissions consultant and also to attend a memorial lecture to Charles Clark, the guru of copyright.

As a newcomer to the London Book Fair, I was overwhelmed by the number of exhibits and people and had no idea of the protocol. I did not know that appointments were made prior to the opening. I wandered in and hoped to find someone to chat to on the stands. I found the reception staff of the big publishers distant and unhelpful to someone not involved in rights. The salespeople's primary aim is to sell and buy rights and everything else is irrelevant.

The staff at the PEG stand were very kind and informative and gave me lots of useful advice, but mostly I just wandered around trying to get someone to talk to me. I attended a couple of talks, took away some literature and tried to get the feel of the world in which I work.

My suggestion to make the Fair more user-friendly would be for the organisers to issue an orientation letter before the actual event to explain to newcomers, be they publishers or any other kind of visitor, exactly what happens at the Fair and how to plan a successful visit.

My overall feeling about my visit was that the publishing world is a very closed book and woe betide the person who tries to break into it, even if they do have something to contribute. ♪

A delightful hob-nob

Jill Fresen

Having been away from South Africa for over a year now, I was delighted to have the opportunity to hob-nob with fellow South Africans, and PEG members in particular. Since I had to take time off from my full-time job in Oxford and travel to London, I went on the Sunday and spent only the Monday helping out at the PEG stand at the Fair. On the Sunday evening, my daughter Anna (editor-in-training) and I spent a delightful happy hour with John and Ken at a restaurant in Kensington, within walking distance of Harrods. (I had previously met John only while attending two of his courses, and wondered if I would recognise him as he emerged from the underground at South Kensington ... that turned out to be no problem, even though his elegant new spectacles were a noticeable enhancement ...)

At the fair, I had two other vested interests – my cousin by marriage, AJ Brooks, was a featured South African author due to give a reading on his second book about life on the Border in the 1970s (published by 30° South Publishers). And my father, a veteran of the South African Air Force who flew Spitfires during World War II, had his book *Spitfires Rampant* featured on the New Titles stand. Unfortunately AJ was not able to make the trip because of the volcanic ash, but Gary Albyn (author of *Manzovo – Place of the Elephants*) read AJ's piece, as well as his own epic poem, which he performed from memory with alacrity – the African bush and the joys and dangers of elephant life were painted orally for us, sitting in Earls Court, so far away from it all.

The Earls Court exhibition centre is a vast and well-organised venue.

The Earls Court exhibition centre is a vast and well-organised venue. Some of the stands of large publishers, such as Penguin and HarperCollins, sported sophisticated shop fronts with illuminated fittings and areas to entertain prospective clients. The PEG stand looked very elegant with colourful posters, smart black storage boxes, and beaded flower arrangement. Right next door we had a refreshment area, which kept us permanently supplied with coffee, snacks and cold drinks. In the short time that I did duty on the stand, I spoke to two interesting people – a Nigerian who wants to take his team of junior editors to the Cape Town Book Fair and attend some commissioned editing courses while there, and an Australian journalist now living in Greece, who was interested in editing and translation. ♪

Editor, find a publisher!

Matthew Seal, PEG's first 'lifer' (aka honorary life member) writes about his writing career

In a *PEGboard* issue centring on the London Book Fair, I am happy to declare that I owe my current writing career to a meeting I had at the LBF of 2006.

On a March day I went to the Fair to give out leaflets promoting my freelance editing services, as you do (or should do, because it sometimes works), and I stopped at a small publisher's stand. No, Merlin Unwin Books did



Earls Court, London, the venue for the London Book Fair and PEG's 'home' for three days



PEG members from South Africa and the UK represented South African language practitioners on the PEG/SATI/MLA stand V495 on the SA Market Focus Pavilion. Sitting is Ken McGillivray, a PEG Cape Town branch committee member, and (standing) Jill Fresen, formerly of Pretoria and now based at Oxford University. Jill travelled down from Oxford to spend the day with PEG. Both were in the audience in the Networking area to witness the official opening of the pavilion.

their own editing in-house and didn't need a freelance, but yes, they were on the lookout for authors. It so happened that my wife and I had an idea for a book, and the talk flowed.

The consequence was our co-written book *Hedgerow Medicine*, published in 2008, and its successor, *Kitchen Medicine*. Interestingly, neither of these is the book that was discussed at the 2006 LBF; this will probably be the third one, which we are now preparing.

In the obvious sense it was a lucky meeting, but it was significant that both the publisher and I were ready to do business and flexible enough to discuss other possibilities after the immediate pretext proved unproductive.

This is my own self-proving that networking is vital to the freelance, at all stages of a career. You need only one hit, and that can change your life. Like meeting your mate or selling your house, you have to be there in the marketplace, actual or virtual, and have a good offer. Then adjust your sights, negotiate and value yourself appropriately. Believe in your luck and capitalise on it.

It also helps if you accept that there is such a thing as fate, kismet, karma, synchronicity or guardian angels. Or *PEGBoard*. ☺



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KITCHEN MEDICINE
Household remedies for common ailments and domestic emergencies



Most accidents happen in the kitchen. But if there are lurking dangers, the average kitchen also contains many handy but often overlooked remedies for treating common ailments or household emergencies. The products for these remedies include herbs and spices, fruit and vegetables, condiments and dressings, oils and vinegars, and many other common and familiar items.

In *Kitchen Medicine* the authors of the successful *Hedgerow Medicine* now move indoors to describe the wealth of healing and emergency remedies that sit unused and idle in the kitchen. Superb illustrations adorn a lively text.

The ingredients are all easily found in the kitchen although in some cases they are exotic in origin (just think of tea, coffee and chocolate).

The ailments and illnesses that kitchen medicine can address are comprehensively listed, making diagnosis and cure both immediate and easy.

TITLE: Kitchen Medicine
AUTHOR: Julie Bruton-Seal/Matthew Seal
BINDING: Laminated hardback
ILLUSTRATIONS: Colour throughout
ISBN: 978-1-906122-18-8
FORMAT: 246 x 189mm
PAGES: 226pp
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Chair's chatter

With the national and branch AGMs having come and gone, it's an appropriate time to reflect on PEG's achievements and prospects, and also to salute those members who serve our interests so selflessly.

It's really been an extraordinary 18 months, purely in terms of milestones. 'PEG on steroids' is a term that's been bandied about of late! We have successfully under our belt two significant conferences (Plain Language and Fiction and Narrative Non-fiction) and two major book fairs (Cape Town and London), plus a dozen or so branch meetings that have added value to PEG membership. In addition, our mentorship scheme has been well and truly launched – to the point where it is attracting more and more mentees and we're already needing to swell the number of mentors. Clearly, our existing corps of mentors have done us – and our profession – proud. Furthermore, commendably good progress has been made towards launching the new hierarchy of member categories and the concomitant points system, introducing the accreditation test and publishing a series of PEG guides – all aimed at supporting you in your quest to be more proficient and more professional in your conduct and your editorial offerings.

It never ceases to amaze me just how little The People Out There know about our craft, and how little they appreciate the value editors can (and do) add to written communications.

Of course, implementing the wherewithal of professional status is one thing; telling our existing and potential clients about it is another matter entirely, and we have the members of our marketing committee to thank for beginning to spread the word – at book fairs, through the distribution of the Members' Directory and, more recently, via the P-zine and the PEG website and, now, PEG's Facebook presence. It never ceases to amaze me just how little The People Out There know about our craft, and how little they appreciate the value editors can (and do) add to written communications. Almost daily, we're confronted with examples of magazines, self-published books, marketing leaflets, technical manuals, press releases or letters littered with horrors that would be so easy to fix if only their authors and publishers would stop to think how much value would be added to reputations and credibility through editorial intervention! So, PEG's mission should be to tell them they need to engage our members if they value their reputations. Clearly, there's much work to be done in this area, particularly among businesses ...

None of these achievements would have been possible – nor will future milestones be achievable – without the selfless dedication and hard work of those within our own ranks. And while I commend and thank all of you for rising to the challenge in support of their remarkable efforts and achievements, let's not allow ourselves to overlook their unstinting enthusiasm and the long hours that already very busy people put in for the sake of us all. We've been more fortunate than we realise to have had stalwarts such as Lulu van Molendorff, Mary Hazelton, Paul Schamberger and Fiona Wallace directing their various portfolios, and, as they step down from office, we thank them for their service to us all. At branch level, we must not forget the sterling contributions of Kristina Davidson, Sharon Montgomery, Sukaina Walji, Carol du Toit, Ken McGillivray and Hani du Toit; or of Diana Coetzee, Hilary Phillips, Linda Pretorius and Isabelle Delvare.

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PEGboard

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The recent AGMs have brought to the fore a new generation of talents and energies at branch level, and I should like to welcome into our midst the new branch committees. Simon Nye now chairs Cape Town and Lia Marus Gauteng. New blood, new teams, new dynamism can only mean good things for PEG at branch level: thank you to Simon and Lia and their teams for making yourselves available for these positions.

'PEG on steroids' is perhaps not that far from the truth after all ...

At the national AGM, nominations were not forthcoming for some key executive positions, including those of vice-chair, secretary, publications coordinator, and members' directory coordinator; but, after the AGM, Pretoria stalwart Carin Thirion offered herself for the position of vice-chair (an offer those present accepted without hesitation!) for a two-year term. A better candidate for the position would be hard to find: in addition to her inherent strengths and talents, Carin will strengthen the Pretoria membership's representation on the executive. Thank you, Carin; PEG will be the richer for your contributions to its management. If any of you feel moved to offer your services at Exco level, please contact one of the Exco members.

Later during the year there were really worthwhile events, with some tangible member benefits: the Cape Town Book Fair (July-August, including a one-day workshop on Plain Language) and the Jozi Book Fair (early August), and currently the formation of the Alliance of Language and Media Practitioners (LAMP) to represent our interests, with those of allied associations, on the SA Book Development Council: SATI (the South African Translators Institute), SAFREA (the Southern African Freelancers' Association) and the Writers' Guild of South Africa (WGSA). We also have an enhanced Facebook presence thanks to the willingness, wisdom and dynamism of Sukaina Walji.

Dates have been set for the November workshops on editing theses and dissertations (Cape Town on Saturday 13 November and Johannesburg on Saturday 27 November: they will be reported on in the next *PEGboard*). There is to be an affiliation agreement with UASA, the United Association of South Africa, a trade union with 100 000 members affiliated with the non-political Federation of Unions of South Africa (Fedusa). There are plans for further publications in the PEG Guides series, and there is a possibility of PEG's negotiating discounts for members on, for example, book purchases. 'PEG on steroids' is perhaps not that far from the truth after all ...

Yours in editing
John

Ed's inkspot



As PEG's Chair so nicely puts it, PEG seems to have been on steroids during the past (by now) more than 18 months. Your Editor presents, with some chagrin, the BLTN edition of *PEGboard*: Better Late Than Never.

Never mind the steroids – the Advent of the Social Media has made producing our newsletter somewhat like running up a Namib sand dune while the wind is blowing downhill. Consider this: in the good old days, we had some sober e-mailing to PEGgers, plus our newsletter. These days, what used to be *PEGboard's* hot-off-the-press exclusives get nabbed by our P-zine and PEG's Facebook page.

The roles of *PEGboard*, the P-zine, website and Facebook as internal/external marketing/comms media are

inextricably linked and have required a rethink or two. In collaboration with Exco, *PEGboard* is changing its focus to longer, more useful, educational and informative articles rather than snippets of event-type information. It was also suggested and agreed that, in its electronic format, the extent of each issue shouldn't matter: if there is sufficient material for only two or three pages, then so be it. This will enable the Editor to bring the newsletter out quarterly on schedule rather than hassle about keeping current/topical and all the angst that accompanies that. Not a journal, mind you, but still a more informative newsletter.

Having said all this, the BLTN edition contains lots of pre-rethink stuff and as yet unpublished material. Another edition is also in the pipeline. By then, we hope that *PEGboard* will have caught up with our Speedy Gonzalez Chair and his team.

– Hester

Breaking into fiction editing

Jo Warner and Norman Blight

Since publishing houses no longer train editors on the accustomed scale, the PEG Conference on Editing Works of Fiction and Narrative Non-Fiction, at Bridge House School in Franschhoek, asked how aspirant fiction editors can break into the industry, and whether it is worth their while.

On 13 and 14 May, some 80 delegates and speakers met for PEG's Franschhoek conference on editing works of fiction and narrative non-fiction. We were offered a keynote address and 15 events in two or three parallel sessions held in the hall complex at Bridge House School, 10 km out of town. The weather for both days was cold and wet, but the enthusiasm of the speakers and delegates – and hot beverages dispensed with snacks – kept the two-day conference informative and engaging.

Discussions between editors and writers were particularly illuminating. For example, Maire Fisher (Maire being a form of 'Moira') was faced with Tracey Farren's *Whiplash*, which had been inspired by the street workers Tracey had met during her journalistic research. After many rejections, the novel was accepted by Modjaji Press. In their dialogue, Maire and Tracey expanded on the time it took to navigate the development of the slang that was important for the flavour of the telling.

Similarly, editor Martha Evans and Andrew Brown spoke of a good working relationship through four novels including his latest, *Refuge*. In the same session, Linda Gilfillan talked to Sharon Sorour-Morris about *Something on my mind*, Sharon's biography of Kate Jowell, commissioned by the family as their Kate sank into Alzheimer's.

Ivan Vladislavic's solo session proved to be a highlight for a number of delegates ... Working as editor can ... be so demanding that it's difficult to sustain both roles, his experience and skill bring a sensitive awareness and openness to constant adaptation to the craft.

Ivan Vladislavic's solo session proved to be a highlight for a number of delegates. The award-winning novelist is also an editor, of both fiction and non-fiction, who is often consulted regarding structural issues well before the line-by-line copy-editing. Working as editor – not rewriting but encouraging authors to find the best way of expressing themselves – can be so demanding that it's difficult to sustain both roles, but his experience and skill bring a sensitive awareness and openness to constant adaptation to the craft, to the benefit of other writers' work.

During her session, Dr Helen Moffett provided an extensive workshop handout which was a mine of useful guidance for prospective fiction editors. It included a sample of a reader's report, which may contribute to the development of structural editing and copy-editing, in preparation for typesetting and proofreading. Pages of an edited manuscript showed the tracked changes.

Although some delegates were disappointed that this talk didn't develop into a workshop, it provided one specific suggestion on breaking into editing fiction and narrative non-fiction: offer to write reader's reports for a publisher ('possibly about ten, and probably unpaid')



Helen Moffett and Izak de Vries paired up to present a session on editing youth literature

to show your familiarity with current publications in a particular genre while demonstrating your literary perceptions and ability to comment constructively. This might lead to freelance work, starting with proofreading.

Elsibe Loubser-McGuffog ran an exemplary workshop, on creative writing, with input by artist Liliane Top. Extensive readings had been emailed to delegates who had registered for the session, so work could begin with rapid pointers to hands-on tasks, with such guidance

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as character development, for group discussion and individual responses. These coordinated stages culminated in the submission of a piece of writing, which was to be illustrated and published online in Elsibe's blog.

This session provided a model for successful workshops: participants engaged in realistic analysis and creative tasks with opportunities for discussion, which built towards a purposeful written product. Supporting materials were emailed ahead, while tasks were focused and efficiently introduced to allow for individual and practical professional development. In future, conference organisers need to insist on the difference between the usual lectures and panel discussions, and workshops such as this one.

In future, conference organisers need to insist on the difference between the usual lectures and panel discussions, and workshops.

This fine team of speakers and the programme were devised and delivered by John Linnegar and Isabelle Delvare, with Ellyn Barry keeping order at the desk and David Delvare recording, with his camera, vistas and huddles of an interesting and productive PEG conference.

An 'assembly extraordinaire'

A Bridge House School 'assembly extraordinaire' on the Friday morning was an unexpected highlight for conference delegates. The pupils' behaviour was exemplary as they filed in to their seats to hear the headmaster acknowledge the best from a schools' literary competition. Then, in keeping with tradition, seven authors from the Franschhoek Literary Festival (FLF), which was starting that day, addressed the school body.

Gabeba Baderoon, Wessel Ebersohn, Veronique Tadjó, Michiel Heyns, Chris van Wyk, Nic Mhlongo and John van der Ruit, all gave short talks about their craft. Each presented a very different and delightful aspect of their approach to writing, from autobiography to crime fiction. The speakers were variously didactic, inspirational, humorous and informative, to the delight of their extended audience.

Several conference delegates also took advantage of the Literary Festival, which concluded on the Sunday. Participants strolled between venues, along the charming streets of the little town, in glorious sunshine under mostly blue skies. A lesson from the festival is the benefit of smaller groups for some events, where early booking was advised. 🍀



Photographs © David Delvare

Liliane Top and Elsibe Loubser-McGuffog conducted a half-day creative writing workshop



Delegates networking in between sessions



The exhibition of ten book-illustrators' posters drew great interest

Fiksieredigering in Afrikaans

Irene Cornelissen

*Irene Cornelissen comments on the sessions
for Afrikaans editors*

Izak de Vries se slypskoolsessies was uiters lewendig – hy is soms amper stil gepraat tussen vrae, antwoorde en menings. Die afskrifte wat hy gemaak het, het alles bevat wat hy wou sê, hoewel niks nuuts nie. Daar was wel kritiek dat die praktiese aktiwiteite deur polemieë in die wiede gery is.

Die paneel van Suzette Kotze-Myburgh, Louise Steyn en Elsa Silke, drie besonder ervare redigeerders, het duidelik uitgewys dat die verhouding tussen skrywer en redigeerder van fiksie uiters persoonlik en intens van aard is, so ook in die vertaling van fiksie.

Etienne Bloemhof en Danie Botha se tweegesprek was louter plesier om na te luister – gebore vertellers het die oue en die nuwe kernagtig en afwisselend teen mekaar opgeweeg.

Die kernvraag is egter nóg gevra nóg beantwoord, naamlik: *hoe* maak 'n redigeerder 'n deurbraak op die fiksiemark? Enigiemand wat weet?

THE CONFERENCE IN A NUTSHELL

Helen Moffett: Editing texts in English

Izak de Vries: Editing texts in Afrikaans (workshop)

Nelleke de Jager and Moky Makura: Editing romance fiction: challenges and charms (panel discussion)

Elsibe Loubser-McGuffog and Liliane Top of 'Creative Express Mini-bar': Creative writing workshop
Author and editor **Maire Fisher and Tracey Farren** in conversation about their collaboration on *Whiplash*

Danie Botha and Etienne Bloemhof: 'So was dit gister, en so is dit hede' – How the approach to editing Afrikaans fiction has changed over the years

Martha Evans and Andrew Brown; Lynda Gilfillan and Sharon Sorour-Morris: Challenges of the author–editor relationship in the context of texts written in English

Ivan Vladislavic: Informal talk and discussion on what Ivan has learnt from reading manuscripts and helping writers to shape books in progress

Suzette Kotze-Myburgh, Louise Steyn and Elsa Silke: Challenges of the author–editor relationship in the context of texts written in Afrikaans

Ann Donald, Vivien Horler, Michiel Heyns and Jennifer Crocker: The book reviewer's view of the editor's role

Arja Salafanica, Maire Fisher and Nicola Rijdsdijk: Editing works of narrative non-fiction

Colleen Higgs (Modjaji Press) and Louise Grantham (Bookstorm, formerly at Penguin): The publisher's view of the editor's role

'Like brushing your teeth'

John Linnegar

If torrential rain can be interpreted as a blessing from nature, then our two-day conference on editing works of fiction and narrative non-fiction was surely well and truly blessed! As Michiel Heyns said during the session on book reviewers' views of the state of fiction editing, good editing is like brushing your teeth. You don't get any credit if you do it, but everyone notices when you don't. We hope that the beginnings of a new generation of regular tooth brushers will emerge from this and subsequent conferences, so that when readers become engrossed in works of fiction edited and proofread by them, nothing jars them out of the reading trance (to quote delegate Louis Greenberg).

The fiction conference programme at Bridge House School just outside Franschhoek was a blend of workshops on, discussions about and the sharing of experiences of both editors and writers – all aimed at giving delegates insight into what those crafts entail, and demand. There seemed to be something for everyone on the menus offered on Thursday 13 and Friday 14 May, especially for editors wanting to test the waters before committing themselves to this challenging field of editorial intervention.

First off were parallel workshops on editing texts in English (Helen Moffett) and Afrikaans (Izak de Vries), each conducted in two parts split between the two conference days. While the number of attendees and limitations of the venue prevented the workshops from having maximum effect, many of the delegates found that the workshops offered invaluable exposure to the rigours and requirements of the editor's intervention in this genre. The real disappointment for the organisers was that the sessions on editing texts in isiXhosa had to be cancelled owing to a complete lack of interest; a shame, since author-presenter Sindiwe Magona offers a wealth of personal experience on both sides of the fence.

One of the most highly rated sessions was the panel discussion on 'editing romance fiction: challenges and charms', during which Nelleke de Jager (Sapphire Press) and Moky Makura (Nollybooks) spoke of the difficulties of publishing books for a black female market in the 16 to 36 age group. There was certainly keen interest in the topic, which covered content, brand references, the aspirational nature of this genre and, last but not least, the problems with distribution. Although the two publishers

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shared articulate and disarmingly frank deliveries, they revealed interesting differences in approach: for example, can romantic relationships in such novels ever be overt and consummated, and, if so, can the consummation be dealt with explicitly or not? In what ways should the mores, behaviour and relationships in such literature reflect those of the readers, or of society? And should the writers and editors necessarily be a cultural match with the protagonists in order to do the novels justice?

Upstairs, seasoned editors Danie Botha and Etienne Bloemhof regaled an intimate group with stories of the way fiction used to be published (Danie) and how a large publisher goes about the process today (Etienne). Their audience sat in awe and fascination as they told of how, in the old days, manuscripts had to be locked away in the strongroom overnight lest they come to harm, whereas now, of course, the laptop and the memory stick or CD have become the editor's portable strongroom. The decision to publish or not to publish manuscripts has also changed quite radically over time, just as the nature of authors has.

Delegates heard it from the horse's mouth, as it were: how editors and writers of fiction should collaborate and what can be regarded as a successful recipe for collaboration. Lynda Gilfillan, Sharon Sorour-Morris, Andrew Brown and Martha Evans talked us through their experiences in producing successful books. What emerged is that the experience will differ between author–editor pairs, will depend upon the quirks and foibles of each author, and will certainly differ between a first novel and subsequent texts, as the author develops and the author–editor relationship matures. This panel discussion, frank and free-ranging as it was, highlighted the importance of the editor's feeling their way and developing a sensitive working relationship with their author – and not attempting to ride roughshod over the author's voice. Open and honest communication, it would seem, is the only means of nurturing the relationship and producing a fine end-product. But their discussion also threw up the thorny question whether, as intermediary in the process, the editor's prime responsibility is to their author, publisher or reader.

'I really enjoyed the talk on narrative non-fiction [by Maire Fisher and Arja Salafranca], so something more on that (and on the editing side of it particularly) should be included in a future conference.'

'Though it was not practical enough, I enjoyed the conference as a source of debate, networking and ideas.'

Delegates were also able to share in publishers' views on the role of the editor and reviewers' opinions of the editor's contribution to works of fiction. In South Africa at present, it seems, either editors are not being given firm enough briefs or they are not skilled enough to mould texts as they should – or, heaven forbid, some texts are being published without having been touched by an editor!

Mandla Langa was our keynote speaker on Day 2. Mandla's message was that editors should encourage the local and the specific in current writing, enabling South African English to find its place and voice. He shared with us an amusing story about his first book, *The Tenderness of Blood*, which he wrote in exile during the Eighties. Thabo Mbeki was then the ANC's propaganda director, and despite Mbeki's berating it (it included criticism of certain tendencies and structures within the ANC), Mandla went ahead and had it published!

So what should the editor's role be? To what extent should they intervene and effect changes? Clearly, in the realm of fiction, their job should go way beyond merely dotting i's and crossing t's, grammar and punctuation (though these are important basics). There is much of a subtle nature for editors to watch out for, including keeping tabs on the plot (particularly unrealistic deviations from it) and characterisation (expressed through distinctive voices and the consistent use of names for characters). The critics agreed that it did everyone – authors, publishers and readers – a disservice to rush a book into print without the polishing that a substantive edit would bring to it. ♡

Three's company

Isabelle Delvare, PEG events coordinator

PEG Gautengers this year gathered for informative talks and fun affairs.

In response to some members' feedback that they valued the more intimate feel of meetings held in members' homes, two of the events were organised in private residences, where we received warm welcomes. Both meetings combined speakers' presentations with the opportunity to network and socialise. Members made excellent use of the chance to interact with others, cheerfully exchanging news and information with colleagues and tucking into the scrumptious snacks.

Both new and long-standing members attend the events to network and meet people, and of course the particular topic is a drawcard. Many have become regulars.

Marching on ...

The first meeting, of 13 March, was held on a glorious morning when Vicky and Wayne Botha welcomed some 35 guests on the capacious veranda of their home in River Club; Vicky kept us supplied with delicious snacks and drinks for this large meeting and through the committee meeting which followed.

Gerald de Villiers addressed us on the issue of language change and either/or usages. Author of the very useful style guide, *Walking on Eggshells: Aspects of English Usage*, Gerald started his working life as a teacher of English, very much aware of his role in teaching 'correct' English. He has published no fewer than 25 books, mostly of an educational nature. Since 1968 many of them have been prescribed for the matriculation exam, both provincially and nationally. The intervening years and also his later, intense involvement in publishing (working for Hodder & Stoughton, and Ravan Press) brought Gerald to an intense awareness that 'language usage ... is in a constant state of flux. Thus, what was regarded as inviolable seventy, thirty, sometimes no more than ten years ... ago, might no longer be seen as such.' As a result, *Walking on Eggshells*, which was published in 2007, is 'as much about exceptions – and allowable alternatives – to rules, as about the rules themselves'.

Walking on Eggshells is 'as much about exceptions – and allowable alternatives – to rules, as about the rules themselves'.

A polished and amusing speaker, Gerald used many examples to explore the necessary balancing act (as editors, PEGgers are well acquainted with this!) between accepting the growing role of spoken usage in determining what is or isn't acceptable and the notion that anything goes. Some of his topics touched on included number, agreement, pronouns, false ellipsis, split infinitives and specific words, such as 'hopefully', which have acquired new meanings over time.

Walking on Eggshells is published by Pan Macmillan.

Casting the net

Together with the winter warmer in July/August, the April autumn brunch has been a long-held tradition of Gauteng members. This year it was held in Pretoria, to accommodate the many members who live there and who regularly trek to Johannesburg to attend meetings. It is purely a networking event, with relaxation and casual business-related interaction as the main goals.

The winter warmer is purely a networking event, with relaxation and casual business-related interaction as the main goals.

The event took place on yet another splendid morning, marred only by the absence of a few members as a result of a virulent flu virus doing the rounds. Linda Pretorius found us the lovely Willows Country Lodge where we met in dappled sunlight on the large wooden deck to enjoy fruit sositates. We then went inside to a heavenly breakfast buffet, and lifted the rafters with happy banter and chatter.

The event brought new members to the PEG family. One of them, Veronica Mathebula, arrived with her book, *Dreams do come true*, which she had published herself. Veronica's amusing but moving article on the process of writing this, her first book, can be found in this issue of *PEGBoard*.

May marketing milieu

The event of 8 May was held in the afternoon, to accommodate members who work on Saturday mornings. There was a very good turnout, and the spacious open-plan

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lounge and dining room of Gerald and Daphne Zwirn was filled to overflowing. Happily, there were again several new faces.

The purpose of the meeting was to showcase our own members, and to gain insight into the methods used by our colleagues to make a success of, and income from, freelance editorial work. Our three speakers were Carin Thirion, Lulu van Molendorff and Fiona Wallace, and one of the reasons they were approached to speak was because they come from very different backgrounds and between them would be able to share a wealth of ideas with their listeners. They had been asked to reflect on their experiences of freelance editing – the trials and the triumphs – and this they did with honesty and thoughtfulness. The audience responded to these contributions

with lively interest, asking the speakers numerous questions, before we broke for scones and cakes, with tea, coffee or juice, served by Daphne. These meetings take a lot of organising and, as usual, Joan Fairhurst undertook various tasks to make life easier for Linda and Isabelle.

The purpose was to showcase our own members.

Many have expressed the desire that PEG repeat this type of meeting, with different members presenting each time. There is a plan for a publication on marketing oneself as a freelancer, and to include some of the insights shared at this meeting. ♡

Do dreams come true?

Reflections of a newly published author in the new South Africa

Veronica Mathebula

Just the other day my friend and I visited Exclusive Books in Rosebank, Johannesburg, to check out my book, *Dreams do come true* – my first published romantic novel in the series *Love Stories for Believers* (LS4B).

Another friend had seen it and mentioned that it was very visible. At the time I had not believed him; I needed to see the book with my own eyes! We shuffled tentatively, wending our way via the biography section. Eventually I worked up the nerve and I ventured towards Psychology, where it was to be found.

You can imagine how I felt when I located it. It was with a sense of pride and admiration that I called my friend over. 'Come and see my book!' I whispered, loudly enough for one of the customers to overhear us. We took a few pictures and I asked the sales assistant to call the manager, Mr Dumisani Ncube, so that I could thank him in person. He and I had never met but he was the first to accept my novel without any fuss. I did not want to know how many copies had been sold in case I got distraught! In any case, mostly readers prefer to buy from me directly.

The road less travelled by

So, you ask, how has the authorial journey been? Well, it has only really begun.

The easiest part was writing the book, which I enjoyed tremendously. I started in April 2009 and within six weeks already had the whole plot in place. Most of the chapters were written on my cellular telephone (I kid you not) when I got bored during meetings and at social functions. Initially I was just fooling around – until, that is, I started searching for publishers on the internet and putting aside the finances for 'my project'.

One of the big publishers turned me down, but I will forever respect them for taking the time to reply. I settled for the package offered by Reach Publishers, a self-publishing house based in Durban, who also assisted me with the editing, design and layout, and gave me much-needed moral support.

'Do dreams come true?': It is and continues to be an incredible journey.

John called me a brave soul then, and now I know why.

Submitting the first draft of my manuscript was nerve-racking, but not as much as handing over the final one. It felt like cutting the umbilical cord. I didn't want to let go of my baby, so I delayed and delayed submission. But I finally did it, and when eventually I saw the artwork for the cover, I was blown away. Someone had given me the chance to fulfil my dream and it was a moment to savour.

Out of the ashes

Since then I have received phenomenal reviews, too numerous to count. Almost all of my readers have loved the book and have told me so through SMSs, emails, Facebook messages, and so on. Comments such as 'This book e ya vaya!' and 'Vero o ayoba!' inspire me daily. Even Gauteng Premier Ms Nomvula Mokonyane declared the novel to be her favourite bedtime read! Through the encouragement of such readers, I am able motivate many who will follow me into this world of writing and publishing.

Comments such as 'This book e ya vaya!' and 'Vero o ayoba!' inspire me daily.

But the best compliment has been indirect – in fact, from people who have subsequently asked me to write their biographies. Already I am in negotiations to document historical accounts of certain political events and will let the cat out of the bag as soon as the ink has dried on that contract. A professor of English at a local university is also considering prescribing my novel for one of his courses – which I take as another serious compliment.

In retrospect, publishing the book was not a difficult thing to do. Neither was printing it or launching it – that is, if you have a little nest egg set aside and the moral support of family and friends, as I did. Even getting into Exclusive Books was not that hard, albeit somewhat frustrating.

Seeds on fertile soil

For me, the most taxing exercise was marketing the book – planting it firmly in the minds of the public. When you reach this stage, it feels as if you have been left out in the cold, especially if you have a love-hate relationship with selling, as I do. It is a case of constantly knocking on Trellidor shatter-proof doors!

Immediately after the launch of *Dreams do come true* I was blessed to secure a radio interview with Karabo Kgoleng of SAfm and also an interview on SABC 2's 180 Degrees through the good graces of its producer, Annie Mokoena. If I can offer one piece of advice, it's that you need to keep up the momentum. This is the reason I am sending copies of the book to every local radio station, magazine and TV show that I can.

Five months later, most of the first batch of 500 copies are sold, and a reprint of 1 000 copies is complete, together with rave reviews printed on the back cover. Of course I still wonder if I was a little crazy to embark on this project. I once told John Linnegar, one of South Africa's finest editors (and teachers), that if I had known then what I know now about the publishing industry, I would never have ventured forth. John called me a brave soul then, and now I know why. It boggles the mind that in the United States a bestseller sells a million copies or more, whereas in South Africa a book hits bestseller status at a paltry 6 000 copies.

I think this is an indictment of us all! Having said this, though, I am very glad I was naive enough to take the plunge. I still believe that this book is going to open many doors for me. I am encouraged most of all by the types of reader it is attracting: the administrator at the office, the waitress in a canteen, the unemployed youngster who has dropped out of school; widows, academics, radio personalities, and booksellers. There is nothing like reaching the right target market. After some research, I found that this genre (romantic novels) is sorely lacking in the Christian market, although roughly 80 per cent of South Africans claim to lean towards Christianity. If you add the entire African Christian market, let alone the global one, the possibilities become almost limitless.

I have to constantly remind myself that dreams do come true.

Call me naive (yet again), but I believe the reason we think South Africans do not read is that much of the content we write about is alien to their world. I believe that for many readers local is *lekker*; for what other reason can it be that so many copies of the *Daily Sun* and the *Sowetan* are sold each day? Often, largely due to a lack of finance, people circulate a book until it's worn out, just as they do newspapers.

The title of this book speaks to me in so many ways that I have to constantly remind myself that dreams do come true and that I must practice what I preach by living by that conviction. It is and continues to be an incredible journey, one that has been both exciting and trying. But I am soldiering on, ready to do it all over again! 🍀