



Galahad Porter

Best of the Blog

Issue 3

Aug 27, 2016

Welcome to Galahad Porter Best of the Blog 3!

You will be pleased to know I have finished relocating back to the UK and it's time to get the ball rolling again on publication of the novel provisionally titled 'At Reception', and writing the thriller trilogy!

If you follow me on Facebook, Twitter or on my blog at galahadporter.com you are pretty well up to date. For those who live by email alone, I have created this PDF file to bring you some edited highlights of the website section 'The Blog'. I try to publish this every 3 months or so, fitting in with publication milestones.

From laptop to book store... may the games begin!

For those not familiar with the publishing industry, here is how the process of publishing At Reception should go. Those aware of it I suggest look at the cute photo of lorikeets beating a path to my door... as I hope will agents, publishers, media and anyone else who wants to know or have a slice of me!

Those of you that have followed the saga of At Reception will be aware that originally it was planned to be a short novel (novella). It was to be self-published (ie at my expense) this year to showcase my writing, and get a reputation as a writer, no matter what kind of reputation! Based on characters from the trilogy, it was seen as a promotional item to open the doors of major agents and publishers, which are largely closed to unpublished writers.

The strategy changed earlier this year. As the book evolved into a deeper psychological story I took the view it deserved the chance to get a mainstream publisher. That way it would become available to a wider audience. To achieve this it was necessary to double the word count, as novellas rarely make it to UK bookstore shelves.



Beating a path to my door... as I hope will agents, publishers, media and anyone else who wants to know or have a slice of me!

Major UK publishers do not accept direct submissions from authors. First the writer has to be accepted by a literary agent. The agent usually requires a synopsis of the story, plus the opening chapters. If they like the work, which can take a couple of months to find out, they will request a copy of the whole novel. If they like that they may take you on. Agents know their clients and may require rewriting of the novel to make it more marketable. If the agent finds a publisher, the publisher may also require further modification, to meet what it sees as market place and bookstore demands. Needless to say, all this delays eventual publication, but if accepted the wait is worth it.

However, only a very small percentage of unpublished writers will get a major agent or publisher. Therefore, in parallel to the agent route, I will kick off the process for self-publishing, targeting launch in early 2017. The process for this starts with copy editing. After incorporating changes and corrections it will go for typesetting. The book industry works on around 6 months' notice of a new title, so the publication details will

be issued ASAP after I sign with the self-publisher. I'll give an update on this in a few weeks once I have an agreement.

Dealing with psychological issues unsupported and untreated (first published 4/6/16)

The lead character in the novel *At Reception*, struggles to cope with her life. Don't we all?

Finding your own way to deal with challenges that arise in your life is normally the first step. Failure to manage the issues usually means the need for help and support. If you get support maybe you can stop things getting worse. For example, someone who feels depressed could go to the doctor. By requesting psychiatric help before the doctor prescribes an anti-depressant, maybe it will be possible to find a way of dealing with problems and avoid taking the drugs.

But where a person does not seek support, for whatever reason, dealing alone with personal issues can be physically and mentally exhausting.

I like the idea, as in autism, of a spectrum, a range of degree of any attribute. To have a fear of water is one thing, to be truly terrified by it is different in degree. I prefer not to pigeonhole people into one condition, but see people as living on a matrix of spectra. When I look at myself I could think of several 'conditions' I may have eg OCD due to my love of lists. My dislike of having my routines changed by others could be Asperger's. My great sadness that my football team were (and remain) demoted for years from the big time could be depression. Put that lot together and.... you get another human being!

Each of us handles personal challenges in different ways and with varying degrees of success. I started using lists and diaries as a way of not forgetting. My tropical fish never get fed twice, probably to their annoyance!

In *At Reception*, which is written in first person, the lead character lives alone and works largely isolated from colleagues, but surrounded by people. You see, from her perspective, how she handles the challenges in her life and work in her own way, untreated and unsupported. I hope readers will feel a great empathy for her, identify with some of her issues and methods of dealing with them, and see her as a friend struggling to cope.

Forecasting: Stockbroking v Laundry v Writing (first published 25/6/16)

A crash outside at 2am wakes me up. My mind turns to the laundry left hanging out overnight, soaking wet as the weather forecast was wrong, again. Is that the possum on the line getting its messy paws all over my clothes? Forget it and go back to sleep, you can always wash them again tomorrow.

Are you of the generation that thinks drying clothes involves only a tumble drier? People used to put their laundry outside to 'dry'. In reality in the UK, 'drying' outdoors frequently consists of turning something wet into something damp. My Mum describes the process 'to lighten', reducing the water content before putting it 'to air' or on a heating radiator or into the tumble drier.

In Australia I have a combination washing machine/drier. The great disappointment at the so called drying cycle means I hang clothes outside. Ah, you think, how lovely, a tropical environment, your clothes must smell like a bottle of fabric conditioner! Alas this is not true. My things smell of mould. Tropical life involves a lot of trees and humidity and mouldy smells! Oh, and possum paw prints and pee, with lashings of parrot poo.

When I worked in investment banking I used to make forecasts of company profits. When companies announce their results the markets react to whether they were better or worse than stockbroker expectations. Whilst there was some kudos for the individual in forecasting the exact result, getting it wrong with everyone else was no big deal.

Forecasting weather for drying laundry is a far more serious business! Getting it wrong can have dire consequences, especially in tropical environments where a clear sunny sky can cloud over at any time and rain! The internet has enabled the nerd in me to flourish in the field of laundry meteorology! I look at weather.com and the local weather bureau websites and combine their forecasts. But what does a 30% or 70% chance of rain really mean? The stars of laundry planning are the Doppler radar screens. You can see exactly where rain is coming from, pretty well live, and plan your hanging program between bands of rain or storm cells. Exciting, eh? I don't know anyone else who does this, but I do recommend the effort!

So why am I telling you this, you wonder?

Because the above are nothing compared to the difficulty of forecasting when a manuscript will be ready! Here is a sample of my forecasts for the novel provisionally titled *At Reception*:

February 7, 2016

'... a first draft should be ready for editing by the end of February'

March 5, 2016

'I now expect to finish the current draft in late March'

April 30, 2016

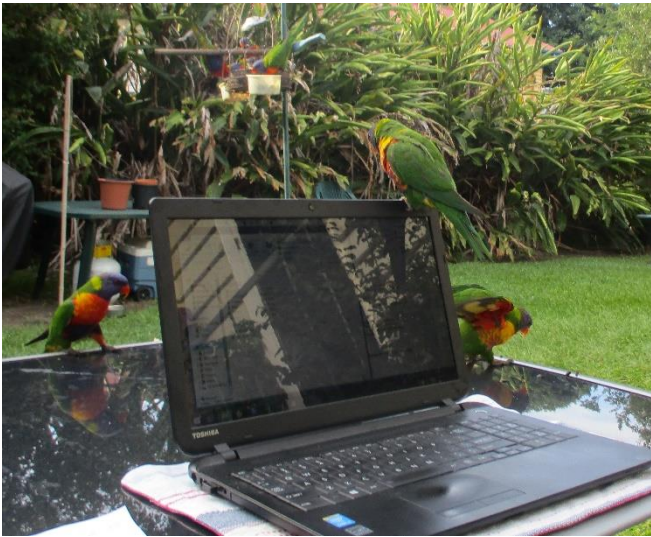
'... once I have finished writing, which should be before the end of May'

May 27, 2016

'During June a final version should be complete'

June 19, 2016

'... it shouldn't be more than a few weeks before it is ready to go'



Any sign of a manuscript?... nope, not here... no, not down there... no, not behind here...'

At the time I really believed each estimate was possible. However, something always came up and changed the goal posts (adding a deeper psychological basis, producing a novel rather than novella).

I read books on how to write novels. Whilst interesting in theory the finer points of writing had to be largely ignored. In practice, if I had followed all their advice I would probably never finish writing! However, both were right to say it will take longer to complete a manuscript than you think, and you need plenty of time to keep improving it once you get to your word count goal.

When it comes to the forecasts for the thriller trilogy, I hope you treat them with the respect they deserve...

Homage to lists! (first published 21/5/16)

I love lists, and oh, spreadsheets, they take them to the next dimension!

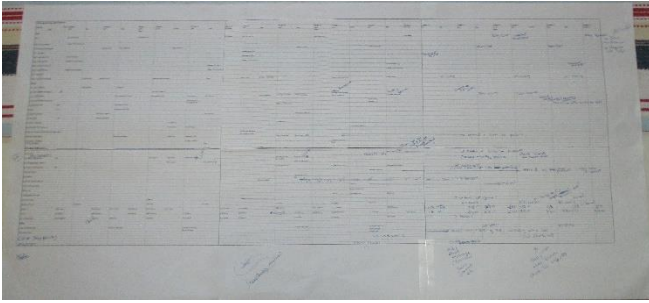
It has been suggested I have some element of obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) as my list writing is extensive. But I find they bring order to my life, and at least I don't forget people's birthdays or items when shopping, well unless they are not on the list!

For the writer, lists and their close allies the spreadsheets, are really useful. When you get an idea for a book the first thing you do is start writing. Some people just keep writing to the end. Others, like myself, set up story timeline sheets and character lists. For each book I have a spreadsheet listing characters down the left, and chapter numbers/times across the top, to ensure everything happens in the correct sequence. It shows where in the book a character does something, reducing re-reading to track down the odd paragraph! It also stops you leaving a loose end, for example if someone travels somewhere and you forget they have to travel back at some stage, losing a character is not allowed!

The trilogy novels have months as time units. An important character is pregnant, so I have to make sure things happen at the correct stage of her pregnancy. Whilst some will disagree, I would be pushing the credibility of my character if at 9 months she is climbing mountains and trekking across the desert! I do need her to give birth, and at the correct time!

The short novel, provisionally titled *At Reception*, originally covered two working days in a hotel lobby. The timeline spreadsheet was a big help when I decided to add a third day, turning the novella into a novel. I use one hour periods so the characters comings and goings are kept in sequence. The spreadsheet helped with reworking the story lines. Some characters would stay an extra night, linking the days together, and consequently their stories have become more rounded and deeper. I could see where routine activities needed to fit in, the importance of which will become apparent when you read the novel.

I've reproduced below a copy of the timeline sheet with the original notation for the addition of the third day.



'At Reception' timeline sheet.

Discipline when using lists and spreadsheets is crucial. You must not get lazy about updating. Most importantly, your writing should never become a prisoner to the sheets. Let the story come to you, don't let your initial ideas stop you from developing in a completely different direction. Having the timeline sheet on a computer helps as you can move things around easily. Nevertheless, the temptation not to change things is great, it's a lot of work and a real pain! However, the rewards in quality are worth it. When you read the final result you find it hard to believe you were once satisfied with the original version!

Boring Boring Galahad! (first published 19/6/16)

I wish I had started writing fiction years ago.

In 2005 I left my tropical life in Miami, and its sports bars, to concentrate on living in my house in the hills of Umbria, Italy. Unfortunately I never found a partner to share the isolation of a hill top farm, so I filled my days with sport on TV. But not just daytime. I would get up in the early hours to watch Miami Heat play basketball, or the Miami Dolphins playing American football.

If only I had used those hours writing, how much further along I would be!

I sold the Italian house and spent more time in the UK and Brisbane, Australia. I anticipated spending time watching sport. But the writing has taken over. I wake in the middle of the night thinking about the book, not whether I want to get up and watch a football game.

I am told by some friends that I have become boring as all I talk about is the progress of the book. Like a parent who constantly tells you about

their child's progress, it's nice to know, but not too much of it! At least I don't have a photo album to show you! By the way, my photos of birds are more popular on Facebook than what I write! Maybe I should become a photographer...

Hopefully after the first publication I'll get a better balance. At least from next month I'll be full time in the UK, so European and a lot of global sport will be on TV at a reasonable time of the day!

Oh, and just to be boring, the novel provisionally titled *At Reception* is in its late rewrite stage, no major changes planned, and it shouldn't be more than a few weeks before it is ready to go! I can then bore people with the progress of the thriller trilogy! That could end up as 5 books if I add a prequel and Part IV. The prequel would answer the question 'I don't understand what the first three books were about!' Part IV is my wishful thinking, it is designed to set the stage for a TV series based on some of the core characters! All this could keep me from watching sport for a few more years!

Are you asleep yet?



For the uninitiated, 'Boring Boring' is a UK football chant...

Final word.....

I have no idea how disrupting it will be trying to get *At Reception* published. Trying to write the trilogy whilst thinking about agents, publishers, interviews, promotional programs and a launch party guest list for *At Reception* could distract me.

As I said, let the games begin, only then will we know, and I'll tell you all about it!

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